

DE GRUYTER

RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALISATION

HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS AND
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

VOLUME 1

*Edited by Martin Fuchs, Antje Linkenbach,
Martin Mulsow, Bernd-Christian Otto,
Rahul Bjørn Parson and Jörg Rüpke*

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General introduction

The work of the research group ‘Religious individualisation in historical perspective’, which began in 2008 at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Study at the University of Erfurt (Germany), has finally come to an end. The research group (or ‘Kollegforschergruppe’ in German) was generously funded by the German Science Foundation (‘Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft’, DFG) and was intellectually embedded in the vibrant and rigorous multi-disciplinary atmosphere and deliberative culture of the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies at the University of Erfurt. The research group consisted of more than 120 members, including the core team at Erfurt, the long-term fellows from all over the world who joined us for one or more years, the many short-term fellows who spent weeks or months with us in Erfurt, and the countless conference participants who were kind enough to loan us their expertise for a few days at a time.

This publication draws together important lines of investigation pursued by the research group during the last ten years. Transcending selves, dividual self, conventions and contentions and, finally, authorities are the four perspectives that inform and explore processes of ‘religious individualisation’ in this publication and constitute its four Parts. Starting from the mechanisms of *religious* individualisation, we explore the agents, characteristics, patterns, and dynamics of such processes. We focus on human actors, both as they cast themselves and as they were constructed or conceived in different periods and across different regions, and examine how they were embedded in social webs and how agency was asserted, ascribed, or denied. We discuss how agency was appropriated and modified and, at the same time, shaped and produced by its various contexts. We look into economic, political, and legal conditions and constraints, but also into cultural practices and everyday discourses, as well as the expert discourses of philosophers and theologians, as well as locally embedded intellectuals and their trans-local counterparts. The 53 contributions to this publication address the spaces and patterns of individualisation and de-individualisation in each case,

Note: The authors are grateful to those members of the research group, who have been co-authors to texts on which we are drawing here, in particular Riccarda Suitner and Wolfgang Spickerman. William Sullivan translated a working text, of which passages are being used here.

as well as the tensions produced in the course of these developments; power relationships as well as processes of protest and marginalisation; and, finally, the processes of de-, re-, and neo-traditionalisation.

Each Part of the publication is preceded by an introduction that situates the discussion and familiarises the reader with the concepts employed in all the Part's subdivisions ('Sections'). It is, however, the afterwords, reflections shared by the authors of each Section, that set the publication apart. All the authors of the publication met for nearly a week to discuss, criticise, strengthen, and reshape their contributions, as well as to identify common themes, threads, and missing perspectives. Thus, we invite readers to start either from the beginning or from the many ends of this publication. As will become clear on reading them, many of the chapters contribute to several of the systematic aspects of the publication and are also relevant to other Sections and Parts.

Accordingly, this general introduction does not offer summaries of the summaries or meta-reflections on the meta-reflections. Rather, it introduces the work of the research group 'Religious individualisation in historical perspective' on a larger scale. The quantity of individual historical 'outputs' produced by the research group in the ongoing process of applying and reshaping the concept of 'individualisation' cannot be summarised even in a massive publication like this. If forced to sum up the findings of the group with regard to this concept, we might say that the gist of the many contributions is both critical and revisionist. It is 'critical' in that many contributions have been directed against the monopolisation of the term 'individualisation' by advocates of the modernisation theory that dominates everyday discourses. It is 'revisionist' in that our group members have often argued against a historiographical perspective that assumes all 'premodern' cultures to be essentially collective or collectivist (with the exception of a few 'big individuals'). Thus, following the example of the first report of the research group, published in 2013 (Joas and Rüpke 2013, now online and open access: https://www.db-thueringen.de/receive/dbt_mods_00034459), we will briefly sketch our starting point and then introduce the wider field of research questions tackled, as well as significant results.

1 Master narratives of individuality and individualisation in the history of religion

Contrary to received preconceptions and common assumptions, 'individualisation' offers a window not only into present societies but also into those of the past, as well as into the history of religions more generally (see Rüpke 2016a, used in the following). It might be helpful to once again look back at the origins of an estab-

lished master narrative, the questioning of which was the analytical starting point of the research group. Examining empirical data back in the early 1960s, Thomas Luckmann pointed, in the context of his analysis of contemporary religion, to the growth of American church religion and conceived of this as indicative of individualisation (Luckmann 1967, an enlarged version in German: Luckmann 1991). However, ‘individualisation’ is generally regarded in sociological discourse as a distinguishing feature of the modern age far beyond the realm of religion and as one of the dominant characteristics of ‘modernity’. Such views usually – although not in Luckmann’s case – lose sight of the paradoxical rise of mass culture as a concomitant mode of integration. Even when one takes into account that sociological theories of modernity differ in the degree of importance they assign to individualisation, individualisation nevertheless has a firm place within all classical sociological accounts of modernisation (as demonstrated by Flavia Kippele [1998], Kron and Horáček [2009], and others). Viewed from this perspective, religion appears as negatively related to the process of individualisation. With the exception of a few thinkers, such as Georg Simmel (1968) and later Luckmann himself, religion has been seen as having fallen prey to the processes characterised by individualisation.

From the perspective of ‘History of Religion’, it is worth taking a closer look at the narratives of historical processes that were thought to form the basis of the equation of individualisation with modernity. These narratives take quite different forms. In his famous study of the Italian Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt (1860, 141) claimed that interest in subjectivity had risen considerably in the European context from the end of the thirteenth century. Later studies showed how in this period new and ground-breaking philosophical, aesthetic, philological, and religious alternatives, as well as new institutions, helped create spaces of critique and distance towards what became regarded as ‘traditional’ society and practices (e.g. Martin 2004). With the coming of the Renaissance, for instance, ‘paganism’ became not only an aesthetic form but also a religious alternative (see Hanegraaff 2012; for another position see Stausberg 2009).

The processes of religious individualisation that can be identified in these contexts drew inspiration from late medieval practices of religious piety. Later, in the early sixteenth century, the Reformation made religion the object of individual choice. While the dominant Aristotelian and Scholastic paradigms had come under scrutiny in the early years of the Renaissance, reformers now questioned again another dominant religious tradition, that is Catholicism. In this case, however, the orthodox interpretations were not only supplanted by intellectual and artistic enterprises but were, instead, openly fought against. Max Weber’s (1864–1920) thesis on the post-Reformation Protestant ethic is an especially trenchant example of this trend, with its emphasis on the turn to inner-worldly asceticism, the responsibility of each individual for his/her life, and the ‘rational-

ization of the conduct of life [*Lebensführung*] – now in the world yet still oriented to the supernatural [*Jenseits*] –’ as the ‘effect of ascetic Protestantism’s concept of calling’ (Weber [1920] 2011, 157).

The first cracks in the Western self-image of a primarily, if not exclusively, modern Western origin of (religious) individualisation become visible in the context of Weber’s comparative analysis of Eurasian ‘world-religions’ and civilisations. With respect to India in particular, Weber made what he called its ‘intellectual’ religions, or soteriologies, a repository of the most pronounced and systematically developed attitudes of world-indifference and world-rejection available to the cultivated individual. Weber denied that this individualising attitude impacted life in the world and that these modes of religiosity reached the majority of lay people or the lower sections of society (what he called the ‘masses’). Weber saw developments in India, and in all other non-Western civilisations, as dead-ends. For him, only Protestant individualisation allowed a breakthrough to the practical individualisation of life in the world, the ‘ability and disposition of men to adopt certain types of practical rational conduct [*praktisch-rationale Lebensführung*]’ (Weber 2004a, 109; see also 1996, 250, 359 / 1958, 325¹; Fuchs 1988, 138ff., 277ff.; 2017, 227, 254).

Louis Dumont (1911–1998) developed Weber’s agenda in another direction and proposed the figure of the Indian world-renouncer (*saṃnyāsīn, śramaṇa*) as probably the earliest form of religious individualisation, albeit one that was already highly diversified. The ideal-typical renouncer, who broke loose from social bonds, became conceived of as the ‘individual-outside-the-world’ (Dumont 1980, 185, 267–86; for this and the following see Fuchs 1988, 417ff., 453–525). Dumont argued that, in societies of the ‘traditional, holistic type’, individualism could generally only occur in clear opposition to (and thus for him ‘outside’) society (Dumont 1986, 26); societies composed of self-oriented individualists are a modern phenomenon. However, Dumont also regarded the ‘otherworldly individual’ as the ‘motor’ and ‘main agent’ of historical developments in India, not only in the religious field but also in the political and even economic realms (Dumont 1965, 91; 1975a, 64; 1975b, 163). In addition, Dumont advanced a strong thesis that Indian brands of religious individualisation might have functioned as an important direct or indirect trigger of religious individualisation in the eastern Mediterranean during antiquity. They would, thus, have influenced Greek philosophers and early Christians, and through this the West more broadly (the reference here is to the gymnosophists or ‘naked sages’, as *yogīns* were called in the Mediterranean). The category of the (otherworldly) individual, Dumont speculates, ‘might have been invented only once’ in history, thus making India appear

1 N.B: The English translation of Weber [1921] 1996 – Weber 1958 – is not reliable.

as the world-historical origin of (religious) individualisation (Dumont 1975b, 168; 1986, 29). In his view, it was only during the history of Western Christianity that the move from ‘otherworldly’ to ‘innerworldly’ individualism was made. The decisive steps in this direction were, he thought, taken first by Calvin and then, secondly, by Luther. In a first phase, the religious authorities of the church and the pope were made superior to the more worldly powers of the emperor and nobles; in a second phase, the will of the individual became identified with God’s will, allowing the individual will to reign without restriction (1986, ch. 1). Dumont’s views remain partial and one-sided due to his strict separation between individualizing religion and ‘traditional’ society. The society conceived by him as strictly ‘holistic’ denies especially the lower sections any agency or individual subjecthood. This is due to his depreciation of other sources of religious individualisation in India as well as elsewhere. Regarding the Indian case, Dumont, like Weber before him, especially downplayed the relevance of *bhakti*. Despite this, he acknowledged that *bhakti* makes it possible, in the context of ‘traditional’ Indian society, that ‘one can leave the world *from within*’ and that all people ‘can become free individuals’ (Dumont 1980, 282f., emphasis added; cf. Fuchs 2018).

Even elaborate analyses such as these, which detected forms of individualisation in the pre-modern and non-Christian world, were still imbued with strong traces of Orientalist stereotyping and of the Western tradition of ‘othering’ the non-Western world (Fuchs 1988). While they might have given an important historical role to the Asian ‘other’, they continued to consider both the modern religious and secular forms of individualisation to be more authentic and more historically advanced. While scholars such as Weber and Dumont reflect the beginnings of an awareness of the wide array of modes of religious individualisation, the understanding that individualisation is a distinguishing mark of the unique Western modernity nevertheless remained largely prevalent. This led other scholars to insinuate that individuals belonging to certain non-European or pre-modern cultures lack even the possibility of formulating any opposition of interests between ‘themselves’ and ‘society’. Such views have been strongly and successfully criticised by anthropologists (e.g. Spiro 1993; see also Part 2 and the concept of dividuality). Recent work on the religion of pre-modern and pre-Christian antiquity, usually characterised as ‘collective’, has produced similar results. The extensive ancient discussions about religious deviance and attempts to legally standardise religious behaviour attest to the perception and acceptance of an extensive religious individuality practiced in many different forms (Rüpke 2011, 2016c).

Meanwhile, the Western world’s exceptional self-description as ‘modern’ has been critically challenged in the global non-West. This critique takes either the form of pointing to the historical inappropriateness of such claims to singularity,

or the form of a counter-stereotype, elevating Eastern collectivity over supposed Western individuality (cf. Asad 1973, 1983). Conceptually linking the modern age and religious individuality has obstructed the study of comparable phenomena in earlier periods, so that individuality and individualisation have played only a limited role in the examination of the dynamics of religion in history. The case of *bhakti* in India has already been mentioned. *Bhakti* – a blanket term for a wide range of phenomena and strands – allows individual devotion; various forms of *bhakti* connect with a critique of both social and religious restrictions. For Mediterranean antiquity, some conceptions of *polis* religion or civic religion have claimed that the religious practices of the political elite and their definitions of legitimate religious actions were the only significant sector of religion in their polities. The variety and changeability of individual religious actions and their profound influence on those rituals called ‘public’ by the elite, have been disregarded, leading to an emphasis on the collective and the fundamentally different character of pre-modern societies (see Rüpke 2007, 5–38; Kindt 2012, 12–35 for criticism). In a similar vein, the assumption of the religious unity of medieval Europe (see Borgolte 2001 for criticism) is just a counterpart of the assumptive self-description of modern societies, implied in the secularisation thesis, as pluralistic. In contrast to such conventional wisdom, recent research focussing on the history of Western esotericism and learned magic has unveiled a variety of individualising impulses and strands that have informed Western cultural and religious history from late antiquity onwards (see von Stuckrad 2010; Otto 2011; Hanegraaff 2012; Otto 2016, 2017; Bellingradt and Otto 2017; Otto 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). The diagnosis of modern individualisation and the ascription of a public and collective character to pre-modern religion are mutually reinforcing frameworks.

However, such observations and criticisms cannot overlook the fact that religious individuality is distributed unevenly even in situations characterised by processes of individualisation which affect or transform religion. In identifying the Renaissance as a turning point, Burckhardt did not deny the existence of dissenters in the preceding centuries. What made a difference in the 14th century, and what constituted individualisation as a process, was not, as the traditional historical narrative has it, the presence of individual intellectuals such as Petrarch (1304–1374). Rather, the defining feature was the increasingly large number of people interested in technical and economic matters, as well as in the subjective dimension of human existence. Mere numbers cannot provide a metric for assessing the scale of this phenomenon. One needs to identify, rather, the contexts, the intellectual, discursive, and practical (e.g. ritual) forms of manifestation, as well as the consequences within a given local society. Even in ‘modern’ and ‘Western’ societies, the acclaimed form of ‘individuality’ might turn out to be very partial, or even only illusionary (see Kron and Horáček 2009, 151f.).

Consideration of contemporary religion in the USA shows that ‘individuality’ is not a straightforward characteristic of ‘modern’ religion, as is claimed by those who argue for the privatisation of religion. ‘Individuality’, as a framework of interpretation as well as a form of behaviour, is primarily found among mobile members of the white middle class. For them, ‘individuality’ as a concept is confirmed by their own commitment and its social consequences (Madsen 2009, 1279–82). This emic concept of ‘individuality’ is not an arbitrary option within a range of possible privatised sacred *cosmoi*. On the contrary, it is a concept developed by a specific group, albeit one that carries a hegemonic character. It is a way of life that is dominant in the eyes of the entire society, even if the whole society does not participate (*ibid.*). There is an important consequence to this, historically as well as sociologically: certain religious traditions might have or develop practices of self-reflection that are able to foster individuality. The institutionalisation of such tendencies, however, and its conceptualisation as ‘individuality’ is a matter of historical contexts and social location.

2 Looking into religious individualisation – in a nutshell

Before going into further detail, a brief overview is necessary. As indicated above, the ‘Kollegforschergruppe’ – or in short KFG, as we used to call it – began by formulating a critique of modernisation theory. The intention was to then bolster this by demonstrating that phenomena that might well be called ‘individualisation’ were existent *and* important in pre-modern and non-Western cultures. However, in the years since we have pushed forward and beyond this analytical starting point in at least three directions.

- a) With regard to modernisation theory, the independence of ‘individualisation’ from other crucial factors all too easily bundled together as ‘modernisation’ has been sufficiently demonstrated (e.g. Bellah and Joas 2012; Deuser and Wendel 2012; Joas 2012, 2013a, 2013b). ‘Individualisation’ has, thus, been set free as an analytical term that is useful beyond Western ‘modernity’, or even multiple ‘modernities’ (Fuchs, Linkenbach and Reinhard 2015; Fuchs and Rüpke 2015a; Mieth and Müller-Schauenburg 2012; Mieth 2014; Mieth 2016; Mulder-Bakker et al. 2017; Otto 2016, 2017, 2018a; Reinhardt 2014a, 2014b, 2016; Rosenberger 2013; Rüpke 2011, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016c; Rüpke and Spickermann 2012; Suitner 2016; Vinzent 2011; Vinzent 2014).
- b) With regard to the history of religion, many phenomena and processes came to the fore when we set aside the lenses of collectivism and looked instead

for anything comparable to ‘individualisation’ (see Otto 2017 and further below). In particular, narratives of ancient and post-ancient (‘medieval’ or ‘early modern’, in terms of West-European epochs) circum-Mediterranean, European, and West and South Asian religions have changed and gained new facets far beyond the work of the group itself. Concepts such as ‘self’ and ‘agency’, ‘subject’ and ‘personhood’, ‘individuation’ and ‘personal identity’ have been taken on board, and at the same time critically examined, in our attempt to develop more fine-grained concepts and descriptions (Fuchs 2015; Fuchs and Rüpke 2015b; Hartung and Schlette 2012; Hollstein, Jung and Knöbl 2011; Lichterman 2013; Messlin 2012; Ram 2013; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015b; Rüpke 2012a, 2015c, 2016b; Rüpke and Woolf 2013; Schlette 2013; see also Parson in this publication).

- c) Finally, reflection has turned towards the very concepts with which we started. How are concepts of ‘religion’ shaped by the aforementioned master narrative of ‘modern Western individualisation’ (Otto, Rau and Rüpke 2015; Rüpke 2018b)? How is the normative character of the concept of the ‘individual’, whenever it is implied that one should *be* an individual, informed by such a narrative? How has the master narrative affected concepts of ‘history’ and ‘change’? The paradoxical consequences of securing individuality by processes of institutionalisation (e.g., through ritualisation, group formation, the establishment of textual canons and traditions, etc.) as well as backlashes into de- or non-individualisation have come into view. Looking more closely at the individual has also brought to light features of personhood that do not easily comply with linear and uni-directional individualisation narratives. Even in (early) modernity, individualisation processes do not lead to a fully ‘bounded’ self-contained individual. The individual person always exhibits permeability, vulnerability, and openness towards the outer and the social world in various degrees, as s/he is also capable of parting and pluralising him/herself in order to navigate multiple belongings, personalities, and allegiances (see Taylor 2007 and Part 2 of this publication). Unravelling relational and partible aspects of the self has forced us to postulate a co-constitutive relation between what we call ‘dividuality’ and individuality. All this has affected our view onto historical and contemporary societies and schools of thought, from a sociological and anthropological perspective (Fuchs 2015; Rüpke 2015c) as well as in terms of intellectual and ritual history (e.g. Mulsow 2012, 2015; Ben-Tov, Deutsch and Herzig 2013; Otto 2016; Bellingradt and Otto 2017; Otto 2018a, 2018b).

Regarding the very concept of ‘religious individualisation’, and in stark contrast to the master narrative referred to above – which usually conceives religious

individualisation as a more or less unambiguous or self-explanatory social process –, we arrived at the conclusion that religious individualisation should rather be understood as a polythetic umbrella term, i.e. as a heuristic tool rather than a clear-cut semantic signifier of specific social dynamics (Fuchs 2015; Fuchs and Rüpke 2015a; Otto 2017). Our work revealed that religious individualisation, similar to other polythetic categories, entails a large number of semantic notions, which are evoked by different scholars on different occasions and with regard to different observations, thus hampering interdisciplinary or even basic inter-subjective understandings of the matter. Inspired but also frustrated by such misunderstandings, and through comparing a large number of case studies and sub-projects, a semantic matrix emerged that maps different notions of religious individualisation, grouped in four basic domains. This matrix is provided here in an abbreviated version (based on the original version published in Otto 2017, 33–6). This narrative rendering of the matrix also includes more recent contributions.

Religious individualisation is said to encompass (or to underlie):

- (A) Notions focusing on an enhanced range of individual options or choices: de-traditionalisation; de-institutionalisation; pluralisation (see also Section 4.2 in this publication); privatisation (see Rüpke 2016a); individuality may become a normative ideal, a ‘cult’ (Kron and Horáček 2009, 120–4), it may become mainstream and compulsory; striving for authenticity or alleged uniqueness; enhanced religious self-determination (Mieth 2017); ongoing recalibrations and reinterpretations of tradition (leading to manifold variations and thus pluralisation: Parson in this publication; Renzi forthcoming); novel religious syncretisms and eclecticism initiated through cultural contacts and exchange (see Fuchs, Linkenbach, and Reinhard 2015, and below on ‘interconnections’); conventionalisations (in the sense of stable, formalised and recognised conventions and practices, which regulate and stabilise individual initiatives in societal forms: see Mulder-Bakker in this publication); the religious market model (thus granting religious tolerance and competition: see Hermann-Pillath in this publication); strategic use of dividuality or of multiple personae to enhance one’s options (see articles in Section 2.2 in this volume).
- (B) Notions focusing on self and creativity: creative, independent, original thinking on religion; developing or creating religious ideas, concepts, choices, norms, practices; reforming or inventing religions; enhanced focus on the ‘self’ or individual salvation; development of religious self-reflection, and of the idea of an individual religious identity or ‘selfhood’, eventually accompanied by moments of liberation; struggle for distinctiveness from the religious ‘other’ (see also Murphy in this publication); awareness of individual responsibility for one’s actions, of moral responsibility, or the formation of a sophisticated concept of conscience; development of the notion of human

- dignity and/or individual human rights, or of the ‘conception of the unique value of one’s own personhood’ (Gordon 2015, 368); creative re-interpretations of religious self-concepts in the light of crisis, such as repressions, diaspora, or war (see Michael Nijhawan’s piece on ‘precarious diasporas’ in this publication); development of the notion of a permeable or multi-dimensional self (see Part 2 in this publication); narratives of extraordinary, charismatic, or outstanding religious figures or ‘authors’ (see Section 3.2 in this publication); biographic transformations with regard to religious selves and identities, e.g. through conversion (see Suitner in this publication).
- (C) Notions focusing on deviance and critique (see also Part 4 in this publication): individual appropriations that lead to deviations from established religious or ritual norms (consider material often subsumed under the heading of so-called ‘folk’ or ‘popular’ religion; see also Raja and Rüpke in this publication); social, cultural, and/or religious ‘dis-embeddedness, temporary rupture of social bonds’ (Rüpke 2013, 13); intellectual ‘autonomy’ (as opposed to ‘heteronomy’) while thinking about religious matters (see, for example, Malinar or Müller-Schauenburg in this publication); questioning established religious norms, concepts, persons, and/or institutions; openly criticising established religious norms, concepts, persons, and/or institutions (this notion is stronger than the former, which may be private; see also Fuchs in this publication); consciously choosing to engage in religious heterodoxy or heteropraxy; consciously writing or practicing the forbidden while risking persecution or even death; open rebellion or revolt against established religious norms or institutions.
- (D) Notions focusing on experience: forms of inwardness (‘Innerlichkeit’: Fuchs 2015, 335); focus on individual, experience-based ‘spirituality’; special attention given to ‘intuition’ and other forms of inspired knowledge; intense religious experiences, e.g. direct encounters with the divine (also through possessions: see Malik in this publication), or in the form of individually determined exploration of the inner self (see Parson in this publication), which may lead to individualised off-book perspectives on religious matters (partly inspired by prophecy or divination: see also Eidinow and Facchini in this publication); traditional experience-based religious paths towards individual liberation, enlightenment, or divine union (for example, in Christian mysticism, monastic Buddhism, or Indian *bhakti* traditions); ideas and practices that foster self-transcendence (see Part 1, particularly Mieth in this publication).

It is crucial to understand that this matrix does not represent a ‘typology’ or even a full-fledged theory of religious individualisation. We see it, rather, as a discursive collage of meanings that have been ascribed to religious individualisation

within and beyond our research group. Heterogenous as this matrix may appear at first sight, it has proven to be a useful tool in scanning for indications of individualisation, as well as in comparing different cases and individuals. If one interprets the matrix as a heuristic ‘net of notions’, it may be applied to religious data – either partially or in its entirety – in order to elucidate whether a certain case is relevant for the study of religious individualisation, which domains and/or notions are triggered by the material, and which are dominant or marginal. This procedure, which has also been called ‘polysemantic analysis’ (Otto 2017, 51), may be carried out either individually or as a collaborative endeavour, with the latter approach allowing for a more fine-grained intercultural comparison – for instance, by comparing specific notions across case studies from different religious, geographical, or historical contexts.

Whether these different notions and domains actually refer to a coherent field (ultimately in the sense of a ‘homeostatic property cluster’: see Otto 2017, 39f., and further Stausberg and Gardiner 2016) or, rather, to various types of phenomena subsumed under the same umbrella for pragmatic or other reasons, is open to debate. In a way, the matrix reflects a new attempt to deal with the persistent problem of so-called ‘critical categories’ in the Study of Religion, i.e., with the problem of defining an analytical category in the (post-)modern humanities without falling into the traps of either deconstructionism or conceptual vagueness and arbitrariness. The advantage of our polysemantic approach is (1) that all semantic facets of the category are preserved and thus enter the analysis (in contrast to monothetic working definitions which usually suppress undesired semantic notions), and (2) that the concept under scrutiny is never fixed nor stable, but remains flexible and open to revisions, recalibrations, and extensions in the light of new findings. Despite its ambiguities and fluidities, the matrix has turned out to be a useful heuristic tool for identifying and comparing different patterns and facets of religious individualisation both diachronically and cross-culturally.

We differentiate the concept of religion in a similar fashion for heuristic purposes. In order to obtain a grasp of the subject that can comprehend and compare religious individualisations from antiquity to the present, from Western Europe to the west Asian and Indian regions (with brief forays into East Asian contexts), from large-scale Christian organisations to contexts of religious pluralism and diffuse religiosity, from individual practices to temple ritual to academic theology, it is necessary to have a sufficiently broad concept of religion available as a working tool. ‘Sufficiently broad’ does not, however, mean gathering together as many or as few as possible of the conventional *topoi* provided by definitions of religion. For the purposes of this project, the object ‘religion’, with its ongoing processes of individual appropriation on the local and trans-local levels, is understood as a permanently changing system of orientation (‘religion in the making’)

that has a peculiar but always precarious status within the cultural context to which it relates. It is also understood that ‘religion’:

- in its content refers to some principle transcending the everyday that often appears in the form of personal gods but can also appear in different grades of the ‘supernatural’;
- communicates this orientation through a wide spectrum of media, in which rituals and specific (‘holy’) objects and stories play a prominent role and in which various forms of systematisation (‘doctrine’) can appear;
- provides directions for action in the form of both worldviews and norms about how to conduct one’s life; nevertheless, the impact and consequences of these norms and worldviews always depends on their appropriation (and hence also modification) by individuals;
- can assume a solidified institutional character in a variety of forms, which may range from individual charismatic ‘providers’ and their ‘clients’ or ‘students’ to ‘lay associations’ and other membership concepts as well as religious elites who can set limits or open up manoeuvring room for individual appropriations; and finally,
- in its concrete implementation constitutes a place of intensive interconnection across cultural, spatial, and temporal boundaries. The term ‘system of orientation’ brings together under one heading attempts to answer the problem of defining the relationship between individual action and social groupings (for the above cf. Fuchs and Rüpke 2015b).

3 Looking into religious individualisation – widening the perspective

Discovering and documenting these different facets and processes of religious individualisation from other times and places opens up a broad but neglected field for empirical research in which special weight is placed on comparing and tracing the interactions between different religious and cultural traditions. Yet this approach also requires that we consider the implications this research has for social theory and the history of religion. Our central focus has been defined by the following five hypotheses:

- 1) *Religious individualisation* is not just a phenomenon specific to modern Europe but also a useful *heuristic category* for the study of historical processes across very different religious and cultural contexts, whether approached as religions (Islam, Buddhism), regions (Western, Southern and Eastern Asia,

also areas in Europe such as the Iberian Peninsula), and time periods. This requires a critical approach to translation and terminology, a broadening and rethinking of concepts by including other experiences and narratives and other forms and trajectories of individualisation (Fuchs 2015). The application of religious individualisation as a heuristic to interpret diverse cultural and historical contexts (whether inspired by the above matrix or not) starts from a polemical intention to search in a way that goes against the grain. As we uncovered other types or facets of religious individualisation originating in other places, we were increasingly able to contextualise the kinds of individualising processes that are more or less familiar to us and establish relationships among them with greater sensitivity.

- 2) These processes of religious individualisation should be understood less as isolated phenomena and more as reworkings of, or reactions to, religious experiences, traditions, and discourses. Thus, the contexts in which processes of individualisation take shape remain highly significant, as do the practices and ideas from which specific actors distance themselves or which they try to revise. At the same time, looking for the contexts of processes of religious individualisation opens the way for additional (religious) options and traditions to become visible. Meanwhile, constellations of cultural entanglements can also come to the fore as important triggers of individualising strands. The chapters in this publication demonstrate that the investigation of the history of individualisation is, in many cases, an *investigation of the history of interconnections* which examines the different ways in which cultural boundaries have been crossed. By ‘history of interconnections’ we mean an inquiry in the sense of ‘entangled history’ or ‘histoire croisée’, which analyses the reciprocal interactions and transfers between different cultural contexts, regions, religions, and reference systems. Such an inquiry involves an increased focus on ‘boundary-crossing’ interactions and exchanges, in which diverse cultural and religious traditions encounter one another and ideas and practices that strengthen or trigger individualisation processes are transferred. In addition to the question of how particular institutions (such as rights of religious groups) are implemented and how forgotten practices (individual confession) and discourses (‘prophecy’) are rediscovered, the question of possible interactions is particularly exciting. Migrations of ideas as well as practices and their effects created complex interactions with consequences for religion long before the great breakdowns of tradition within and outside Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Seen from this angle, the insights gathered by our research group can be used to trace the vertical, or ‘deep time’, dimension of these processes of transformation. In the present and for the future, the ever-increasing interaction and interconnection among

cultural strands and trends of diverse origin taking place amid intensified and divergent processes of globalisation is striking.

- 3) Given that many processes of religious individualisation are closely connected to the formation of institutions, traditionalisation, and conventionalisation, the interactions among these processes must be systematically examined (see foremost Part 3 in this publication). Such kinds of institutionalisation processes can (but need not necessarily) have the paradoxical effect of again limiting the scope of individualisation. *Individualisation and de-individualisation* are in many cases intertwined. Institutional protection of individual practices creates at one and the same time an awareness of the possibilities for heteropraxy or heterodoxy and the tools to counteract these through standardisation. Such mutual reactions may then again increase the power of dissent, but also the emphatic rejection of alternatives. Hence, even processes such as the creation of canons, traditions, or forms of fundamentalism can be revisited rewardingly in the light and in the context of individualisation processes, if one keeps an eye on the ambiguities involved in such processes. Religious individualisation – provided it is not taken to mean a one-way path to modernisation – thus designates contingent processes of personal religious exploration and of the cultural or social groundings of such explorations and their respective articulations. The boundary crossings and feedback loops are processes inherent to individual actions as well as to the creation of communities or standardisation at an institutional level. Furthermore, relapses into de-individualisation not only constrain individuals but may also create free spaces for new forms of individualisation. This is precisely the reason why concepts such as ‘self’, ‘individualism’, or ‘religious geniuses’ do *not* structure our publication. Formulations like ‘Transcending Selves’, ‘The Dividual Self’, ‘Conventions and Contentions’, and ‘Authorities’ have, instead, been chosen as the organising principles of the four Parts.
- 4) The perspectives just outlined allow for the development of an alternative or even complementary narrative to the aforementioned master narrative of ‘modern Western individualisation’. Here, *the concept of ‘dividuality’* comes into play, not only with regard to ‘non-Western’ perspectives but also by comparing the multiple Western and non-Western modernities. Various authors with an anthropological background, such as Edward LiPuma (1998; 2001) and Alfred Gell (1999; 2013), but also Charles Taylor, the philosopher of the modern self (Taylor 1989, 2007), have started to point out (two) different co-existing dimensions of personhood found across time and space, including in the modern West. Of these, one is more individual and the other more dividual. The altered awareness offered by the concept of dividuality is reflected in the contributions contained in Part 2 of this publication. Dividuality is,

on the one hand, traced as the dynamic foundation of human sociality and individuality (see the articles in Section 2.1) and, on the other hand, as a lived social reality and concrete social praxis in particular societies and social contexts (see the articles in Section 2.2 and 2.3). The socio-historical perspective in particular helps to reveal concealed histories of dividualisation that run alongside individualisation as its complement, and which have, paradoxically, often facilitated individual and distinct standpoints by means of dividualising strategies (for example, in the form of literary practices, such as the play with different pseudonyms used by a single author, or the opposition between author and private individual; see Section 2.2).

- 5) In the history of theory, the concept of individualisation has mostly served as a Eurocentric strategy of exclusion. Likewise, the concept of religion has often turned the collective into an absolute value that has been attributed especially to pre-modern or non-Western areas. Based on the KFG's results, and through confrontation with the history of scholarly research in this area, a *concept of religion* has been developed that makes it possible to reconstruct the study of religion in the context of historical processes of individualisation and interconnectedness while avoiding the pitfalls of Eurocentrism. With these theoretical reflections (Fuchs 2015; Rüpke 2015c; Otto 2017; Albrecht et al. 2018), new large-scale narratives (such as Joas 2012; Rüpke 2018a), and the work collected in the present publication, we are aiming at nothing less than a redefinition of the concept of religion by challenging the prevailing view, which locates religion in the collective, the institutional, and the standardised.

This prevailing supposition about religion has informed scholarly choices, determining what issues receive analytical attention and what groupings, behaviours, or beliefs merit being described as 'religion'. It has also had a decided influence on the portrayal of religion in other disciplines. Our hypothesis, based on our previous findings and those provided set out in this publication, is that a new conception of religion is needed, a conception that envisages an intrinsic and reciprocal relationship between the individual and the social (brokered by interconnections and processes of individualisation and de-individualisation). Taking the concept of religious individualisation as an analytical starting point of an inquiry that is sensitive to both contingency and context, it is possible to reorient the study of religion towards a perspective that systematically acknowledges processes of individualisation and entanglement. Individuals act religiously whenever they communicate with at least situationally available non-human addressees (whether those are situated within or beyond that context) to whom they ascribe agency and render such action plausible by routinely and strategically

appropriating traditional semantics. As a consequence, religious action entails ascription of agency to patrons and/or audiences, processes of groupings, as well as competition and distinction. Religion, hence, should be analysed and described as lived religion and religion in the making.

4 Implications and perspectives

The present publication, despite its size, does not intend to offer the final word for research on processes of religious individualisation and their manifold histories. Rather, by consolidating our present knowledge, it offers a starting point for further research. Within this larger horizon, we propose the continuation and expansion of research in five particular fields:

4.1 Individualisation and religious (and cultural) entanglements

While starting from local contexts and specific forms of religious individualisation, further attention must be given to interactions and interconnecting processes among concurrent religious strands, as well as to the transmission of practices and beliefs across the boundaries of different social groups and ways of life. Whether within or across continental or subcontinental spaces, detailed historical and ethnographical studies must be combined with the investigation of geographically wide-ranging and *longue-durée* processes of transferral (Mulsow 2018). What we can expect to emerge from this field of research is a deeper understanding of the reciprocal effects between micro- and macro-phenomena, ranging from religious idiosyncrasies of intellectual intermediaries, nonconformists, and long-distance travellers to processes of group formation that make use of new conceptualisations and forms of individualised practices. Two aspects deserve particular attention here:

- a) *Cultural brokers*: For Norbert Elias, it was migrating scholars of the Renaissance period who were the first people to whom processes of individualisation can be ascribed (Elias 2001). By contrast, our combined work has shown that such impulses are by no means to be found only in Europe or from the early modern period onwards, but also in ancient and medieval as well as non-European societies, not least in South Asia. In the context of religion, such processes emerge above all when they coincide with phases of ‘religionification’ (thus Rüpke 2010) or religious pluralisation, as for example

in the Roman imperial period and over broad stretches of the religious history of India. India was, for most of its history, characterised by a high degree of religious diversity. Religious ideas and religious groups could not but have other religious modes and concepts in view when elaborating their own practices and perspectives. This has led to lively exchanges, to demarcations, to all kinds of combinations, as well as to disputations and struggles, and there were many constellations in which social actors did not make any particular distinction between the various religious strands or pedigrees (Fuchs 2018, 141–3; Linkenbach 2016; Parson in this publication and forthcoming). Such constellations allowed an unending stream of new individualising forms and stances that have not, so far, been exhaustively explored. In the European context, demands for religious individualisation have always been present in deviant intellectual or ritual (and partly underground) traditions, such as certain strands of Western esotericism or learned magic (see on the latter Otto 2016); yet, at certain moments and in particular places, they also increased on a broader societal scale, as, for instance, during certain phases of the Middle Ages or during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Central Europe. In such phases one can investigate such things as, taking pre-modern Europe as an example, ‘pluralised exiles’ (thus Mulsow 2010) and correspondingly pluralised migrants, who could use their plural identities to increase their own options for religious action. These learned migrants were both products of interconnections and entanglements and actors who pushed such interconnections further by developing religious ‘syncretisms’ and even by means of cultural ‘misunderstandings’, bringing together currents from different cultural backgrounds (App 2014, 11–23; Mulsow 2018, 22–6). The encounter between the Portuguese Jesuit Monserrate and the Mughal ruler Akbar provides an example of this multi-faceted plurality in the context of the cross-civilisational circulation of millenarian ideas in the sixteenth century (Subrahmanyam 2005; see also Kouroschi 2015; Fuchs, Linkenbach and Reinhard 2015). Like other ‘marginal men’, they carried knowledge of their cultures of origin into other regions and manifest simultaneously a special receptivity to foreign ideas.

The investigation of these special groups of ‘cultural brokers’, often members of elite but sometimes also of subaltern classes (Nath Yogis, Sufis, Roman military personnel), permits – where the sources are available – the examination of questions that can otherwise scarcely be answered. One starting point here is the question of how experiences of religious contacts or entanglements translate into individual activity, since subjective awareness of large-scale structures can take very diverse forms.

By differentiating the various facets and phenomena of religious individualisation, and by accepting that de- or non-traditionalised behaviour can oscillate between perfection and deviance, it is possible to widen the range of descriptive terms available to us. Taking such an approach allows us to more reliably ascertain the nature and degree to which concepts and ideas (Mulsow 2017) that originated outside a particular group or cultural context had an impact on individuality in that context and on the specific manifestation of that individuality. We see this clearly in several of the chapters dealing with South Asian figures such as Kabir, Akbar, Dara Shikoh, Banarsidas, Ramakrishna, Keshab Sen, and Gandhi (Dey, Fuchs, Höke, Murphy, Parson, Sangari), and also in chapters on European Judaism (Facchini) and Pope Benedict XIII resp. Pedro Martinez de Luna (Müller-Schauenburg), or on Albert the Great (Casteigt's first contribution) and the Chinese Buddhist Monk Xuanzang (Deeg). Other issues that may also come to the fore consider cases of factual interconnections ('hybridity') that are, however, no longer perceived as phenomena of difference (for example, radical pietism that runs across religious confessions, or the fusions between Sufi, Nath Yogi, and *bhakti* ideas and practices in early modern Punjab; Murphy in this publication); finally, stereotypical defensive behaviour, such as that of religious apologetics, could actually reinforce religious interconnectedness and hybridities despite intending to prevent precisely this. Methodologically, such research should start from well-documented cases of individuals and their special forms of individualised religious practices and then move on to consider consequences, social diffusion, and the discursive evaluation of 'precarious' (Mulsow 2012) forms of religious practice and knowledge.

The sources thus reveal a broad spectrum of agents, from religiously deviant individuals in central Europe ('Beguines', 'visionaries', 'hermeticists', 'spiritualists', practitioners of 'learned magic', etc.) who were not always aware of the diverse transnational paths that their sources had taken, all the way through to religious entrepreneurs, including missionaries (such as the Jesuit missions in China, Japan, and India; since the nineteenth century also female missionaries), merchants, military personnel, and researchers across highly variegated cultures. Such people are found across periods and continents, beginning with 'Chaldeans', 'sorceresses', 'magi', ancient astrologers, entrepreneurial ascetics in India and elsewhere, prominent *bhaktas*, *gurus*, or *ācāryas*, and saint-poets, including some from disrespected groups and women but in the Indian case also many ordinary people, all the way up to Zen specialists such as E. Herrigel and D. T. Suzuki.

- b) *Structural relationships of exchange and interconnection across cultural and religious boundaries:* The very term 'Jesuits' points to the necessity of considering not only contacts through individual actors but also networks and

interconnectional regimes, as well as their evolutions. By ‘interconnectional regimes’, we understand network structures in which particular structural and habitual conditions – principles, rules, norms, and expectations on both sides – make long-term interconnections possible. Examples of interconnectional regimes include orders, missionary societies, and imperial formations (the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Mughal Empire) in which various religious strands, ethnic groups, and also particular officeholders interact. Local and cross-regional networks are linked together and solidified by such regimes; the classification of groups in legal terms provides both limits and a free space for their particular activities. Outsiders’ stereotypes of groups can be polemically rejected or, on the contrary, adopted and canonised as the groups’ own self-descriptions.

Attention should also be given to the types of interaction and their individualising effects. Processes of interconnection as well, as isolated developments, should be investigated across a geographical area ranging from Europe to South Asia, with western Asia and Islamic empires serving as a bridge in both directions. In addition to strategies of group and network formation and reciprocal differentiation, individual encounters also matter. For instance, the reactions of contemporary ‘observers’ who conceptualise these facts in their respective textual genres in their capacities as philosophers, theologians, jurists, ethnographers, hagiographers, and historians. Such processes are of particular interest for the history of individualisation, on the one hand, through their relation to traditions of self-reflection that have been present in philosophy and ethnography ever since antiquity – European as well as West, South, Southeast, and East Asian – and, on the other hand, through the individualisation, shaped by mobility, of religious experience and through the adoption of foreign traditions by individuals.

4.2 The long-term effects of processes of religious individualisation and ‘de-individualisation’: opposing forces and countertrends

As Georg Simmel emphasised many years ago, individualisation is always accompanied by processes of institutionalisation and standardisation. Individualisation was thus always complemented by the potential for de-individualisation. The most important types of ‘de-individualising’ counterforces might be said to be standardisation, normalisation, canonisation, ritualisation, the development of dogmas, and the disciplining of deviants – processes that we address as ‘conventions’, in the third Part of the publication, and ‘authorities’, in the fourth Part.

Complementary dynamics of individualisation and de-individualisation need to be further explored in order to bring to light forms and configurations of stabilising mechanisms:

- a) *The role of law*: In the late-antique Mediterranean, for example, the development of diverse forms of religious individualism (from elective-membership groups to hermits) is associated in a reciprocal process with self-reinforcing tendencies towards normalisation, whether in the criminal law of the *Codex Theodosianus* or in Talmudic texts. In more recent times such tendencies translate, for example, into regulations on individual or corporate religious freedom in constitutional law. In many cases, religious communities demanded, through their conduct and their stated commitments, appropriate behaviour from group members. In light of the significance that has been attributed, especially since the European Enlightenment, to the universality of legal rules and equality before the law as a means of individualisation (instead of de-individualising standardisation), law, and religious law in particular, as well as their corresponding law-forming institutions, appear to be particularly interesting objects of research.
- b) *Confessionalisation*: Paradoxically, the increase in the number of religious options and in the institutional protection of plural models leads both to the availability of alternatives and choices and to uniformity-imposing processes of ‘confessionalisation’. In the wake of such processes, religions may enhance the criticism of individualisation to the point of fundamentalism. In addition, it must be kept in mind that an individual’s decision not to exercise certain options, or an individual’s making of decisions that have the effect of reducing further options, constitutes a necessary part of one’s lifestyle and hence – paradoxically – also of individualisation. This form of de-individualisation is closely related to processes of religious individualisation.
- c) *Interconnections between spatially distant regions*: Here, too, the interconnectional approach broadens the spectrum of questions we can ask. Due to a strong tendency to legitimise and standardise ideas and institutions, the product of interconnections may in certain cases turn into an institutional homogeneity that intentionally conceals the underlying interconnectedness. This form of transmission of religious currents and ideas involves *longue durée* processes to such an extent that they include transcending the limits of a local community or even becoming transcultural. Given that many religious actors take care to corroborate that their actions accord with tradition, one must look into the significance of interconnection or disconnection, or, as the case may be, the significance of the supposed refusal. Such processes may be causal for the transmission of specific kinds of content, as, for example, certain Jewish elements in ‘Christian’ traditional concepts

(the Sabbath, 'Israel') or 'Western' elements in Orthodox churches. These macro-sociological questions seek to explore the extent to which 'nonconformity' is possible in a particular setting (including the settings of social classes) and to understand the circumstances in which religious individualisation turns into a kind of standardisation.

- d) *Religious pluralism and the rise of 'religions'*: As many of the chapters stress, individualisation always raises the question of how boundaries are demarcated. 'Religions' themselves are a central ingredient in these developments. Religions appear in this context as solidifying nexuses of religious practices and convictions – 'syncretisms' in the original sense of the term – that create community and draw outward boundaries. Religious pluralism in societies can also safeguard religious practices and convictions of minorities as stable religious options.

4.3 Conceptual development and conceptual comparisons – questioning the self

As some of the chapters in this publication demonstrate, ideas about personhood and self – explicit as well as implicit – that were developed in religious contexts are an important field of investigation and need to be more systematically explored (consider for instance Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu conceptions of 'moral' action, including *karma* theories). Non-Western ideas of self or selfhood should be subjected to a more elaborate comparison with the modern Western concepts that underlie most of our theories. What is required is a sense for the processuality and mutability of 'self'-constitution.

Efforts to bring different philosophical conceptualisations into dialogue with one another have recently been pursued with new vigour (cf. Fuchs 2015). Buddhist, Jain, Vedantist, and Western phenomenological and analytical traditions have so far been profitably brought together (see among others e.g. Siderits et al. 2011; Ganeri 2012; earlier already Hacker 1978 a and b). The primary current distinction is between positions that defend notions of a minimal self and those that plead for a narrative notion of self. In connection with the first group of positions, ongoing debates are interested in the question of whether the self is to be understood as a stream or as a structure. Among those who support narrative notions of self, a major dispute is between those who claim that the self is narratively enhanced and those who argue that the self is narratively constituted (Krueger 2011). So far, however, comparative discussions of different strands of philosophical thought have left untouched an important question: to what extent do the conceptualisations of self that emerge in a particular cultural and historical

context reflect and/or inform social ideas of the times in which they are developed and stand for societal processes of individualisation. In line with Charles Taylor's authoritative reconstruction of paths towards the modern notion(s) of self in 'the West' (Taylor 1989), we suggest further studies in order to reconstruct other histories of 'self'.

4.4 The concealed histories of dividuality

Anthropological debates about the global variability of notions of the self, the person, individual identity, and agency have inspired Part 2 of our publication, in which we focus on the debate concerning 'dividualist' modes of personhood.

The inquiries in this Part into the multiple articulations of the self or the person clearly show that an understanding of self and personhood in pre-modern as well as in modern times cannot be based solely on individuality but has to be complemented by a perspective which can also detect the dividualist dimension. We consider three lines of further research to be necessary and promising. Firstly, we propose investigating how the dividualist and the individualist aspects of the person are co-constituted and co-existing at different times and in different geographical places, and whether relationalities differ according to the spheres of life (religious, economic, social) in which they occur. In addition, it is important to ask if the relationship between the two aspects in a particular social setting is just a lived reality and tacit knowledge, or if it is also emically conceptualised and theorised. If the latter is the case, does this relationship enter these epistemologies or does it even function as a guiding social imaginary? Secondly, how far can an analysis of the individual-dividual relationship contribute to an anthropology or philosophy of life and provide new inputs for reflections on the conditionalities of life? Anthropologists and philosophers have emphasised the corporeal and social vulnerability of the human being, as well as its material dependency. Despite their singularity, an individual person is never fully in control of her/his life, never acts fully according to his/her free will, but works, rather, within the existing limits produced by the necessary entanglement of body and environment (Butler 2006, Jackson 2008, 2013), including the non-immediate or transcendental. These entanglements play out more forcefully under conditions of precarity and social suffering, and where life is considered of unequal worth (Fassin 2009, 2010, Butler 2006). Thirdly, how does the individual–dividual relationship play out in the larger narrative of the state, the nation, and the citizen? Can we dive deeper into the problem of navigating multiple personae and multiple belongings (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013), especially under political conditions of flight, migration, and displacement, often provoked by religious fundamentalisms and conflict?

4.5 Conceptual terminology in the history of religion

We close this introduction by returning one last time to terminology. As the research summarised and developed in this publication shows, the terms ‘individualisation’ and ‘religion’ contain an implicit agenda that often associates Europe with secularised modernity, and religion in Europe and elsewhere with collectivity. This agenda is often activated in the form of historical narratives, which constitute an important means for individuals and religious groups to create both inclusion and exclusion and, thus, to construct their identities (Rüpke 2018b; see, for example, Malinar and Frenkel in this publication). ‘Confessionalising processes’ – already in the period from the third to the sixth century across the entire Mediterranean region – gave rise to narratives about ‘Jews’, ‘pagans’, ‘Christians’, and ‘Manicheans’, and later about ‘Catholics’ and ‘Protestants’. Similarly, ‘communalising processes’ in India since the 19th century have established and juxtaposed categories of ‘Hindus’, ‘Muslims’, ‘Sikhs’ and others as typical actors and driving forces of religious change (for confessionalising processes in antiquity: Rebillard 2012; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015a; Rebillard 2016; in later Europe: von Greyerz et al. 2003; van Lieburg 2006; for communalising processes: Pandey 1990; van der Veer 1994; Fuchs and Dalmia 2019). Admittedly, such narratives opened up a perspective on multifaceted interactions and today form a basis from which we can speak about religious plurality. At the same time, however, they also cemented (and continue to cement) group boundaries that are the objects of fierce controversy and a wide variety of forceful efforts on the part of religious organisations to impose closed group identities. Complaints about deficits in religious identity are historically widespread, in later periods even among religious groups with a closed membership. Individuality is equated with deviance. But historiography and narrative in general has also provided, since antiquity, an important opportunity for emphasising the religious individuality of the actors described or for opening up religious space for the author himself or herself (Becker and Rüpke 2018). In many chapters of this publication, narratives figure as an important tool of individualisation.

And our own narratives? During the late Enlightenment (described as ‘the saddle period’ by Reinhart Koselleck), certain key concepts in the history of ideas (‘piety’, ‘culture’, ‘future’, and even ‘religion’) underwent a change in meaning amid the social upheavals of the period. Together with changes in the historical understanding of time came a renewed historicisation of religion and a development of diverse, individualised religious cults and movements (Feil 2007). Historicisation also affected the ways of representing the intensive developments of a wide range of religious traditions during the early modern and colonial periods. Our own work is a part of this trend within the history of the related disciplines.

The use of ‘historical perspectives’, characteristic of our research, to understand the relationship between religion and the individual, is itself part of a process of historicisation of religions. The study of Christianity as a key catalyst of religious individualisation, as proposed by early scholarship, had to be transcended in order to grasp the role of other religious traditions as contexts for processes of religious individualisation. At the same time, this inquiry made the importance of religion in social processes clearly recognisable: across different historical periods and cultural regions, religion has been a privileged locus for individualising processes.

These historiographical findings confirm the paradox of religion that is at the centre of this publication: religion shows both individualising and de-individualising tendencies. At the same time, we neither see religion as the one and only seedbed of individualisation nor do we see religion as consistently discouraging or thwarting processes of individualisation. The publication demonstrates the fruitfulness of zooming in on individualisation. As proposed here, however, both the concept of religion and the concept of individualisation, particularly the latter, must be used with much more care than has previously been the case, in the form of ongoing (conceptual) reflection. The trajectory of the work initiated here suggests further avenues for research that maintains an engagement with additional terms and paradigms, in other regions and epochs. The ground gained in this publication, along with the critical reflection on religion and individualisation, needs to be expanded by the further elaboration of concepts that attend to the manifold phenomena and historical processes beyond the early modern period and Europe.

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Part 1: **Transcending selves**

Martin Fuchs

Introduction: Transcending Selves

Religion is inherently relational. Talking of religion or religiosity means talking of a relationship people think to have to something else, something beyond, or something felt inside, but in every case something that is not immediately available. At the same time, no religious individual can neglect his or her relationship to other people, and there are various religious positions that equally give this relationship prominence. Finally, the concern of an individual for him- or herself is often conceived in relational terms, as 'self-relation'. In cases considered spiritual or religious, this may overlap with the inner experience of a larger force. Preoccupation with oneself, or with one's self, occurs in various shades and to varying degrees. There also is the suggestion to regard the object of self-relation as itself a relation (Schlette, this publication; cf. below in this Introduction).

These three types of relationality are not independent of each other, but condition, if not actually co-constitute each other. How the relations among these relationships are being conceived nonetheless varies immensely. Not all three are in focus to an equal degree in each case. What differs in particular is the degree to which human individuals or human selves are being assigned an active, shaping (*gestaltende*) role in this relational web, or are seen as merely recipients of the acts of others or the Other, or even as being engulfed by, and thus disappearing into the position or role that is being assigned to him or her. Relations in all three respects allow the individual – and actually constitute the conduits that enable this – to express him- or herself, to expand, to explore things, to widen his or her scope, to connect, but also to experience 'an other' and the import and significations of an other. The question is, in which way the individual develops and builds, and actually can develop and contribute to building, these relationships. Individuals contributing to a process of individualisation each represent an exemplar of a particular modality of individualisation. In reverse, and this points to instances of de-individualisation, one's others (or the Other), and the relationships to or with them, may constrain and even overwhelm the individual.

What then matters is how 'the' Other, how the social others, how the 'self' and 'selves', and how the form and dynamics of their interrelations and interactions are being conceived. The view on these relationships moreover differs depending on the angle one claims to take: that of an Ego who puts him/herself at the centre; that of the Divine (God) and the expectations humans ascribe to the Divine; or that of one's social others, if not of the 'generalized other' in G. H. Mead's sense of the term (Mead 1934).

1 Relationality and ‘transcendence’

Part 1 of our publication puts aspects of religious relationality in the centre, circulating around selfhood and interactional dynamics. Reflections gathered in this Part focus on how individual selves are seen to ‘transcend’ the confines of their (assumed or inferred) ‘identities’ and in this way either confirm the individuality of religious seekers or are an expression of individualised search. Keeping the framework of the three relational axes in view, the way the different aspects and dimensions are being explored however differs across the contributions to this Part (as well as to the other Parts) of the publication. Some foreground the relationship of an individual with the Divine or the Absolute and thus position the individual and the divine as two poles, differing with regard to the dynamics between the poles. Others approach this relationship from how it is embedded or even grounded in social relationships and in this way makes the rapport with the divine appear as a social relationship of a particular kind. Schematically speaking, this second perspective conceives of the religious-spiritual terrain as a triadic instead of a dyadic relationship. The dyadic image fits to ideas of a bounded being, discriminated from fellow beings, and tends to concentrate on elaborating the conception of self-hood. The relations to other humans as well as the non-human world – being pushed into the background in favour of concentrating on the self-divine relationship – tend to be seen as accidents or ancillary to what seems central, or are considered derivative of the core relation. This perspective one can find in an ideal-typical, but at the same time extreme form represented by Louis Dumont’s individual-outside-the-world, in the case of India (Dumont 1980, 185, 267–86), as well as by modern ideas that take individuals as singles. The triadic or triangular model leaves the notion of self-hood more open and allows for a broader exploration of relationalities and a stronger consideration of the social dimension of this array of relationships.¹ The distinction between these two kinds of approaches or emphases, which represent different (disciplinary) lines of thought, is reflected in the way Part 1 of our publication has been partitioned.

‘Transcending selves’ then has a threefold meaning. The phrase refers first of all, and rather conventionally, to the experience of something beyond direct human grasp, something often substantialised as ‘the’ transcendent, but something with which individual actors want to connect or feel connected. The beyond (which

¹ Versions of the triadic or triangular model are further explicated in the article of Fuchs in this publication and in the Afterword of Section 1.2.

may be a ‘within’²) can be experienced as deepening or widening the (everyday) self, or even as contributing to its actual and authentic formation. The metaphor of self-transcendence secondly, and in a wider and at the same time more profane sense, refers to a self, or the image of a self, that reaches out to the world beyond him- or herself and experiences some powerful connectivity to something larger or broader in which it feels included, but which, on the face of it, can equally denote non-religious contexts – as in cases of ‘collective effervescence’, to employ Émile Durkheim’s much quoted term (Durkheim 1964; cf. Joas 2000, 58–61). (Some, of course, turn this around and regard the profane transcendent as sequel to or extension of the religious transcendent.) And finally (and still broader), the phrase as used here refers to those social relations of a self that impact and connect him or her directly and inwardly with others, and become in this way adjuncts of a self. Under the last auspices, ‘transcending selves’ then relates in an emphatic sense of the term to what a person or self shares with significant others.³ In religious contexts, as discussed in Part 1, the last and the first forms of transcending are sometimes closely entwined, and may involve the second form too. The last form is being mulled over particularly in Section 2 of this Part of our publication, but it also points towards cases of internalised interdependence conceptualised in Part 2 in discussions around the term ‘dividuality’. As the introduction to Part 2 indicates (p. 323 of this publication), the concept of dividuality ‘emphasises the existential moment of relationality and porousness between human beings, things, and the transcendent, and acknowledges the capacity of relevant actors to co-create the human being and her/his perception of the Self’. The relation to the transcendent in the common, narrower and more spiritual sense of the term stands in the foreground of Section 1. Concerning all three forms, ‘transcending’ relates to the self as subject as well as object of the process. But while from a theological point of view, as in the case of Meister Eckhart (Dietmar Mieth, Section 1.1), it is God who is seen as active and as initiating the process (in the case of Eckhart to be understood as a process of continuous movement and becoming), others, like Magnus Schlette (in an earlier work), consider the human self as the instance

² The image applied here is that of ‘beyond direct human grasp’. This is not necessarily meant in the sense of the spatial metaphor of ‘beyond’, as when one says ‘beyond this world’ or ‘beyond this life’, or ‘life beyond’.

³ It is with respect to the second meaning in particular that Hans Joas and after him Magnus Schlette have recently brought self-transcendence into closer focus. Joas makes self-transcendence a core term of his sociology of sacralisation and of the formation of ideals and values (2000; 2017, esp. 431–5). In his eyes, experiences of self-transcendence ‘have to be experiences of decentering’ (Joas 2008, 14). Building on Joas, Schlette (2013, ch. 13) emphasises the aspect of receptiveness, openness or even disposition for the experience of the unexpected, incommensurable or incongruous.

that is active in a process of self-transcendence. For Schlette the process and activity of self-transcendence, however, occurs on the border between transitivity and intransitivity and has to be seen as a process or activity that demands ‘neither effort nor willfulness’ (‘weder Anstrengung noch Vorsätzlichkeit’) (Schlette 2013, 351f.).

2 Struggling with selves and selfhood

Discussions and reflections on the notion of the ‘self’ abound. The ‘self’, or notions translated by the word ‘self’, have been central to philosophical and theological-doctrinal debates in the West in Christian and secular contexts, in India in various philosophical schools as well as in Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh and other religious contexts, and in the Islamic milieus, which includes South Asia, especially within Sufi traditions (and there will most probably be further instances of such reflections in other cultural contexts). What complicates things even more is not only that we have no consensus on what the term ‘self’ is to mean and include, or how to translate terms from other languages with comparable, but not identical meanings, themselves again often polyvalent, accruing additional meanings over time (like *ātman*, *ahaṃkāra*, *jīva*, *chitta*, *buddhi*, *manas*, etc. in Indian languages; also the Buddhist *anattā* – ‘not-self’; or *nafs*, *qalb* and *rūḥ* among Sufis),⁴ but also that in European language use the term ‘self’ is being intermixed with other terms like ‘person’, ‘identity’, ‘soul’, ‘Ego’ and even ‘subject’.⁵ Speakers and scholars may employ one of these terms referring to connotations for which others would employ another of the mentioned terms. For a long while the epistemic dimension stood in the foreground in discussions about the self. In recent times attempts are increasing to overcome limiting terminological conventions, especially now including bodily dimensions, self-other relationships, and more generally, inter-subjectivity. In this publication, ‘self’ stands as a placeholder for the practices, experiences and representations of humans circumscribed in different ways as person, even persona, identity, individual, in part also subject and actor or agent, respectively as ‘patient’ of someone else’s actions.⁶ In some contexts, notions of soul as well as of mind, but also of the body and of embodiment

⁴ Regarding processes of differentiation and accretion of meanings of the term *ātman* cf. Malinar 2015, 391–3.

⁵ Terminologically, discussions in this publication are dominated by Western philosophical language. Non-Western terminologies and conceptualisations are taken up in particular chapters.

⁶ The aspect of ‘patency’ or the receptive or ‘passive’ dimension of agency is increasingly being included in theories of ‘action’; see Dewey 1987 [1934]; cf. Fuchs 1999, 359f., 374–7; Pettenkofer 2010, 134f.; and others.

fill in for aspects of selfhood. ‘Self’ here is not meant to demarcate a specific idea of selfhood that all contributors would share. Self or person in the articles that follow can be geared to spirituality, but can also comprise embodiment and the whole gamut of sensoria, can refer to concrete human beings or to imagined-constructed-conceptualised beings, can see them as contained or as connected.

Of particular importance is that in no case the self can be understood as something that we can fully grasp. The self cannot be addressed as an ‘object’ of observation and scholarly discourse: ‘We are not selves in the way that we are organisms, or we don’t have selves in the way we have hearts or livers’ (Taylor 1989, 34).⁷ The self, in significant respects, is constituted through self-interpretation and, one should add, the interpretation of someone’s self or person by others. What is more, the self’s interpretations ‘can never be fully explicit’, nor can a self’s articulations ever be completed (*ibid.*). Self is not a substance: self – like religion – is inherently relational. There are concepts that try to take self as an entity or substance, but these usually lean towards notions of ‘soul’, or substantialised notions of *ātman* or *jīva*, or, going in the opposite direction, towards an objectifying depiction of a ‘person’.⁸

Significantly, the notion of self tends to show up in composites (*Komposita*). This includes composites denoting the attempt of *understanding* selves, or one’s self: self-interpretation (in German both *Selbstdeutung* and *Selbstauslegung*), self-articulation, self-recognition (*Selbsterkenntnis*), self-awareness or self-perception (*Selbstwahrnehmung*), and self-definition (and in this sense then trying to determine one’s self); composites denoting the activity of *developing* or *enhancing* one’s self: self-becoming (*Selbstwerdung*), self-discovery (*Selbstfindung*), self-formation (*Selbstbildung*), and self-realization (*Selbstverwirklichung*); composites denoting the effort of *establishing/corroborating/proving* one’s self or oneself: self-ascertainment (*Selbstvergewisserung*), self-assertion (*Selbstbehauptung*) or self-determination; and composites denoting *occupation with* one’s self which more explicitly than the other denotations emphasise the *reflexive* character of thematising and imagining one’s self, like with the terms self-image (*Selbstbild*) and – the most discussed term – self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*). ‘Self’, it seems, stands for something that has to be accessed. Therefore, the access-points matter.

At the same time, and against this background, a self has to be conceived as itself accessing the world and other selves or persons. One way to further proceed

7 Jonardon Ganeri confirms this from a different philosophical background. From a liberal naturalist standpoint, a first-person stance, which the self occupies, ‘is compatible with the claim that no entity exists that might be visible from the perspective of a scientific naturalism’; Ganeri confirms that ‘Buddhists are right to deny the existence of any such thing’ (Ganeri 2012, 327).

8 Regarding *jīva* see the article by Rahul Parson in Part 3 of this publication.

in this direction is the renewal of a focus on attention, as recently exemplarily articulated by Jonardon Ganeri (2017). He takes attention as ‘key’ to an ‘account of the nature of persons and their identity’ that ‘precedes self’. Ganeri discriminates between two distinct roles that conscious attention performs in experience, that of placing and focusing – ‘placing’ signifying ‘opening a window for consciousness’; ‘focusing’ ‘accessing the properties of whatever the window opens onto’ – and distinguishes varieties of conscious attention that include intending, introspection, empathy⁹ and past-directed or auto-noetic attention (Ganeri 2017, 1–4).¹⁰

What the explorations and imaginaries encapsulated by the composites mentioned show is that the self becomes available, accessible, through deliberations. But is there a self before these deliberations and what would this be? Some assume a pre-discursive familiarity with one-self or a pre-reflexive state or sense of self-ness, which as such is underdetermined, implicit. Manfred Frank (2002) employs the conception of a pre-reflexive *Selbstgefühl*, which one might translate as sense of self. Dan Zahavi identifies the pre-reflexive sense of ‘mineness’ or ‘ipseity’ with a ‘minimal’ or ‘core’ sense of self (Zahavi 2005, 125).¹¹ Magnus Schlette proposes the phenomenological notion of pre-intentional awareness, which to a certain extent seems in line with Ganeri’s term ‘attention’. Schlette conceives the object of this relation, the pre-reflexive self, as itself relational, ‘but neither in terms of a reflexive nor in terms of an egological relation’: ‘We have to conceptualize it as a pre-intentional co-consciousness in any state of mind that this particular state of mind belongs to *me*’ (Schlette, Part 1 of this publication; cf. Schlette 2013, 197–207).¹² Even if attention, pre-intentional awareness or the minimal self would have to be presupposed systematically, these can be accessed indirectly only, once the self is being discursively (re-)constructed from within its both conceptual and pragmatic contexts.

9 On empathy see Antje Linkenbach’s article in Part 2.

10 ‘Attention is the selective placing and focal accessing that brings a world to view and provides orientation within it’ (Ganeri 2017, 28). In his new book, Ganeri engages in particular with what he calls the ‘meticulous Buddhist introspective observation of the human mind’s structure and functioning’ (ibid., 5), especially the Theravāda philosopher Buddhaghosa, with contemporary cognitive psychology, and with contemporary philosophy of mind.

11 ‘[...] the idea is to link an experiential sense of self to the particular first-personal givenness that characterizes our experiential life; it is this first-personal givenness that constitutes the *mineness* or *ipseity* of experience. Thus, the self is not something that stands opposed to the stream of consciousness, but is, rather, immersed in conscious life’ (Zahavi 2005, 125; author’s emphasis). Regarding ipseity, see also Paul Ricœur (e.g. 1999).

12 ‘Inner-directed self-relation [...] therefore means the relation to inner-directed mental states (states evoked by inner stimulation) that I am pre-intentionally and co-consciously aware of as *my* mental states’ (Schlette, Part I of this publication; author’s emphasis).

The environs of ‘self’, both understood as a concept and as something that is implicated in the world, are being articulated from different angles. Here Charles Taylor (1989) might be used as a guide. In the first instance, a self is placed in social as well as cultural spaces, with a cultural repertoire, shared social imaginaries and publicly available conceptual and moral languages, which a person might share, but also may dissociate him/herself from (Taylor 1989, 35): something not only, but particularly relevant with respect to people driven by religious intents.¹³ Starting from the other end of naturalist first-personal accounts of subjective consciousness, there too the focus is now on how the self is open to and connects with the world.¹⁴ More particularly, a self inescapably relates to other selves in conceptualising and constructing its identity, and one would have to add, taking others as both fellow beings and as opponents: ‘[o]ne is a self only among other selves’ (ibid., 35). And, finally, what for Charles Taylor is of particular importance, humans cannot do without ‘some orientation to the good’ and define themselves by where they ‘stand on this’ (ibid., 33). For Taylor it is ‘the space of moral and spiritual orientation’ within which one’s ‘most important defining relations are lived out’ (ibid., 35). A human being feels the ‘need to be connected to, or in contact with, what they see as good [...] or of fundamental value’ (ibid., 42).¹⁵

The situatedness of selves in this triple way makes the selves appear dynamic. Selves are nothing fixed, but constantly change, shift, move, develop. Selves are evolving. The self, one’s identity, the idea of personhood shifts from context to context of interaction and inter-subjectively established meaning; it never is complete, concluded, rounded off. It never is entire. This further complicates deliberations on the self. Ways to handle this condition differ. One way of dealing with

13 The concept ‘social imaginaries’ refers to implicit meanings and underlying or background assumptions about social existence, the ends of individual and social life, and also regarding fundamental values and norms (cf. Fuchs 2015, 333, with reference to Cornelius Castoriadis and Charles Taylor). This does not mean that anyone would be socially predetermined. – The use of the term of cultural repertoires here is mine.

14 Jonardon Ganeri’s attempt of reconstructing human subjectivity from the angle of a liberal naturalist conception of the self sees the self as ‘a unity of coordination, immersion, and participation’: ‘Fully first-personal subjective consciousness is at once *grounded* (in “friction” with the world and subject to its constraint), *lived* (in experiential openness and presence to the world), and *engaged* (with the pulls and demands of emotion and intention on the world)’ (Ganeri 2012, 329; author’s emphasis). Ganeri develops his conception in dialogue with Indian naturalistic philosophies of mind, especially those of Cārvāka, the Buddhist Yogācāra school, and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, incorporating recent discussions in phenomenology, analytical philosophy and Western philosophy of mind as well as Greek and Islamic philosophy.

15 Hans Joas (2000, 142f.) criticizes that Taylor leaves the relationship between the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘identity’ somewhat unclear and that he sometimes speaks of ‘the good’ in ‘essentialist terms’.

this is a narrative approach – the reconstruction of the genealogy, the sequence of instantiations, of a self from the viewpoint of the present. Different versions of a narrative account of self have been proposed (Schapp 1953 [2004]; Ricoeur 1999; Krueger 2011; and others). More radically, Buddhists reject the idea, encapsulated in the famous concept of *anattā*, not-self, ‘that a detached witness watches from the centre of a space of experience’ or ‘that a detached agent acts in the centre of a space of action’ (Ganeri 2017, 9f.). In a different direction go those conceptualisations that assume the possibility of identifying or establishing a core sense of continuity of the inner self even under conditions of constantly changing circumstances and in the vicissitudes of life. This may, as in several cases discussed in our publication (like those of Eckhart, Arndt, Kierkegaard), be backed by trust in the co-presence of the Divine, and thus by a foundational relationality, and may sometimes be even conceived as a processual, moving, interactional relationship. Other conceptualisations, in contrast (like many found in *bhakti* and among certain Sufis), think in terms of impermanence interrupted by transient experiential moments in which unity and the fulfilment of the relationship with someone else, or with the Divine, is being fleetingly, but never continuously, attained – just a hunch of permanence. It is the two last positions that are represented in Part 1 of this publication: the third one primarily in Section 1.1, the last one primarily in Section 1.2.

3 Religious language of self-transcendence

Religious discourses give the situatedness of selves a specific perspective. On a metaphysical-doctrinal level, religious authors tend to articulate the situatedness of humans in generalising, existentialist terms, be it suffering, be it meaninglessness, be it moral damnation of this world (the *Diesseits*), or be it longing for the beyond, for ‘liberation’. On the level of lived religion, discourses tend to target moments, situations, experiences (in the sense of *Erlebnis*) and explorations in which a person, a ‘self’, senses or discovers something non-transient and liberating. Magnus Schlette makes the point that William James regarded religious experiences as *eo ipso* experiences of self-transcendence, that is a surrender to ‘transcendent powers’; in this he sees a line going back to Friedrich Schleiermacher (Schlette 2013, 366; James 2008 [1902]).¹⁶ This again, however, reduces the view on self-transcendence to a substantialised expression of ‘transcendence’.

¹⁶ Hans Joas in a recent book (2017, 70, 73) comes to the conclusion that James did not receive his inspiration from Schleiermacher, but he sees an indirect connection to Schleiermacher via American Transcendentalism.

Religious thinkers conceive of ‘the transcendent’ and what we here call processes and moments of self-transcendence in very different ways. Much of what goes on in religious contexts is about ways of understanding and conceiving, as well as preparing for experiences of self-transcendence. Across the different religious contexts, Abrahamic as well as Indic ones, one encounters images of enlightenment through, or togetherness (communion) and even of union with the Divine, of love for the Divine and love of humans by the Divine, sometimes of fusion with the Divine, of sensory and bodily experience of the Divine, or even extinction in the Divine, aside from the more intellectualist conceptualisations of becoming a witness or voice of the Divine and a mediator between the Divine and other humans, of directedness towards the Divine, of devotion to and participation in the Divine (*bhaj* in the word *bhakti*). As mentioned before, some see the self-transcending relation to the Divine in the wider context of reaching out to and sharing with other humans, and thus as part and parcel of a form of social self-transcendence.

A particular experiential notion, also taken up by William James, and already referred to by Schleiermacher before him,¹⁷ and again by Kierkegaard, is that of self-surrender (*Selbstaufgabe*, *Hingabe*), or, in the Indian *Śrīvaiṣṇava bhakti* context starting with Ramanuja (traditionally, 1017–1137 CE), the comparable Sanskrit term *prapatti*, which Srilata Raman and others take as synonymous with ‘self-surrender’.¹⁸ It is with regard to notions of self-surrender also that the paradox of self-transcendence becomes most tangible: the idea of confirmation of a self in the very act or attempt of relinquishing it, of its extinction. This may mark the extreme of constitutive relationality. But this is significant in other ways too. One often encounters statements that exhibit a lack of sociological sense and understanding of relationality and insinuate that Indic religions, particularly the Upanishadic and Buddhist variants, would represent positions of denial of individuality and individualisation, and thus the very opposite of Christianity as the exemplary field for religious individualisation. It rather seems that self-surrender – and this is only one option in the Indian, as in the Christian contexts –, be it viewed as an experience or as a desire, marks the extreme of religious individualisation.

17 In his *Über Religion* Schleiermacher asks to give up one’s life out of love for the universe (*aus Liebe zum Universum Euer Leben aufzugeben*), to aim to become more than one is oneself (*strebt danach mehr zu sein als Ihr selbst*), to lose oneself, and in this context to eradicate (*vernichten*) one’s individuality (Schleiermacher 1799, 132).

18 *Prapatti* from *pra+pad*, which can be translated as ‘to take refuge with/in’ (van Buiten, according to Raman 2007, 11). Discussions within *Śrīvaiṣṇavism* concerned the various dimensions of *prapatti*, the idea of God’s grace and compassion, and in this context, the balance between God’s doing and what the individual human should do or not do for his/her own salvation – *prapatti* either signifying just one of several paths in search of God, or requiring ‘to do nothing, for any effort was an impediment to the working of God’s grace’ (Raman 2007, 11).

4 Transcending and embedding selfhood

The focus on relationality underlying the idea of ‘transcending selves’ guides the arrangement of the papers. The papers assembled under this title have been divided into two sections. A gross differentiation is the one already mentioned between a dyadic and a triadic focus. One may further distinguish between two analytical modalities of accessing the question of self, one focusing on the exegesis of systematic statements contending with questions of self, the other on reconstructing the practical and semantical articulations of self-hood. This is also being reflected, although not to the full extent, in the way the papers were divided up. The first approach predominates in the first section of Part 1 of this publication, the second in the second section, with the (partial) exception of the paper of Andrés Quero-Sánchez. Magnus Schlette’s article may be considered an in-between case. He focuses on the practical attitudes and dispositions underlying the texts (in this case poems) he analyses.¹⁹ In any case, especially the systematic reconstructions of notions of self, identity and person would require additionally to be historicized, with respect to the intellectual and social contexts in which the systematic positions were developed. This, however, is not part of the discussions here.

4.1 Section 1.1: Relationships between transcendence and selfhood

The inner dynamics of relationships of (self-)transcendence have usually not been analysed sociologically and comparatively in Western scholarship. They rather still are the preserve of theologians and philosophers. Many of the current conventions of talking of the transcendent and of transcendence with respect to the self originate here. The discussions of recent years in Erfurt, with their focus on religious individualisation, at least allowed starting a process of reconsideration that prepares cases taken from Christian contexts for comparisons and perhaps even sociological analyses in the future. De-centring one’s lens and the assumptions of the debate will take a long time.

The pieces in Section 1.1 provide snapshots of processes of religious individualisation in the European context. They offer exemplars, important instances or moments, of processes that show the unfolding of particular ideas and formats of selfhood in relation specifically to ideas and experiences of the divine. While

¹⁹ In this context see also his reflections on the reconstruction of the ‘grammar’ of the uses of notions of self(-realisation); Schlette, 2013, 45–9.

Section 1.1 presents cases from different epochs, starting with the 13th century, and while all these cases are taken only from West European traditions this selection is not meant to confirm the belief in the idea of a singular and linear process that developed in the Western and Christian context independently of processes elsewhere. One paper, that of Julie Casteigt, gives an inkling at least of exchanges with the Arabic scholarly world. What this selection then illustrates is the fact that European developments have been studied much more intensively than the philosophical and conceptual developments elsewhere.

The article by *Julie Casteigt* on the work of Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280) that opens our publication presents an exemplary and at the same time unique case of religious individualisation. The article shows how Albert not only takes the figure of John the Baptist as the model witness of God, mediating between the Divine and the human world. But further, using the metaphor of ‘vases of light’ and universalising the model of John, Albert argues for the possibility that everyone, in an absolutely singular manner, can become a manifestation of the divine principle and act as metaphysical mediator between God and other human addressees, constituting thereby a community of individuals.

In Albert’s case the individual appears as the recipient, or ‘vase’, of the light that transcends the self. In the case of Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1328), presented by *Dietmar Mieth*, the individual is meant to prepare him/herself to receive and recognise the presence of God in his/her heart. The transcendence of the empirical self, experienced as a sudden breakthrough, is being understood by Eckhart not only as a constant process of flow and movement, but also as a mode that does not allow distinction between God and human on the categorial level: *distinctio per indistinctionem*, or ‘distinction by non-distinction’.

With the article of *Magnus Schlette* we jump to a much later stage, the early 17th up to the turn to the 19th century, but stay in central Europe. Discussing the philosophical transformation by Immanuel Kant of the inward-oriented Protestant worldview exemplified by intellectual figures of the Protestant tradition as diverse as Johann Arndt (1555–1621), Paul Gerhardt, Gerhard Tersteegen and Barthold Hinrich Brocke, with respect to the idea of natural beauty and the sublime, Schlette elaborates on the two-level concept of self-relation that is entailed in these Protestant positions, based on an inner sense of relationality with God, experienced (comparable to Eckhart) as togetherness, and the progress from an inner-directed to an other- or outer-directed self-relation.

In a move beyond Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1786–1834) raised the question of the relationship of human rationality to the transcendent. *Elisabeth Gräb-Schmidt*, in her article, thus shifts the focus from the process of self-transcendence to the position of the individual vis-à-vis ‘the’ transcendent, or transcendence as ‘religion’ and thus as a sphere of its own, a notion that prevails in modern

contexts. While the transcendent appears here as the unalienable precondition of rationality, Schleiermacher insists on the limits of rationality for the individual. He sees the individual as grounded in an overarching transcendent, which confirms his/her individuality.

Matthias Engmann in his discussion of Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) returns to practices of self-transcendence. Kierkegaard regards God as ground of, and presence in, every human being that each human is being asked to actively actualise, the goal being self-surrender. The article points to an understanding of religious individualisation as ‘becoming oneself before God’ and thus a process of re-positioning and increased self-awareness in acknowledging one’s unconditional dependency. Here, the immanent aspects of authenticity and (self-)transcendence are systematically correlated to the individual’s inward relation to God.

These elaborations on self and self-transcendence in the European context are backed by *Anders Klostergaard Petersen* with a general evolutionist narrative of the making of the self, or what he calls ‘suifaction’. Klostergaard Petersen considers the transition from what he calls complex urban to early cosmos types of religion, what others call axial age religions, as the point at which genuine forms of selfhood, i.e. the distinction of the individual self from not only other selves but also from the group, emerged, accompanied by ideologies of selfhood as well as modes of self-cultivation that made the self ‘independent’ of culture. Discussing the examples of the Book of Deuteronomy and of late Stoicism, Klostergaard Petersen understands the self at this developmental stage as being involved in a relationship to ‘superhuman powers’. This he sees then superseded – with the coming of modernity, in the form of Western Enlightenment and Romanticism – by the idea of a detached autonomous self that now is conceived as existing ‘all on its own’.

4.2 Section 1.2: The social life of religious individualisation

The relationships of religiously inclined individuals with other spiritual seekers correlate with and, in various and different ways, corroborate the relationship of selves with what is variously considered as the divine, the absolute or the ground. Speaking more generally, relationships with the Divine are embedded, or are even seen as co-grounded, in relationships with other people one is or feels attached to. Religious positions differ in how far they acknowledge and above all respect and include the relationships to others, or, conversely, are in denial of such social relationships, on which, however, they inescapably build, even while they try to break these.

The article of *Andrés Quero-Sánchez* presents such a case of denial. His paper, at the same time, represents a link to the papers in Section 1.1. Focussing on Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), and on Schelling’s engagement with ideas of

Plato, Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, Jakob Böhme, and Friedrich Jacobi, he discusses how this idealist thinker struggles with what he regards as the threat of one's particular engagements to an unmediated relationship to the Absolute.

The other three contributions to this Section take social relations as their starting point. *Rubina Raja*, who takes us to Palmyra in the three first centuries CE, discusses the relationship between priests and the (lay) people to whom they attended, but also the relationship between these priests and their deities. Raja focuses in particular on the banqueting *tesserae* (tiles or tokens) that served as entrance cards to religious banquets and that were found in large numbers in Palmyra. The religious banqueting events can be regarded as clear signs of a process of religious individualisation when seen against the background of the otherwise seemingly standardised Palmyran ritual practices. Individualising aspects show up in several ways, with respect to the choice of people invited, the individual personages of invitees, and the individualised iconography of the entrance cards. On top of this, and this seems a specific feature, judging by the way the *tesserae* were designed Raja can show that the priests were put on a level with the deities.

Dimensions of relationality and intersubjectivity are at the centre of discussion in the contribution of *Martin Fuchs*. Fuchs takes *bhakti*, a core strand of Indian – especially, but not only, Hinduistic – religiosity, as an exemplary case of relationally grounded religious individualisation. Covering a history of at least 2000 years till today, the term *bhakti* denotes forms of participatory devotion and self-transcendence and stands for direct access to and experience of the divine. Of core relevance are the dimension of universal recognition and the potential for, but also the limitations of, the critique of religious as well as social hierarchy and exclusion. Examining what he regards as the phenomenological core of *bhakti*, while keeping track of the diversity, malleability and innovative capacity of *bhakti*, Fuchs develops the concept of a triangular interactional structure of reciprocity and authority between saint-poets (exemplary *bhaktas*), 'lay' devotees and the divine, in which each side, transcending itself, reaches out to the others.

Discussing a context that combines *bhakti* elements with Sufi and Nath Yogi traditions – 18th century Punjab, today divided between the states of India and Pakistan – *Anne Murphy* takes the concept of religious individualisation as a key to develop a new understanding of the ways in which what later generations conceived of as separate religious traditions are being connected, blended and transcended contextually. Taking the case of the *qissa* (a poetic narrative) *Hir*, composed by Wazir Shah – centred around a love story, social (gender, family) relations and religious affiliations, and popular even beyond the region to this day – , Murphy puts particular focus on the ways deep normative conflicts are being fought, in which strict conventions and hierarchies of gender and caste

clash with an individualising ethos and the critique of authority. Bringing into play differing religious perspectives and alignments, she shows how the cross-religious, both as devotional experience and as a form of religio-social critique, was in vital respects tied to religious individualisation.

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Section 1.1: Relationships between selfhood and transcendence

Julie Casteigt

‘Vase of light’: from the exceptional individuality to the individualisation process as influenced by Greek-Arabic cosmology in Albert the Great’s *Super Iohannem*

1 Introduction

As we know, standard theories regard religious individualisation as a specifically modern or early modern phenomenon. The question today is whether we can find glimpses of religious individualisation also in pre-modern Europe, perhaps even connected with the dynamics of stabilisation or ‘institutionalisation’. I shall focus in what follows on Albert the Great (1200–1280) and his treatment of the individual. This first appears in his commentary on the *Gospel of John* (*Jn* 1:6). The verse reads: ‘A man came, sent from God, whose name was John (New English Translation).’ Albert the Great highlights John, as witness of God, to be an exceptional individual. Paradoxically, Albert will raise this witness-figure to the rank of a universal model of individualisation. At the end of his commentary, he even invites every reader to become a witness of God in their own way (Casteigt forthcoming). This transformation of an exceptional individual to a model of individualisation happens through a series of textual processes. I would like to show here how Albert develops them by interlacing different philosophical and scientific traditions that enable this Christian character to reach a universal signification for every individual.

As a preliminary, I ought to clarify how I shall use here two main concepts.

The first one is imported from sociological studies. ‘Institutionalisation’, as processes through which individualisation forms are established, will in the frame of this philosophical inquiry be understood and described as modes of elaboration of textual series, and not as being embedded in social and political institutions. In this case, the dynamics of textual institutionalisation and its entanglement between Christian exegesis and Greek-Arabic cosmology and metaphysics results in an ambivalent, or even paradoxical, characteristic of religious individualisation. To become universal, the model of individualisation taken from John the Baptist goes through a de-personalisation of the individual, that is, an assimilation to non-human beings. This particular feature leads us to develop several meanings of the second main concept of our inquiry, i.e. individualisation.

‘Individualisation’ will be regarded as religious inasmuch as the individual is always defined in this *corpus* of texts in relation to his or her divine principle. In the *Super Iohannem*, Albert the Great places his analysis on a metaphysical level. He does not consider here the political, social, or economic conditions of the institutionalisation of individualisation. In this context, ‘individualisation’ will be considered here as indicating a process which leads from the first meaning of the word in these passages of the Albertian works, through a second, and to a third meaning, which I synthetically present as three distinct steps.

First of all, ‘individualisation’ designates the circumscription, or description, of an individuality. Albert’s description of the exceptionality of the first witness of the incarnate divine Word, John the Baptist, is based on John’s singular properties as a person. According to this first meaning, Albert’s understanding of individualisation – as the description of the unicity of an individuality – complies with the patristic tradition.

Secondly, the dynamics through which this mode of individualisation will be universalised potentially to all human beings entail a process of de-personalisation and assimilation to non-human agents. Thereby, an exceptional individual will become a model of religious individualisation through the mediation of the individuality of cosmic entities. These entities are non-human beings that can transmit light without producing it. In Greek-Arabic cosmology, such entities that do not produce the light that flows through them are stars, planets and their satellites. Albert figuratively calls ‘vases of light’, because their transparency allows them to spread the light of the sun that they receive. This second step of the ‘institutionalisation’ of individualisation opens a broader question: the one of the attribution of a common mode of agency to human and non-human beings. ‘Agency’ is used here as a common term for beings considered as intellectual entities, like the cosmological ones, without being specifically restricted to human agents. Therefore, ‘religious individualisation’ may serve as a productive heuristic tool for highlighting the interaction between the identity of an individual and his or her mode of operating as an agent. It helps heuristically to link the levels of being and of operation. In this perspective, individuals have to be considered at a larger scale than the personal one. They belong to a *cosmos* in which they interact and share their mode of operation with non-human agents.

Thirdly, ‘individualisation’ will be understood, through the cosmological image of the ‘vase of light’, as a possible universal pattern that concerns any individual as far as he or she is embodied. In this sense, ‘individualisation’ does not mean anymore an exceptional gift but rather a relational place between the divine principle and the other agents of the human and non-human community which enables the whole universe to continuously receive the light of the principle, even in its extreme parts. The embodied individual, who is then ‘institutionalised’ by

this textual series of steps, has a relational function: he or she links up the divine principle to all creatures and enriches the manifestation of the principle with particular features based on his or her bodily constitution. Thus, the function of John as a pattern of individualisation is not directly to be understood as an ethical practical norm but rather as a metaphysical model in which the particular properties of individuality (in the first meaning) are reduced or theoretically suspended, so as to concentrate the attention on the being and on the agency of the individual as an embodied mediation of the causality of the first principle.

This modification process of the meanings of 'individualisation' occurs through the reception of the Greek-Arabic cosmology into the medieval biblical exegesis, so that the interlacing of different religious traditions changes Albert's comprehension of the *Gospel of John* as a fundamental text for the Christian tradition. With these references to the Greek-Arabic cosmology, the *Doctor universalis* gives, indeed, a new interpretation of the Johannine witness: a witness is not confined to exceptional personalities but, more generally, he or she is to be understood as a mediation which, similarly to a 'vase of light', manifests the principle indirectly, transmitting the light of the principle itself to others who cannot have direct access to it. But he or she does not carry on a mere transparent diffusion of the light. The witness colours the ray that he or she receives with the particular quality of his or her own individuality. And this qualification by his or her individuality relies on the specific physical composition of his or her body. Thereby, the Dominican master opens a new possibility to understanding individualisation in the Christian tradition. In this third step of the dynamics of individualisation, even though Albert the Great offers a universal model of individualisation, such an individual is still characterised by his or her particular body. And this body has a religious function: it manifests the divine principle in an absolutely singular manner.

From the viewpoint of the textual *corpus* and of the method we will follow, I shall focus on the exegesis of *John* 1:7 ('He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him', New English Translation) and on the textual network around the figure of the 'vase of light'. It will appear that the 'vase of light' constitutes a figural unity in Albertian thought which crosses his entire works, connecting different textual *corpora* of commented texts (Aristotelian, Dionysian, biblical) and various disciplines. As a first step, I shall develop the first meaning of 'individualisation' and its institutionalisation strategy by elucidating how Albert the Great interprets the traditional explanation of the characteristics of any witness according to the Fathers of the Church. As a second step, I shall show how Albert builds a new model of 'individualisation' using the image of the 'vase of light'. Both the second and the third phases of the process of individualisation that we will distinguish belong to the Albertian interpretation of the

Greek-Arabic cosmological texts about the ‘vase of light’ and allow Albert to give a new interpretation of the Johannine witness and of the individual represented by the witness.

2 Individualisation as the description of an exceptional personality

As a preliminary, I owe the reader an explanation about why I have chosen this textual *corpus* and this particular case. The *Gospel of John* belongs to the set of revealed holy texts of the Christian tradition. As the fourth Gospel was the last work that, in the Middle Ages, a master of theology should comment on according to the order of studies in the Latin Universities, it offered, therefore, the occasion to make a synthesis between the different philosophical traditions that a master had commented on in his career and the various texts of the Bible that he had examined as an exegete. That is why Albert the Great’s *Super Iohannem* represents a major speculative work, so as to observe how he binds together the reception of Greek-Arabic philosophy and the Christian tradition, at the end of the thirteenth century in the Latin world.

Therefore, from a methodological point of view, we will be particularly careful in looking at the way Albert interlaces the patristic sources with the Greek-Arabic ones for the first meaning of ‘individualisation’. The manner in which the *Doctor magnus* comments on his sources builds a textual series in a particular literary genre: the exegetical one. These textual series reflect the speculative work he pursues throughout his biblical commentary about the different types of individualisation. It is, therefore, possible to distinguish two different typologies. The first meaning of ‘individualisation’, that is the description of an exceptional personality, is elaborated by an ‘architectonical’ network of mustered individual aspects and implicit patristic sources, whereas the second and third meanings of ‘individualisation’ lean on a dynamic typology. The reader must cross the whole of the Albertian works and its textual treatment of the ‘vase of light’ to understand what the new model of ‘individualisation’ means. The first typology proceeds by juxtaposition of *criteria*, the second by dynamic development of a unique model that is expressed through an image.

As for the first meaning of ‘individualisation’, at the beginning of his exposition of the verse *Jn* 1:7, Albert the Great explains clearly the aim of the verse as he understands it: in that verse, ‘the witness is praised, and he is shown *omni exceptione maior* (Lewis, Short 1956)’ (Albertus 2019, 106, 6). Albert uses here a specific juridical terminology that means that this witness, John the Baptist, is

greater than anything which could limit his testimony. There are four reasons for him being a witness beyond reproach and suspicion: his nature, his function as a witness, the authority of the one who sends him, that is God himself, and the meaning of his name (*ibid.*, 106, 14–7).

The first reason is his human nature that makes him appropriate not only to his human addressees but also to the divine Word made flesh (*ibid.*, 106, 22–108, 4) whom he testifies. So his exceptional reliability rests on the fact that he, as a human being and not as an angel (*ibid.*, 108, 5–6), is an adequate mediation for both terms of the relationship. No divine mediator would suitably communicate with human beings except the one who is the Word made flesh. But the witness needs to share the very nature of his addressees, just as the pontiff is chosen among men as a mediator between them and God, according to the example that the *Doctor magnus* gives. About this first reason, the Master of Cologne does not claim any novelty of his thesis: he explicitly quotes the *Glossa ordinaria* (Glossa 1603, 1024), a miscellany of biblical glosses of the Fathers of the Church, and comments on it.

The second reason is John's function as being sent (Albertus 2019, 108, 9–14). 'Being sent' etymologically means that he is not an angel by nature but by function: he announces the Word made flesh. He comes neither from his own authority nor from the authority of other human beings or by their mediation. But he receives his mission from God himself (not the incarnate God): that is the third reason for his absolute reliability (*ibid.*, 108, 15–8) as a witness. Both the second and the third reasons are founded upon several biblical quotations.

The fourth reason is the witness' name (*ibid.*, 108, 19–23) and its meaning. The name 'John' was not chosen by his parents. Otherwise, their newborn son should have taken the name of his father: Zechariah. His name was given by God and, as a reflection of this divine origin, it means in itself grace or divine gift. The *Gloss* which Albert of Cologne explicitly refers to adds: 'substantially given'. In other words, John's identity consists substantially in the grace of God. The *Doctor magnus* insists on placing John's whole life from the beginning under the sign of God's gift: from the announcement to his father, his conception in the womb of the old Elizabeth.... Albert writes also that John's father was God. Thereby, he means: the one who gave John his name. But the scribes of the manuscripts of Düsseldorf (Albertus 1455), Emmerich (Albertus 1476), Köln (Albertus 1450–1455) and the printed editions (Albertus 1477; 1504–1505; 1651; 1899), who perfectly well knew that John's father was Zechariah, corrected *pater* to *patet*, so that the text does not mean anymore: '*the father*, the way he [John] was made, the nature of John and his mission are referred to God' (Albertus 2019, 112, 3–4) but '*it is evident that* the way he was made, the nature of John and his mission are referred to God'. These later corrections made by the scribes of the manuscripts show how

Albert's interpretation – that the whole being of John comes from God, understood as his father – still was new and difficult to accept even in the fifteenth century.

Moreover, the *Doctor magnus* emphasises that the identity of John consists substantially in the divine gift, with the verse 1 Cor. 15:10 ('By God's grace, I am what I am etc.'). Thereby, he suggests an identification between Paul of Tarsus and John the Baptist on the very point of their whole identity being given by God, in as much as they are sent by him and have accepted their mission.

Thus, what makes John the Baptist an exceptional witness is, firstly, that he is a human being whose nature ensures him to be an appropriate mediation between the incarnate Word and his human addressees; secondly, that he does not come from any human authority; thirdly, that he has been sent by God and that does not add any human intention to the divine mission he receives; and fourthly, that, as being sent, his whole identity substantially consists in his divine mission.

Through the networks of biblical verses he quotes, Master Albert makes clear that John shares certain aspects of his exceptionality, as a witness, with other biblical characters¹ (Albertus 2019, 112, 1–4). The Albertian method of interpretation of the Christian Holy Scriptures consists in elaborating echoes and resonances between some aspects of certain biblical figures. These figures correspond to each other and contribute to a constant rewriting and modifying of the story of the People of God. But also the Prologue which the *Doctor magnus* writes to his own *Super Iohannem* creates an overlay between two different persons named John: the Evangelist and the Baptist. Under the following aspects both John the Baptist

¹ With any Pontiff, according to *He.* 5:1; with the Patriarch Abraham as a man according to *Gen* 18:27; as a sent man, with *Obadiah* 1:3; with *Is.* 48:16 and with Moses in *Ex.* 3:13 as sent from God; with Paul in 1 *Co.* 15:10 as receiving substantially his identity from God. And when Albert the Great refers to another translation which links every aspect of John's life to God, he adds some more identifications to other biblical figures. This alternative translation of the verse is so: 'This exposition is confirmed by another translation that says so: "He has been made man, he has been sent by God, his name was John".' The *Doctor universalis* distinguishes between three aspects with regard to the first *criterium*: his father, the way he was made and his nature: 'For this reason, John's father, the way he was made, his nature and [his] mission are referred to God.' And the name 'John' indicates this original relationship to God in the womb of John's mother, which assimilates him to Jesaiah in *Is.* 49:1: 'The Lord has called me from my mother's bosom etc.' and to Jeremiah in *Jr* 1:5: 'Before I made you in the motherly bosom, I have known you, and before you came out of the motherly bosom, I have sanctified you.' In relation to John's mission in this second translation, *Albertus Magnus* likens John the Baptist to Paul in *Gal.* 1:11–12: 'I have let you know the gospel that has been announced to me, because it is not according to man. And I have neither indeed received it nor learnt from a man, but from Jesus Christ's revelation' and to *Jr* 1:7: 'You will go to all that I will sent you to, and you will tell them that I shall command to you.'

and John the Evangelist overlap implicitly. As for the authority who sends the witness, the *Doctor universalis* writes that the divine Wisdom itself manifests in the increased Word and in the Word made flesh and is the first efficient cause that teaches John the Evangelist and moves him to write (Albertus 1899, 7–8). So John the Evangelist, like John the Baptist, neither speaks from his own authority nor because he is sent by human beings. He is sent by God (ibid., 12b) and the spirit of the Wisdom speaks in and through him, so that the authority of what he writes is indubitable, says Albert, commenting on *Mt* 10:20 (ibid., 8) about the fourth Evangelist. Regarding the name ‘John’, the *Doctor magnus* follows the commentary of Jerome of Stridon and understands this name as meaning the grace of God, which indicates a person in whom grace is or to whom a divine gift is made (ibid., 11b). Thanks to the similarity of these features, both John the Evangelist and the Baptist are described, on the one hand, as exceptional individuals and, on the other, as overlapping figures. Their singularity can, under certain aspects, build a general type of individuality.

Therefore, on a more general level, we could conclude from this first definition of the individuality of the witness that he or she corresponds to a singular case whose outstanding properties could be yet granted to other exceptional biblical figures. The exceptionality of this individual is paradoxically conceived as general or, at least, as sharable by others. As far as his or her nature is concerned, the witness is a human being, so that he or she can communicate what the Word made man (*humanatum*) is to his or her human addressees. Relating to his or her mission as a witness sent from God as well as to the name ‘John’, the conception of the individual consists in shifting the substance of the human individuality from its contingent singularity towards its divine origin. The human individual in his or her own being substantially consists in the gift of God, that is, in the relationship with God. It is, therefore, a relational conception of the substance, or of the being, that is applied here to the understanding of the individual. Hence, the exceptional individual is the one whose characteristic is to receive his or her being (pointed out by the name ‘John’ in the case of John the Baptist) and the reason for his or her action only from the divine principle. The singularity of these exceptional witnesses of God rests on a detachment from their own particular qualities as this or that concrete person. They are in a sense unexceptional, because their identity as individuals substantially consists in what all individuals share, that is the universal metaphysical origin of a first cause of being and acting. But their identity is not circumscribed by the particular features that usually describe the contingent conditions of a personal existence. So the textual ‘institutionalisation’ of the figure of the individual consists, in this first step, in elaborating a category of individuals who are exceptional because they have left behind all the particular features of their particular identity determined in space and time. This process of textual

‘institutionalisation’ is inherited from the patristic tradition which is here referred to very generally as the *Gloss*. This textual process uses an overlapping technique that consists in putting into relief some similar features that enable linking together different biblical figures. Yet, *Albertus Magnus* sharpens this patristic technique, concentrating it in a metaphysical formula about the identity of the witness.

In contrast with those exceptional individuals, the interlacing of the exegesis of the *Gospel of John* with the Greek-Arabic cosmology could make one think, at first sight, of a universalisation of the role of the witness who receives a specific function in the *cosmos*. Yet I shall argue here that an accurate reading of how the Albertian text really operates has led us to discover that the universalisation, as a detachment from the properties of an individual who exists in a particular space and time, is already involved in the original interpretation that Albert develops leaning on the inheritance of the patristic tradition: the identity of such an individual consists in defining itself substantially as coming only from his or her divine principle. What the Greek-Arabic cosmology brings to the Master of Cologne is, therefore, more specifically the identification of such individuals with non-human agents.

3 The identification of the individual with non-human agents through the influence of Greek-Arabic cosmology

In his commentary on *Jn 1:8a* (‘This one was not the light’), Albert the Great compares John the Baptist to a ‘vase of light’. According to the words of the *Gospel of John*, John the Baptist is not the true light that, as a source of illumination, illuminates from itself. Such a true light corresponds only to Christ. But John is identified to an illuminated light (Albertus 2019, 120, 19–20), that is a light that illuminates because it receives its own light from the source of light itself. Albert’s aim is to strongly underline the Evangelist’s insistence upon ‘the distinction between the one who gives testimony and the one whom he bears witness to’ (ibid., 120, 11–12), that is, between John and Christ. It follows that human individuals are not prime agents. They receive their capacity to act from a divine principle that is the universal cause of action. In what follows I shall demonstrate that the witness represents a type of agency that is at the same time secondary with regard to the first cause and immediate, as long as it transmits the whole virtue of the first cause itself. This type of agency corresponds, in the Albertian system, to the specific function of a mediation that does not communicate only a reduced part of what it receives, contrarily to a conception of causality in terms of participation.

The argument of the *lux illuminata* is already in the *Gloss* on *Jn* 1:8 and in Augustine's commentary on the *Gospel of John* (Augustinus 1954, 10, 9–11). But the *Doctor magnus* does not refer to either of those sources here, although he has quoted the *Gloss* explicitly about John the Baptist, as we have seen. Rather, later on in the exegesis of *Jn* 1:8a, he refers to Avicenna. And he uses the expression 'vase of light', in order to answer to a wrong understanding of the verse *Jn* 1:8a which would, according to him, derive from Avicenna's interpretation of *lux* in his *Liber de anima* (Avicenna 1972, 170, 7–171, 22). The Albertian choice to explicitly rely upon an Arabic source rather than the Fathers of the Church underlines the core of his philosophical gesture: he draws from non-Christian traditions, in order to universalise the function of the Christian witness as a metaphysical mediation and to found it on rational arguments.

According to Avicenna, *lux* means only the 'light in [its] own nature and that is not illuminated' (Albertus 2019, 122, 1–2), that is to say only an active principle. Therefore, Avicenna would contradict the Albertian exegesis of this verse, namely: 'The good are the illuminated light, but the illuminating light, which is Christ, is different' (ibid., 120, 19–20). Avicenna would deny the distinction between two types of light and would interpret the verse *Jn* 1:8a as follows: 'The good are the light that illuminates and that is not only illuminated' (ibid., 122, 2–4). Moreover, Albert refers to the evidence of biblical authorities such as *Mt* 5:16 to strengthen what would be Avicenna's interpretation of the verse. So, according to Avicenna and to this passage of the Holy Scriptures, John the Baptist should be an active principle of illumination, rather than passive, and would be, then, identified with Christ.

Avicenna's interpretation of *lux* as only active constitutes an objection to the exegesis of *Jn* 1:8a that the *Doctor universalis* first gave. To rebut this argument, Albert makes explicit his identification between the witness as an illuminated light and the specific function of mediation as a 'vase of light'. He develops the distinction between the two types of light that he has already introduced at the beginning of the exegesis of *Jn* 1:8a: the divine source of light which is only active and another one which illuminates, because it is illuminated. This second type of light, which is receptive, corresponds to John and to the category of perfect human beings (ibid., 122, 5–10) to which John belongs. We shall come back to this category of perfect individuals in the third step of our inquiry. Let us concentrate now on their comparison with an illuminated light. These active and passive functions of illuminating and being illuminated are assimilated to what the *Doctor expertus* calls a 'vase of light'. To illustrate this expression, he gives the example of a 'luminary that emanates the light that is infused to him' (ibid., 122, 9).

The comparison with luminaries – that is with cosmological entities – is not new. Albert the Great quotes two occurrences in the Holy Scriptures that mention the luminary (ibid., 98, 21; 122, 9–10). But Albert's interpretation comes from

the understanding of the luminary as a ‘receptacle of light’ by John Damascene (Damascene 1955, 86, 1–2). The *Doctor magnus* characterises this receptive function noted by Damascene as a ‘vase of light’. As the ‘vase of light’ is a receptacle, it corresponds to the physical and metaphysical function of the matter, that is, the passive term in a relation, within the meaning of being receptive. Therefore, a ‘vase of light’ is, in Albert’s eyes, a body that is composed of a formal principle, the light that it receives, and a material one, the capacity to receive the light and to be informed by it. ‘A luminary is, namely, as the Damascene says, a “vase of light” and so there must be in it a composition of light (*luminis*) and of a body that holds the light (*lumen*)’ (Albertus 1993b, 235, 27–30).

Because this capacity to receive characterises precisely a body, a personal individual can be easily compared to a ‘vase of light’ and, therefore, to an impersonal being, like a cosmic entity. The mode of operation of such a non-human agent consists in both receiving the light from the source of illumination which is, in this cosmological (Duhem 1954, 327–45; Hoßfeld 1969, 318–29; Price 396–436; Stein 1944, 182–91; Gregory 1996, 1–23) monarchical² system unique, and in transmitting it to others. According to Isidore of Seville (Isidorus 1850, 178b; 1911, without pagination) whom the *Doctor universalis* follows (Albertus 1980, 90, 28; 1972, 65, 1), the etymology of *solis* is *solus lucens*: the sun is the only entity that shines from itself and possesses light in itself. The moon and the stars don’t have light in themselves. They acquire it from the sun (ibid., 90, 28–30).

Therefore, perfect human beings are not anymore merely described as exceptional individuals. Rather, they are identified with the general function of a body that is able to receive the light of the source of illumination, so as to transmit it to others (Albertus 1993b, 235, 42–4). This identification with non-human agents, the cosmic entities, leads us to examine, firstly, their specific mode of agency and, secondly, their status as embodied individuals.

3.1 The mode of agency of non-personal entities

In assimilating the personal individual to a non-human agent, *Albertus Magnus* focuses attention on their common mode of agency. The first characteristic of the operating mode of a ‘vase of light’ consists, namely, in receiving the light of

² ‘Monarchical’ is here understood in its etymological meaning, denoting what has a unique principle. Albert makes clear that the comparison between the sun and God, as first cause, is only an analogy between a creature and the creator, which includes an immeasurable disproportion.

the sun from which all the bodies in the universe receive their light univocally (Albertus 1972, 64, 49–54), that is according to precisely the same nature and definition, be they superior or inferior bodies. On this argument of the univocal presence of the light in every cosmic body, the *Doctor magnus* follows the authority of Aristotle and of other philosophers (Aristoteles, *Metaph.*, lib. 2, cap. 1 (993b 24–7) in Ps.-Aristoteles 1562–1574, 283b; Avicenna 1980, 311, 9–15) he anonymously mentions. If all cosmic bodies receive the same nature of light, therefore this light must come from a first source. That means that all other bodies that emit light receive from the sun the light they give out. So the first characteristic of the mode of agency of non-human entities is to be receptive with regard to the first universal agent, which is the first cause. This feature precisely meets the definition of John as an exceptional personal individual: as cosmic bodies receive the whole light they transmit from a unique luminous source, the sun, so John is sent by God only and receives from God only his own being and capacity to act as a witness.

The second characteristic of the mode of agency of a ‘vase of light’ corresponds to John’s identity substantially consisting in being received from God. We shall observe how the comparison with cosmic entities enables Albert the Great to universalise this ontological definition and to specify it on the level of the mode of operation. The second feature of the mode of agency of the ‘vases of light’ is that they operate on the basis of their own being, and not only as an accident (a non-essential element) regarding what they are. The comparison with non-personal entities leads the *Doctor magnus* to define the being of an individual through his or her action and, reciprocally, to link his or her action to his or her ontological constitution as an individual. The transition from the reception of the sunlight to its transmission happens, namely, through the ontological transformation of the cosmic body. Albert writes that the cosmic body receives ‘in its depth’ (Albertus 1971, 154, 26–33; 107, 39–46; Albertus 1980, 90, 57–91, 4; Albertus 1975, 57, 1–2) the light that passes through it, so that this body entirely enters into fusion with the light (Albertus 1975, 56, 71–57, 7; Avicenna 1972, 260, 95–263, 54, spec. 263, 44–54). The Master of Cologne points out that to receive light ‘in one’s depth’ means to welcome it according to one’s own being (Albertus 1972, 64, 55–6). This melting of all its parts radically transforms its own being as material body into a luminous being. This happens to this body through its being ‘trampled’ (*calcatio*) until it reaches fusion. In other words, it was only a physical body with specific transparent properties that particularly enable it to receive and transmit the light of the sun. And now it becomes *in actu* a bright light transmitter. Comparing the personal individual with a non-human agent, Albert the Great highlights that the mode of agency of an individual in general fundamentally arises from the transformation of his or her own being that is performed by the

first universal agent. The definition of his or her being as individual depends on the permanent flowing of the active power of the first cause through him or her that makes him or her able to illuminate.

The third characteristic of the operating mode of the ‘vase of light’ concerns the final cause of this operation. The aim of the emission of light from the sun is to illuminate the whole universe as deeply and completely as it can, according to the measure in which the various bodies can receive it. So light is this instrument through which the sun, or first motor, attracts every inferior body and leads it towards its own form, or being *in actu*, that is the very nature of light itself (ibid., 65, 7–9). Some bodies remain dark and opaque. Others refract light outwardly or superficially, as we will see below. Yet, the ‘vases of light’ are totally transformed in light. That is why they acquire a specific function as mediations that convey the light of the sun without reduction. Hence, through this fusion, the first motor assimilates to itself some specific cosmic bodies, transforming them into ‘vases of light’ which are able to transmit at their turn the light of the principle. But they are not merely channels that remain independent from the light that passes through them, assuming this transmission only as a role that would not affect their identity. As ‘vases’, they retain in some way the light they welcome, so that the sunlight becomes their own form, or definition, as individuals. The *Doctor universalis* even speaks of them ‘soaking’ (Albertus 1980, 78, 7–11) up the light of the sun until the light reaches their own centre. Yet, their being-light – that is, being of the same nature of the light of the sun – indicates their essential and continuous dependence upon the sun, as the source of light. They can transmit light further on, because this act can constantly be led back to the first motor (Albertus 1993a, 107, 68–71) as the principle that constitutes them. Their being *in actu*, that is in the operation of transmitting light, consists in drawing continuously light from its source (ibid., 107, 73–6). And this act of drawing light, melting and emitting it, forms their own being as ‘vases of light’: the being of luminaries is constituted by the light of the sun itself (ibid., 43, 1–3 and 14–23).

This conception of the identity of non-human entities rejoins here the identity of exceptional human individuals, like John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. Both are paradoxical types of individualisation. The identity of the personal and non-personal entities is not defined by their particular features but only by the universal ones, namely that they receive their being and their operation from the first principle. Yet, with the comparison of the exceptional witnesses of God with non-human agents, Albert the Great now focuses this conception of individual identity on the mode of agency that is intimately related to the being of the agent. He bases this conception on the arguments of the Philosophers and can thus generalise it.

3.2 Embodied individuals

Now, the Master of Cologne does not make explicit why he uses exceptional individuals and specific cosmic bodies as a model of individualisation which could have a normative value for everyone – in the conclusion, we shall make explicit the nature of ‘normativity’ here. The function of the ‘vase of light’ is both cosmic and metaphysical. It corresponds to the function of a mediation which prevents a metaphysical system from being, on the one hand, pantheistic (Albertus 1993a, 45, 52–6) and, on the other, monistic. According to the first modality, the principle would be confused with the universality of the beings it produces. According to the second, all the individuals would melt their differences in the unique nature of the principle. *Albertus Magnus* wants to avoid such metaphysical modalities that eliminate the possibility for the divine principle and the individuals to be differentiated.

Therefore, he insists on establishing specific mediations which are able to transmit the nature of the first principle itself, on the one hand, and on the other, leave a free space for the constitution of individual differences, because they signify a distance – or a difference – between the principle and the individual beings. In other words, such mediations allow, on the one hand, the unity of a differentiated universe. The Philosophers (*De epistula de principio universi esse*, cf. Libera 1990a, 55–78; Libera 1990b, 356–64; Libera 2005, 74–87; Aristoteles 1986, 74, 16–7; Alfarabius 1836, 47; Avicenna 1980, 481, 50–1; Averroes 1562–1574, 344b; Algazel 1933, 117, 33–4; 119, 10–1; 24–6; Maimonides 1520, 53; Avicenna 1892–1895, 113, 23–114, 6) express this conception of the universe as a totality ‘turned towards the One’ (*uni-versum*), which Albert describes as follows: ‘from the simple One immediately arises only the One according to the order of nature’ (Albertus 1993a, 55, 72–6). This conception of the unity that spreads immediately from the first principle towards the extremities of the universe rejoins the univocal transmission of the light of the sun, which we have mentioned above.

On the other hand, such mediations open the possibility for a differentiated order with different degrees (*ibid.*, 55, 65–7). Depending on their greater or lesser distance from the first principle, each body receives the unique nature of the sun light differently, namely, according to its own capacity to receive. Therefore, the exceptional individuals or the ‘vases of light’ as specific cosmic bodies can be used as universal models of individualisation, because they indicate the fundamental nature of every agent, human or non-human: that is to receive one’s being and one’s operation entirely from the first principle. And, thus, they can serve as mediations that prevent confusion between the first principle and all individual beings. Yet, the comparison with the ‘vases of light’ points out that these specific

agents are not universal beings that would only be defined by the light of the sun, but are embodied individuals.

As a fourth characteristic, the mode of operation of these impersonal agents is linked to them having a specific ‘substance of body’ (Albertus 1980, 90, 60–1) which differs from that of the sun and of the other bodies. The reason why a body receives and, to some extent, retains the light of the sun is its own consistence, its ‘thickness’ (Albertus 1971, 107, 38–9), as the *Doctor magnus* writes. He goes further: light is no property of the fire in itself. The fire receives light, when it is mixed up with a transparent body that has some thickness (Albertus 1971, 107, 29–32). In other words, light wouldn’t shine and appear to us, if it weren’t reflected upon a body and received by it. It would just dazzle and blind. That the individual agent is embodied is, namely, the condition for the light of the sun to be seen.

Yet, bodies receive the light of the sun singularly according to their relation to the source of light. The *Doctor universalis*, following ‘men who excel in philosophy’ – Aristotle (Ps.-Aristoteles 1562–1574, 283b), Ptolemy (Ptolemaeus 1515, 35v), Avicenna (Avicenna 1980, 311, 9–15), Messelach (Thorndike 1949, 354) and many others (e.g. Al-Bitrûjî 1952, 90, 4–5; 128, 30–129, 14) – distinguishes several degrees of reception (Albertus 1980, 90, 44–57). Jupiter (Albertus 1971, 154, 986, esp. 32) is from all sides crossed by the light of the sun and is, thus, resplendent. Because the body of Mars is of a less noble nature, the light it transmits declines towards red. The light that Venus emits is pale. And the light that passes through Saturn is even more pallid. The light of the moon seems to be veiled, because the moon is earthly (Aristoteles 1966, 152, 12–5) and opaque and because, depending on its phases, it gets away from a perpendicular position with regard to the sun (Albertus 1993a, 107, 77–88). Being embodied agents allows the different ‘vases of light’ to grant various shades to the light of the sun. Without each of these singular bodies, the light of the sun wouldn’t have been manifested under those frequencies of the light spectrum.

The comparison with the ‘vase of light’ enables the *Doctor universalis* to link together the being and the agency of the individual as entirely received from the divine principle, on the one hand. And, on the other, it points out the absolute singularity of the way in which an embodied individual transmits what he or she receives from the first principle. This absolute singularity is based on his or her being embodied, which acquires here the status of a metaphysical function. In his commentary on the *Gospel of John*, Albert of Cologne derives, namely from a comparison of the ways in which the different cosmic bodies receive the light of the sun, a typology of the different ways a heart relates to the spiritual light (Albertus 2019, 98, 3–23). The embodied agency of the witness does not appear in the description of the exceptional individual influenced by the patristic tradition.

By contrast, it constitutes a main characteristic of the mode of agency of the ‘vase of light’. Therefore, Albert the Great clearly interprets the *Gospel of John* relying on this Greek-Arabic cosmological theory. He explicitly compares perfect human beings (ibid., 122, 7–8) like John to the ‘vases of light’, which are transparent and yet receive the light of the sun ‘in their depth’, that is being modified in their own being. They differ from the bodies that only receive light superficially and have, therefore, a shine that has only an outer beauty. They are also different from the black or opaque bodies that do not receive light, except as the manifestation of their own darkness.

4 As a conclusion

A closer reading of Albert’s texts has revealed that, in the first type of individualisation, that is, in the patristic description of an exceptional individual, Albert’s original interpretation consists in introducing already a universalisation dynamic. The Master of Cologne transforms the patristic conception of the exceptional witnesses of God, interpreting these witnesses as individuals who receive their whole being from God. What makes them exceptional is precisely what takes them away from their unicity as particular persons existing in a certain time and space.

Therefore, the function of the comparison with the ‘vases of light’ is not only to reinforce the universalised reach of the patristic type of individuality. But also, the assimilation of personal individuals to non-personal cosmic entities enables Albert to highlight their common mode of agency as embodied beings. Their mode of operation gives them the status of mediations of the first principle with regard to all other entities in the universe, because they receive inwardly the flow of the first principle which grants them being and agency, so that they are transformed in this active principle which constitutes their being as mediations, or ‘vases of light’. Their embodiment enables them to transmit, at their turn, the light they receive, without reducing it and in a singular manner that depends on their physical constitution.

Thus, the second and third meanings of ‘individualisation’ – which are also two steps in an individualisation process, that is ‘individualisation’ as depersonalisation and as embodiment – which Albert the Great derives from his interpretation of the Greek-Arabic cosmology, enable him: to base his interpretation on philosophical arguments in speaking about exceptional individuals whose being and acting are only defined by the divine gift; to focus on the close relationship between those individuals’ being and their operating; and to assign a specific metaphysical function of mediation to those individuals.

That is why the *Doctor universalis* attaches a normative value to this cosmological pattern, or more precisely a protreptic function: every reader of his commentary on the *Gospel of John* is invited to go through this individualisation process, so as to match his or her mode of agency and the conception of his or her own identity to the mediating function he or she occupies in the universe between the divine principle and his or her own human community. Albert concludes his own commentary, following John the Evangelist himself, by calling on his reader to become, at his or her turn, a witness in his or her own way: that is an embodied individual who transmits in his or her own singular mode what he or she receives from the divine principle to his or her human addressees, constituting thereby (through his or her individualisation *in actu*) a community of individuals. Of course, human beings, as created, participate the light of the first causes. They do not convey it to others without reducing it. Yet, Albert's interpretation of the 'vase of light' has a protreptic function, in that it invites the reader to turn himself or herself towards this specific definition of his or her own being and agency. It does not mean that the definition of the individual as a participation of the first cause, which only receives being and capacity to act according to its limited capacity, is denied. Rather, Albert the Great suggests a plurality of perspectives on the comprehension of individuality. The protreptic function of the 'vase of light' underlines one of those perspectives that the reader can take into consideration.

The way in which the Master of Cologne himself goes through the individualisation process that leads to the 'vase of light' is reflected in the function he gives to this individualisation process in his own philosophical system, on the one hand, and, on the other, in the way he deals with the different rationalities involved in his act of commenting. Far from subordinating his hermeneutics to a *corpus* of theological dogmas, so as to constitute a 'Christian philosophy' according to Étienne Gilson's formula (Gilson 1998, 1–38), Albert extends Johannism beyond the limits in which the traditional exegesis of the Fathers of the Church had circumscribed it. Johannism is instead conceived under the influence of concepts forged inside exogenous sciences and under non-Christian authorities, such as Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, Messelach and Ptolemy.

This interlacing of various religious traditions, scientific disciplines and realms of realities that allows this original interpretation of the Johannine witness is not a minor phenomenon in Albert's way of thinking. On the contrary, it leads to a central notion in Albert's philosophical system. The function of the mediation that entirely communicates the flow of the principle protects Albert's 'metaphysics of fluxus' from both monism and pantheism. Therefore, the individualisation process that Albert understands under the name 'vase of light' is raised as a philosophical tool that prevents all individuals from being assimilated to the divine substance or confused with it, on the one hand, and, on the

other, that prevents the divine principle from being identified with individuals and reduced to them. With such mediations as ‘vases of light’, the first principle is present to every entity in the universe, even the farthest.

Albert was one of the first Dominican exegetes in the thirteenth century to receive the inheritance of the Greek-Arabic philosophy and sciences and to cross it with his own understanding of the Holy Scriptures and with their Greek-Latin patristic interpretations. At the *studium* of Cologne, he founds a new stream of interpretation in which one of the main principles is that the same truth lies at the origin of every religious tradition (Pagan, Jewish, Christian, Muslim...), which we can also find in Eckhart’s works (Echardus 1936–1989, 154, 14–155, 2; 155, 5–7).

Moreover, the enhanced diffusion of the Albertian comprehension of this process of individualisation is documented in Eckhart’s reading of the same passage of the *Gospel of John* (Casteigt 2014, 159–76). Meister Eckhart likens the fulfilment of the witness to the birth of a son. In other words, the mediation, or the witness, achieves its being *in actu* in an immediacy to the principle. The son has the same being as the father. He is only distinct from the father, as far as their relation is concerned, as the one who is begotten is different from the one who begets. But the subtlety of Eckhart’s interpretation is that the son has the same mode of agency as a ‘vase of light’. Identical to the nature of the principle, he transmits the very light of the principle without reducing it. Eckhart insists on the transparency of the agent, whereas Albert highlights the embodiment that makes the operation of the agent unique.

Albert the Great does not only look for homologous structures in the different religious traditions and ways of thinking; he does not merely modify the literary exegetical genre which will, for example in Eckhart’s works, naturally include the ‘external’ influences of other disciplines of knowledge and other religious traditions; but rather he, as an author, goes through a specific process of de-personalisation and embodiment. In other words, his individualisation, as an author, is not limited to the *criteria* of the particular religious tradition to which he belongs. But his receiving of other religious traditions and assimilating them moves him off-centre from the place of exceptional individuality he occupies as a master in his religious order, the Order of Preachers, and in the intellectual institutions of his time. Through this de-personalisation, he experiences theoretically (through the commentaries of Greek-Arabic cosmological and metaphysical texts in this case) and practically, through the process of writing, an individualisation as a procedure which is opened to everyone as a possibility and as part of a development which is not only reserved for human agents but includes also non-human ones. Indeed, the model of individualisation is the one in which a star or a planet actualises transmission, through the singularity of its own physical body, of the light of the sun to the whole universe.

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Dietmar Mieth

Self-transcendence in Meister Eckhart

1 Meister Eckhart's vernacular project in the service of religious self-awareness

The importance Meister Eckhart the *Lehrmeister* and *Lebemeister*, thus the Parisian *magister* and vernacular preacher, ascribes to 'equality' is striking. He means both human and religious equality. (cf. Sermon 65, *MW*) Eckhart addresses all individuals – without distinction of sex – on the basis of equal possibilities. In scholastic philosophy as for Eckhart, of course, 'equality' is a metaphysical, not a sociological category. Inequality of social rank has no influence on this fundamental category, as, 'before God', all are equal, in terms of God's Creation and of their humanity and their salvation. To clarify, we may say that, while plants and animals are unequal, all are 'equal' as God's creatures. When this perspective dominates, a social component arises, as becomes clear in Eckhart's use of the word *Eigenschaft*, meaning for him subjection to external purposes and ascendancies. In humorous vein against Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart makes the point that Thomas was interested in the inequalities of blades of grass, thus in grasses individually, but that he himself is interested in their equality, thus grass *in genere* (cf. Sermon 53, *MW* 281, Pr. 22, *DW* I, 384–6).

Eckhart addresses individual people as 'souls', and so mostly without regard for differences. He does not, of course, overlook or pass over the differences between individuals, but sees such differences as being *leibgebunden*, 'tied to the body'. He is also able explicitly to expand on the idea, not least when he indicates that 'my body is more in my soul than my soul is in my body' (Sermon 66 and Sermon 21, *MW*); he goes further when he attests to the perfection of embodied humans as being the 'best', while that of angels is only the highest (cf. Sermon 70, *MW* 359; Pr. 67, *DW* III, cf. Mieth, *LE* IV, 95–122). We read in Eckhart's explicit preaching program:

When I preach it is my wont to speak about detachment (*Abegescheidenheit*), and of how man should rid himself of self and all things. Secondly, that man should be in-formed back into the simple good which is God. Thirdly, that we should remember the great nobility (*Adel*) God has put into the soul, so that man may come miraculously to God. Fourthly, of the purity of the divine nature, for the splendour of God's nature is unspeakable.

(Beginning of Sermon 22, *MW* 152, Pr. 53, *EW* I, 564, 6–14)

The program is about God's and the soul's *Lauterkeit* (transparency, clarity). In his concern to formulate scholastic thinking as sermons in the vernacular, Eckhart

imparts thoughts that, while highly speculative, are expressed by him in terms of a linguistic pool that, created in the context of a spiritual relationship with God, has already itself become vernacular. Speculation in a language that has yet to be employed in speculation often has an innovative result. For this reason, even 19th-century Old-Germanists were first struck by Eckhart's supreme linguistic astuteness as a vernacular preacher. Eckhart is not actively concerned with religious 'experience', in the sense of Bonaventure's *cognitio Dei quasi experimentalis*, or the same scholar's *Three ways to God (De triplici via)*, thus experience already established and current in the vernacular, in the sense of what in today's parlance is referred to on the basis of historical testimony as mystagogy. But the rich imagery he employs is often interpreted as 'mystic'.

Eckhart is not interested in immersive mysticism, initiation into secret ciphers, or promotion of an ecstatic condition. But he is conscious of telling the absolute truth, come 'direct from the heart of God'. And he insists that, in a sermon, a communicative resonance is possible between preacher and audience and *vice-versa*. Above all, though, Eckhart's desire is to teach how one may live. Life is not to be shorn of its 'now-ness' on the strength of the future, or of a plan. For God is present in every 'now' more than he is in the flow of time: 'He works, and I come into being' (Sermon 65, *MW*). Unity in works, exercise of the heart, individual identity in religious and moral terms: these are his educational project, from which even 'coarse and unschooled' people are expressly not excluded (*cf.* Divine Comfort, *MW* 553f., *BgT*, *EW* II, 213). It is with such optimism that, here like Socrates, according to the official accusation he 'confused' people.

2 The early project: self-transcendence in Eckhart's teaching in Erfurt

Eckhart begins, as a prior in Erfurt (from 1294), by apparently following normal tradition with his *Collationes*, a title inspired by John Cassian; Eckhart, though, has a new spiritual program in mind, at whose center stands, not 'experience', but, in the tradition of the philosophical maxim 'know thyself', the investigation of one's own sensibility: *nim dîn selbes wâr* (*Talks*, *MW* 489, *EW* II, 340, 25f.).

There is seldom explicit mention of 'experience' in Eckhart's sermons. And yet he is *nolens volens* confronted by the question of experience when he speaks spiritually to the 'people'. In Erfurt itself we have accounts of the desire of pious women to achieve an ecstatic state (*jubilus*) arising from a particular path of

piety.¹ From the beginning, however, Eckhart dismisses all guarantees of a particular path to God, emphasizing instead the *Weiselosigkeit des Gottfindens*, the pathless way to find God; that is to say, it is not the already ritualized path itself that matters, but the way that path satisfies the criteria that Eckhart deploys.²

Eckhart orchestrates transcendence of self as a process by which God and humans relate together. *Selbst/self* is a central concept in medieval spiritual writing. Eckhart's early Erfurt teachings (1294–1298) are commonly cited: *nim dîn selbes war und wo dû dich vindest, dâ lâz dich. Observe yourself, and wherever you find yourself, leave yourself: that is the very best way.* (cf. 1c) He provides a kind of guide to diagnosing one's own sensibility: where you discover yourself, there you must leave yourself. This most widely known and followed of Eckhart's works can be summarized as follows:

Instead of changing themselves internally, pious people want to change themselves externally. For example, they want to imitate others, go on journeys, or enter a monastery. They are not at peace with themselves. They think they have to change the circumstances of their lives, and, in the process, neglect to change themselves internally. For they relate to (external) circumstances in a perverse way. Instead, they ought to learn *to change themselves*; otherwise they are not at peace, wherever they go, whether into another circle of acquaintance, to another place, or far away. They run far away from themselves, and become lost. Stay with yourself, but leave yourself. However, you forsake external goods, that of itself will not have an effect on you. But, if you step away from your covetous desires, then you can have goods and reputation, but they will no longer matter to you. You must not care for yourself as if you were an all-important possession. You must not even cultivate the longing for your own covetous desires. What Jesus praises in spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3) is inner freedom from one's own striving to possess and one's own longing. So: 'Pay heed to yourself, and where you then find yourself to be (*dich vindest*), there leave yourself. That is the best you can do'. So: study your *Befindlichkeit*. (*Be*)*vinden* translates the Latin *experiri*, the religious experience that is summarized in the technical expression *experientia Dei quasi experimentalis* (Bonaventure).³ Eckhart's 'Talks of Instruction', which I will resume in the following, insists:

What impedes you is that you are always yourself and nothing else. It is your self-will, even if you do not know it and refuse to believe it. For the disquiet that plagues you always comes from your own will, whether you are aware of it or not. (cf. *Talks, MW* 487ff.) When we think

1 Mundschenk 1997, n. 1610 ff., 243.

2 Cf. on Eckhart's pathless way to God in Mieth 1969.

3 Cf. Geybels 2007.

a human being should avoid something or seek something in particular, we are usually thinking of places, or people, or a way of life, or stress, or an activity: but this is not to blame for the fact that he is prevented by his way of life or whatever else: you, everywhere, yourself, are what impedes you, for in all these matters you behave wrongly [...].

The ‘leaving’ meant here is a process of letting go – in the sense of freeing from ties – without end. Whoever lets himself go immediately readmits himself. This leads to a conception of *Gelassenheit* (‘detachment’), today best understood as unreserved surrender. So the bond with God always does as well by the ‘leaving’ as the ‘leaving’ itself goes well. God fills a person to the extent that the person is empty. Eckhart constantly poses his listeners the question: where are you, how is it with you? If all is well with you, that is your doing too. The way you are is the way you act.

[...] So begin with yourself, and let yourself be [...]. The more people venture forth, the less they find peace. They act like someone who cannot find the way; the further he goes, the more he becomes lost. So what is he to do? He should first relinquish his own self: then he has relinquished everything. It is true: if a person relinquishes a kingdom or the entire world, but retains his own self, he has given up nothing. Yes! If he has relinquished his own self, whatever he then retains wealth, respect, or whatever: (yet) he has relinquished everything [...].

For, whatever you do not wish to covet, for God’s sake you have given that all up and surrendered it. This is why our Lord said: Blessed be the poor in spirit (*cf.* Matthew 5:3), which is to say those who are poor by their own will. And no-one should doubt this. If there were a better way, our Lord would have said it when he spoke of this: Whoever wishes to follow me, he must first deny himself (Matthew 16:24) – this is the nub of it. Get to know yourself, and, wherever you find yourself, leave yourself there. This is the best way.’

These criteria of ‘leaving’ deconstruct certain ideals of particularity in the fields of humility,⁴ prayer, penance, poverty, and contemplative immersion, among many others. But it is possible further to construe Eckhart’s practical spiritual intention in terms of the fundamental concept *Gelassenheit*.⁵ In common with the German words *Wirklichkeit* and *Bildung*, *Gelassenheit* cannot be translated into English without shift or loss of meaning. Neither ‘calmness’ nor ‘coolness’ fits, and neither does ‘composure’; just as ‘reality’ does not fit for *Wirklichkeit*, or ‘education’ for *Bildung*. This relates to the fact that our fundamental concept *Gelassenheit* stems from so-called Late-Medieval Dominican mysticism, as represented by Meister Eckhart (*ca.* 1260–1328), Henry Suso (1294–1361), and Johannes Tauler (1300–1361). Conversely, historical linguistic developments and the globalization

⁴ *Cf.* Schöller 2009; Witte 2013, 302–30.

⁵ *Cf.* Mieth 2014b.

of English have had such an inverse effect on German usage that *Wirklichkeit* is now associated with reality, *Bildung* with instruction or training, and *Gelassenheit* with calmness or coolness. This represents a loss in central meaning and human meaningfulness. For, if we consider the religious origin of these words in German, *Wirklichkeit* has something to do with *Gottes Wirken*, for God is *lautes Wirken* (Latin *actus purus*): it is not a matter of presence, but of dynamic. Similarly, *Bildung* has something to do with *Herzensbildung*, and *Gelassenheit* is not quiescence, but *the fundamental stance of self-distancing and surrender*. If we look for an element of Eckhart's central message in English, then we find it rendered by 'detachment'.⁶ The sense cannot be expressed in such an integrative form in German. However, rendering it by Eckhart's *Abgeschiedenheit* or *Ledigkeit*, 'detachment' brings us closer to our Dominican than, for example, 'calmness'.

3 'Inwardness' – God is internal to humans, not outside or above us. Self-transcendence from the inside out

When you are inwardly in the right place, then it does not matter where you choose to be. If you are in the wrong place inwardly, then nowhere will be right for you. If you are in the right place, then God is with you, on the street, among human beings. Nothing stands in your way anymore. God shines in everything you come across. God works through you when you are in that place. Then, although circumstances might be changing around you, you are, as it were, constantly 'God-feeling'. This fundamental feeling penetrates you, even when you are at the same time moved by many things. God is active and seeks you out. Nothing stands in his way. You may be helped in this by being in a church, but what matters is a presence of God in every situation. Instead of frantically seeking, you must let yourself be found. The feeling may be compared to a constant thirst: as long as it is unquenched it remains present, whatever else may happen. The thirst dominates your self-awareness (*cf. Talk, MW, 491ff., DW V, 206*). The thirst is slaked by a *Durchbruch* or 'breakthrough' into an inner source, and the consequence is a life-change, not an external alteration.

One can practise this. Learning to write also begins clumsily until such time as it flows easily from the hand. Learning an instrument, one arrives at facility

⁶ *Cf.* Vinzent 2011.

through practice. So it is with the sense of God: first you have to make an effort, for example in prayer; then it comes of itself.

When we are in this fundamental state of feeling, we can use the possibilities we meet with in the world. Whoever has inner understanding also works well. For God is 'in all things', and to be found in all circumstances. For he is 'pure reality' (*Wirklichkeit*); he consists entirely in works. Whoever possesses him inwardly, he helps from the inside out. Whoever comes so far, in the midst of works has the sense of being unconstrained and with God.

Anyone might fall into difficulties in this process, or be misled into error. But we can so attune ourselves as to nevertheless remain inwardly in that fundamental state, or be capable of returning to it. Everyone can be weak, but, in finding our way back to our self and to our fundamental state, we draw new strength from our weaknesses. The problem is not the weakness; the problem is wanting what makes us weak and error-prone: that is, renouncing our fundamental state in favour of another state. The problem is not the tendency to sin – we should not wish it away – but the way we react to the tendency.

Remember: it is not that familiar splendour that constitutes love in its fullness, but the intensity of our will. Will is more than splendid feelings (*cf.* Sermon 65, *MW*). Will must be strong for its own sake, even without the support of pleasant feelings. We can test the strength of the state we are in by opening ourselves up to everyday necessity, and being ready to help the poor and tend the sick, instead of wallowing in pious feelings.

Whoever lets something go, receives back a hundred times as much (*cf.* Mark 10:29f.). Whoever gives something up receives it as a gift. For whatever such a person then lacks creates space for the unfolding of God's love. Paul even goes so far as to risk being separated from the comfort of Christ's love when what is at stake is his active love for his brothers and sisters (*cf.* Romans 9:3). Here too, the message is, if you lose comfort you gain greater comfort.

This being so, Eckhart also gives answers to the need for experience, although in a metaphoric of life rather than an instruction to seek experience in a narrow sense. In, for example, the Dionysian Sermon 71 (*EW* II, 64ff., Sermon 19, *MW*) and in the cycle on God's birth in the soul,⁷ he gives such answers to the repeated question: How can we feel something ('*bevinden*') of this?

⁷ *Cf.* *DW* IV, 1, Sermons 101–4 (102=83 *MW*, 103=90 *MW*); on the authenticity of this God's-birth cycle, *cf.* Steer (ed.), *ibid.* 320 f.

4 Working from the inside to the outside, in order to mitwirken with God's Wirklichkeit (*activitas*)

This brings me to a brief consideration of Eckhart's association with 'mysticism'. Nowhere does Meister Eckhart associate the term with himself. 'Mysticism', understood as the religious experience of profound realities, is a recent concept.⁸ While Eckhart speaks of contemplation and ecstasy, in the sense of particular gifts of grace, he always mentions the act of experience in a distanced sense. Experience assumes that one contemplates one's contemplation, thus observing oneself as it were in unity with God, watching oneself 'in the act'.⁹ It is more important to Eckhart that one should 'know' of that unity, even without any accompanying experiential act. 'Knowing', *Wissen*, is here meant in the sense of wisdom and accomplishment. What is central is *Isticheit*, the ineluctable knowledge that something 'is', not that it can be typified in distinct categories.¹⁰ The allocation is ontological, not epistemological or psychological. Implied here is an end to the practice of admiring people on account of their explicit, ecstatic *Jubilus*, or their particular attributes¹¹: a habit that can lead to error. Only practical change that a person has brought about in his or her own life, in the sense of works of love, is reliable:

You often ask how you ought to live. Now pay close attention. Just as I have told you about the image – that is the way you should live! You should be His and for Him, you should not be your own or for yourself, or belong to anyone.... I declare truly that, as long as *anything* is reflected in your mind, which is not the eternal Word, or which looks away from the eternal Word, then, good as it may be, it is not the right thing. For he alone is a good man who, having set at naught all created things, stands facing straight, with no side-glances, towards the eternal Word, and is imaged and reflected there in righteousness. That man draws from the same source as the Son, and is himself the Son.

(Sermon 14, *MW* 116ff., Pr.16b, *EW* I, 192)

'God has not bound man's salvation to any special mode'. You following Eckhart, must rather draw all good ways into your own way (*Talks*, *MW* 505; *DMBR*, *DW* V, 251, 10–4). It is thus a question of self and experience, but also of a successful path to a good life.

But: if God withdraws and conceals himself, what can I do?

⁸ Cf. de Certeau, 2010, 31.

⁹ Cf. Vinzent 2014, 220.

¹⁰ Cf. my interpretation of Sermon *DW* 67 (*MW* 70), *LE* IV, 102 ff. Cf. besides Beccarisi 2005.

¹¹ For 'jubilus': cf. the description of the Béguines in Nicolaus von Bibra in Mundschenk 1997, n.1.

Distinguish what you feel and what comforts you from everything else. For, even towards suffering, you can behave as if you were being comforted. God suffers with you. His readiness to experience pain and his ability to do so are greater than ours. Whatever pain hits us hits him harder, because he is even more sensitive to it. Does not his suffering make our bitterness sweet? The light shines in the darkness: we do not see it in the daylight.

You can behave towards God in such a way that you let him be, and do not keep him for yourself. Then you can abandon yourself, as Paul abandoned himself to the will of God (*cf.* Acts 9:6), as Mary committed her will to the will of God. As we have seen, Eckhart repeats often: You become truly human by ceasing to want for yourself. It is a question of not blocking the way with self-will when God's will wishes to pass through you. There are many people in heaven who did not quite manage that (you can cross the sea even on a light breeze). But that is the direction to take to the main prize: to be enveloped in God, wearing him 'like a cap on your head' (*Talks, DW V, 228,4; tr. DMBR*). God allows himself to be borne on our tongue, so that we may remark what is really sweet and delicious.

How can we become certain of eternal life? (*cf. Talks, MW 502, DW V, 240–4*)

There is a certainty through inner epiphany, which is given to few people and can be subject to self-deception. But there is also the certainty of love, and this is greater, more 'authentic', more credible, and more certain. It relies on daily contact with love. All creatures and human friendships are involved in this contact. Whoever loves is not afraid (*cf.* 1 John 4:18). Whoever loves is wrapped in the cloak of forgiveness (*cf.* 1 Peter 4:8). Love erases everything and begins anew. The more it erases, the more it is increased (*cf.* Luke 7:47).

God comes near to you, however far away you may feel. (*cf.* lc. 249–51, 5) God stands before your door: leave it open for him! And do not be severe with yourself if you cannot take the path that everyone reveres. For there are many paths (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 7:24). One path to the good is not to be pitted against another. You should not despise the ways taken by others. You yourself must not be fickle in the ways and paths that you take. You may learn from role models, but do not copy them! This even applies to Jesus Christ: we do not have to fast for 40 days as we are told he did. Let everyone choose their own way, following Christ and not trying to copy him. Fasting in Jesus' sense is also not to utter a word when silence is preferable: or not to respond to an insult.

If you are inwardly secure in your direction, then fine clothes are not a consideration: they do not elevate you, but neither do they damage you (*cf. Talks, MW*

506ff.; *EW* II, 388ff.). It is the same with good food with your family or in other company. Be happy and give thanks for it. There is a time for fasting, and a time for eating. Joy and sorrow have their time. We can even learn from Jesus Christ himself that blessings can lie in sorrow. You must, therefore, not shine in these things, in eating and dressing, by the regard you wish to create. It is not forbidden to cook or put on something special: such a stricture too could be burdensome. But you must not be overweening on your own account; much rather be 'overweening' on Christ's account. If your works come out of him, he will take them up.

To be careless in the midst of your works (cf. *Talks*, *MW* 492ff.; *DWV*, 209–11)

How do we practice finding and embracing God in all things? We must remove from our works the impediment of our inner direction. If we succeed in that, we can work and delight in our works, without mirroring ourselves in the outcome. For then we embrace our works as a gift from God, that is to say as a continuation of his works and his authorship. It is a question of disengaging inwardly, and of the state of being disengaged (*Abgeschiedenheit*). This is our preparation for correctly receiving the gifts of God: to learn that it is not a question of magnifying something to hang on the wall for our own glory. God wishes to find himself again in our will. The correct ethic does not seek success in the sense of a goal; it allows in what God wants for the world. This can be a strong and good feeling, but that feeling can also deceive if it does not identify itself as inner surrender.

Inner and outer works (cf. *Talks*, *MW* 512; *EW* II, 404,14 – 406,3)

We may not remain inactive in our inwardness. Works are important, as long as they are works performed with God. For inwardness must break out in works, and works lead back into inwardness: works outward and inward together. But it is a question of 'working from the inside outwards'. We can also work on inwardness, for example through humility (see above). The highest point of exaltation lies in the lowest point of self-abasement. The smallest is the greatest (cf. Mark 9:35). They who can give receive most. We owe to God the honour of giving. All that we have in the form of gifts is only 'lent' to us. We must therefore dispossess ourselves inwardly. For God himself alone wishes to be our entire possession. That is true poverty: to be empty and at the same time newly replenished. Eckhart asserts with Paul: 'We must have as if we had not', and yet possess all things (2 Corinthians 6:10).

God does not give me the best that I can in any way imagine for myself; and even this is as I must want it. He gives when we take back our own expectations. Whether God works with nature in humans, as the creator, or with grace as the savior, is hard to distinguish here. Eckhart has it that the particular course the water takes to flow into a garden is not as important as that the garden gets watered (cf. *Talks*, MW 521, EW II, 430,29 – 432,4).

Eckhart as a Dominican belongs to the poverty faction. But he does not teach emulation of Jesus' poverty, as Francis does, but emulation of God's wealth. God is rich because he lacks nothing; but he keeps hold of none of his wealth for himself. Eckhart – without disavowing outward poverty – thus espouses an inner concept of poverty: not to have, not to know, not to want; but to relinquish all this to God's works.

5 Transcending self in God's birth

God's incarnation is for Eckhart the central perspective in Christian theology, and, for him, the historical event of Christ's birth represents only an occasion for more precise reflection on that central theme.¹² The significance of this for Eckhart is: as well as a *creatio continua* ('perpetual Creation') there is an *incarnatio continua* ('perpetual Incarnation'); which is to say, an event that has both always been consummate, and at the same time is in the process of being consummated at every moment as a work of God. From this perspective, Eckhart not only sees the world and humanity differently, but also the Trinity, so to speak retroactively, at its origin or in principle. Insofar as (according to Boethius) a human being – not, say, an angel – is a 'person' in the sense of individual substance, Christ is a 'person' through his humanity. But it is not only on Earth that he has this quality, but also in the Trinity. In this way, through the perpetual act of God's incarnation, relationships (*relationes*) in the Trinity become relationships between persons.¹³ The process not only changes our understanding of the Trinity, but also 'ennobles' the nature of humanity. There is thus a kind of return-birth, in which humanity, in actively collaborating in God's *Wirklichkeit*, reinforces the dynamic of the relationship between body, soul, and the divine (the Trinity).¹⁴

What happens during the process of being borne and being born? Many think only of the 'product', the child. But the father becomes a father only when he has

¹² Cf. Mieth 2012 on the following.

¹³ Cf. Pr. 67, DW III, Sermon 70 MW. Cf. Mieth, LE IV.

¹⁴ Cf. Mieth 2014a, 63–72.

a son or a daughter, the mother a mother only when she has a son or a daughter. Eckhart expands this rationale to the extent of saying, ‘God becomes when all creatures pronounce God’ (Sermon 109, *DW* IV, 771, 5ff.). The word ‘God’ comes into being by there being people who can utter it, even though they do not reach the obscure depths of the deity by doing so. God is also present within belief after coming into being, but then he is above all names.

Birth as a divine self-revelation is to be understood as an event in time that reveals to us a constant, intense gesture of devotion by God. At the same time, again according to Eckhart, it is to be understood as a becoming without time, that is to say a constant, perennial motion (*cf.* In John n. 8, *LW* III, 8 f.). This motion is part of God’s plan of creation, which we are not to understand as if he lives before and above us: by this extreme level of devotion, he lives in us. John’s gospel begins: ‘In the beginning was the word’, and Eckhart equates this with the beginning of creation. ‘In the beginning’, he says, ‘is not the same as “at” the beginning’. Eckhart knows that creation must happen constantly: God is not a clock-maker, who winds the mechanism at the beginning and then constantly intervenes to put it right.

Eckhart understands the Word (in the sense of John 1:1) as a speech event: something issues from and at the same time remains in the speaker. That is very easy for us to comprehend and validate. The same applies to the eyes’ outward gaze: it simultaneously depicts in us the image of what is seen. Or he speaks of an echo, in which the sound is and at the same time rebounds; or of warmth left behind in the night by a sunny day: a vestige of the light.

God becoming human is for Eckhart at the same time a revelation of the general process of becoming human: God meant much more by his irreversible association with humanity than merely to live with humans on Earth. Humanity and divinity are inextricably interwoven, not merely since the time of Jesus, but in the sense of revelation working and affecting the past and the future, fulfilling itself *in* time, and at the same time located *transversely* to time.

Language mediates between this emblematic birth, across time and yet in time, and humanity’s creative, self-knowing profession of self, finding expression in a reciprocal birthing process not to be confused with rebirth. For humanity, in its own works that themselves emerge from God’s *Wirklichkeit*, also gives birth to God. The only way we have the ‘Word’ is in words, but these refer to a perspective on *Wirklichkeit* where this *Wirklichkeit* is not ‘given’, but is in the process of arising. However, this potential to emerge is God’s Creation, whether as the becoming of the world or as God’s becoming human. Or, as Eckhart says: ‘God works, and I come into being’ (Sermon 65, *MW* 331ff.). For the meaning of God’s becoming human is humanity’s becoming out of God and becoming God. By ‘becoming’ is here expressly not meant spatial progression or the temporal

cycle of becoming and expiring, but something happening in the now, working across time's chronological course, so to speak in another dimension, but always happening, without cease and at every moment of time. Otherwise, if this activity did not constantly happen, as a product of Creation, but also as a process of becoming human, everything would collapse into the vortex of nothingness. Becoming human and becoming an 'I' are entangled in this process. The offer is all-inclusive, but leaves the personal way open. In Eckhart's own words:

[...] the process, or the engendering and outflowing we are speaking of here, really happens first and above all in the arising instant. This does not happen in movement or in time: it is the goal and end of movement. [...] Therefore it does not logically pass into non-being, or sink into past time. But, if this is so, the process is always in the beginning. But then it is always with us: take away time, and evening becomes morning; and, if it is always as if "in the beginning", then birth is always, arising always: either never or always, because the beginning, or "in the beginning", is always. So it is that the son in the deity, the Word "in the beginning", is always being born, has always been born.¹⁵

By God's intent, revealed to us in the gradual unfolding of his Creation as revealed by scripture, and by his gracious adoption of humankind, true humanity becomes coordinate with being Christ. Eckhart expresses God's intent in terms of 'witness' and 'giving birth': that is to say, true being strives to break through into this reality of givens, which itself exists only by virtue of the same perennial process. For, in themselves, created beings would be nothing. But the process of God's Creation brings them together in a unity in which they are differentiated only by pure activity (God as sheer works, thus actively giving birth) and pure passivity (being born). Without this process of becoming in a creatural sense, nothing, again, would be revealed. It is only by virtue of this differentiated state, discerned by us in our earthly being, that we as individuals are able to see the way that existence is constituted and to live from that revelation. By this means, and by its sense of self, humanity moves into a higher realm of security in which it is consecrated, not conserved.

This as an art of living is fulfilled in terms of a liberation from impediments, *Gelassenheit* in Eckhart. There is also the joy of being liberated, enhancing comfort, a joy in partaking in the divine process: 'God works, and I come into being': even that (*cf.* Sermon 65, *MW, DW I*, 114,5). My works can become part of God's *Wirklichkeit*.

What was originally merely on loan now becomes our own. The image of God in humans is disclosed, and united with the primal image. God's becoming human reveals the true possibilities of human nature: being the image as

¹⁵ In John n.8, *LW III*, 8 f. Tr. into English from Dietmar Mieth's modern German *DMBR*, see on this *cf.* Mieth 2014a, 159f.

a process of birth, as truly being the son. Humanity joins the company of the Trinity, becoming, in Eckhart's German, *geborngot* (*EW* II, 288,9).

What I have described here, keeping close to the texts but using modern parlance, has another important point. Human corporeality is always a factor, and even co-penetrates God. For Eckhart does not distinguish the son of God become human and therefore become flesh from any non-corporeal person within the Trinity. Humanity thus stands above the angels, who are diaphanous spirits without individuality, because corporeality enjoys the dignity of Christ's being. As the body individualizes humans, in self-transcendence a remarkable ambivalence arises: while the path of self-transcendence leads away from individuality, and one loses one's individual name (John or Mary), it is only in individuality that the 'best perfection' can be achieved, where the body in the soul is taken into unity with God. This can be understood only if conceived in terms of dynamic relationships, and not combinations of substances. Eckhart thus revolutionizes ontology,¹⁶ and he is seen today as pioneering a processual structure of relationships, an interpenetration: the one is in the other after the manner of this other; the other is in the one after the manner of this one. In his mature work *Buch der Tröstung*, Eckhart celebrates this 'two in one' by the erotic image of fevered love (*cf. Divine Comfort, MW, 535; DW V, 30, 15ff.*).

6 An example of Meister Eckhart's teaching: self-transcendence on hearing the word of God, as inner resonance without particular preconditions

I cite Meister Eckhart's sermon on Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (*cf. John 4*) as an example of the way he treats the need for experience (*Erfahrung cf. Sermon 66, MW 58, 300–4; DW II, 108–25*)¹⁷. Here, Eckhart is not confronted with a requirement for a particularly deep level of knowledge on the part of his audience: in the words of the sermon's title – actually the initiating bible passage – they wish to be “good and faithful servants” (*cf. Matthew 25:21*) of their Lord.

¹⁶ *Cf. Matsuzawa 2018.*

¹⁷ *Cf. Mieth, Experience 2017 a., 195–197.*

Eckhart wishes, however, to show that, merely because his hearers have no access to a deeper experience of God, they must not think of themselves as *Knechte*, in the sense of performing only lowly services. Their feeling that they lack the necessary gifts creates the didactic situation: the audience regard themselves as being too ‘uncouth and ignorant’, and yet, in the sense of the sermon’s theme, want to be ‘good and faithful servants’ of God, and, as such, also accepted or appointed by God. They have no confidence in being *especially* accepted and esteemed by God. They may therefore be lay brothers of the Dominican Order. Eckhart’s didactic intention in telling the story of the Samaritan woman is to demonstrate that nobody is too ignorant to encounter God, in the sense of experiencing a turning point in his or her life. In his own words:

Ich spriche aber mê – erschricket niht, wan disiu vroude diu ist iu nâhe, und si ist in iu¹⁸ – ez enist iuwer keinez sô grop noch sô kleine von verstantnisse noch sô verre, er enmüge diese vröude in im vinden in der wârheit, als si ist, mit vröude und mit verstânne, ê daz ir talanc ûz dirre kirchen komet, jâ, ê daz ich tâlenc gepredige: er mac es waerliche in im voinde und leben un haben, als daz got got ist und ich mensche bin! Des sît gewis, wan ez ist wâr, und diu wârheit sprichet ez selber. Daz will ich iu bewîsen mit einem glîchnisse, daz stât geschriben in einem êwangelîô.

But I say yet more (do not be afraid, for this joy is close to you and is in you): there is not one of you who is so coarse-grained, so feeble of understanding or so remote but he may find this joy within himself, in truth, as it is, with joy and understanding, before you leave this church today, indeed before I have finished preaching: he can find this as truly within him, live it and possess it, as that God is God and I am a man. Be sure of this for it is true, and Truth herself declares it. I will show you this with a parable which is in the Gospel.

(Sermon 58, MW 301, Pr. 66, DW II)

The peculiarities of this sermon:

It is the *sole passage* in the German and Latin works of Meister Eckhart where a biblical pericope is translated word for word as a complete text. The text is also a narrative, likewise a rare device in Meister Eckhart. Here, the audience of a sermon is to be immersed in the experience of the Samaritan woman. This too is unique. The aim is the *equalization* of access to God and a lowering of the threshold in the sense of access without reserve, for all. If Eckhart is here defending the preaching of ‘learned’ sermons to the unlearned, the point is important for him on the threshold of his trial in Cologne (cf. *Divine Comfort*, MW 553ff., EW II, 310–13).

Above and beyond this didactic purpose, Eckhart’s intention is to dramatize his ‘dethroning’ of God, which might be summarized by his motto *was oben war*,

¹⁸ Cf. DW 1, 95.4 ff.: [...] *warumbe gât ir uz? War umbe blîbet ir niht in iu selben und grîfet in iuwer eigen guot? Ir traget doch alle wârheit wesenlich in iu.*

ward innen (or: what was remote became near), by raising the level of the water in the well: when the Samaritan woman drops the implements she needs to draw water, her pitcher and rope (mediations), this signifies her realization that the ‘true’ water is not bubbling in the depths, but as it were in her face at the well’s rim. She is, so to speak, eye to eye with Christ. Eckhart frequently says that he does not favor ‘seekers after God’, but those who allow themselves to be ‘found’.

I will here interpolate Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:6–42), first in Meister Eckhart’s ringing translation into Middle High German:

unser herre saz ze einem mâle ûf einem brunnen, wan er was muede. Do kam ein wîp diu was ein Samaritânâ von den *heiden*, und si brâhte ein kruoc und *ein seil* und wollte wazzer gewinnen. Und unser herre sprach ze ir: ‘wîp, gib mir ze trinkenne!’ Und si antwurte im und sprach: ‘war umbe eichest dû von mir trinken? Nû bist dû doch von den juden und ich bin ein Samaritânâ, und unser ê und iuwer ê hânt keine gemeinschaft miteinander.’ Dô antwurte unser herre und sprach: ‘westest dû, wer von dir trinken eischet, und bekantest die gnâde gotes, vil lîhte iechest dû mir trinken, und gaebe dir von dem lebendigen wazzer. Swer trinket von disem wazzer (hier im Brunnen), den dÛrstet aber; der aber trinket von dem wazzer, daz ich gibe, den endÛrstet niemermê, und von im sol entspringen ein brunne des êwigen lebens.’ Daz wîp merkte diu wort unsers herren, wan si engienc niht gerne dicke ze dem brunnen. Dô sprach daz wîp: ‘herre, gip mir trinken des wazzers, daz mich niht mê endÛrste.’ Dô sprach unser herre: ‘ganc und bring her dînen man’. Und si sprach: ‘herre, ich enhân keinen man.’ Dô sprach unser herre: ‘wîp, dû hâst wâr: dû hast aber vÛnf man gehabet, und den dû nû hâst, der enist niht dîn man.’ *Dô liez si vallen seil und kruoc und sprach ze unserm herren: ‘herre, wer bist dû? Dâ stât geschriben : als messias kumet, den man heizet Kristun, der so uns lêren alliu dinc und so uns diu wârheit kunt tuon.’* Dô sprach unser herre: ‘wîp, ich bin ez, der mit dir sprichet’, *und daz wort ervulte allez ir herze.* Dô sprach si: ‘herre, unser eltern die betten under den böumen ûf dem berge, und iuwer eltern von der jÛdischeit die betten in dem tempel: herre, welche von disen betent allerwærlichst got ane, und welches ist diu stat? Berihte mich des.’ Dô sprach unser herre: ‘wîp, diu zît sol komen und ist iezuo hie, daz die wâren anbetaere *niht aleine suln beten ûf dem berge noch in dem temple*, sunder in dem geiste und in der wârheit beten alsô den vater ane; wan got der ist ein geist, und wer in anebeten sol, der sol in anebeten in dem geiste und in der wârheit, und alsolîche anbetaere suochet der vater.’ Daz wîp war alsô vol gotes und Ûbervliezende vol und Ûzquellende von vÛlle gotes und wart predigende und rÛefende mit lÛter stimme und wollte allez daz ze gote bringen und vol gotes machen, daz si mit ougen anesach, als si selber ervÛllet was.[...]

Jesus antwÛrte, daz ist, daz er sich offenbâret waerlîche und genzlîche und al, als er ist, und ervÛllet den mensche alsô ÛbervlÛssiglîche, daz er Ûzquellende ist und Ûzviezende von Ûbevoller vÛllede gotes, als diz wîp tet in einer kurzen zît ob dem brunnen, diu vor gar ungeschicket was dar zuo.

Once our Lord was sitting on a well, for he was weary. Then came a woman who was a Samaritan (one of the *heathen*), bringing a pitcher and a *line*, meaning to draw water. And our Lord said to her: ‘Woman, give me to drink’. And she answered him, saying: ‘Why do you

ask me for a drink? You are one of the Jews and I am a Samaritan, and those of our faith and your faith have no dealings with each other'. Then our Lord replied, saying: 'If you but knew who it is who asks you for a drink, and if you knew the grace of God, you might perhaps have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you from the living water. Whoever drinks of this water [here in the well] will again become thirsty, but whoever drinks of the water that I give will never thirst again, and from it shall spring up a fountain of eternal life'. The woman was struck by our Lord's words, because she did not like going often to the well. So the woman said: 'Sir, give me some of this water to drink, so that I may never be thirsty again'. Then our Lord said: 'Go and fetch your husband', and she said: 'Sir, I have no husband'. Then our Lord said: 'Woman, you are right: you have had five husbands, but the one you have now is not your husband'.¹⁹ *At this she dropped her jug and line* and said to our Lord: 'Sir, who are you? It is written that when the Messiah comes whom men call Christ, he will teach us all things and make the truth known to us'. Our Lord said: 'Woman, I am he who is talking to you', *and at these words her heart was full*. 'Lord', she said, our fathers used to worship under the trees on the mountain, and your fathers the Jews worshipped in the Temple. Sir, which of these worship God most properly, and in which place? Tell me that'. Then our Lord said: 'Woman, the time shall come, and is now, when true worshippers *shall worship not only on the mountain and in the Temple*, but shall worship God in the spirit and in truth: for God is a spirit, and whoever worships him must worship in the spirit and in truth, for such are the worshippers the Father seeks'. At this the woman was filled with God, filled to overflowing, welling over with divine fullness, and she went preaching and crying out with a loud voice, wanting to bring to God everyone she saw, and make them full of God as she was full. [...]

And Jesus will answer, that is, reveal himself truly and wholly and totally, as he is, filling that man to overflowing, so that it comes welling up and running over with the overfull fullness of God, as happened in a short space to this woman at the well, who before was quite unready for it. (MW 58, 301ff.)

The story in the English Bible, John 4:6–42 (NIV):

6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' 10 Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.' 11 'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?' 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?' 13 Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks

¹⁹ Eckhart – concurring with allegorical tradition – likens the five men to the five senses by which it is possible to sin, and he likens 'the husband she does not have' to reason, which can lead to understanding, and shape the will.

this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' 15 The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.' 16 He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.' 17 'I have no husband,' she replied. Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.' 19 'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.' 21 'Woman,' Jesus replied, 'believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.' 25 The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' 26 Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you – I am he.' 27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?' 28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?' 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him. 31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' 32 But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about.' 33 Then his disciples said to each other, 'Could someone have brought him food?' 34 'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.' 39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did.' 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.'

My line of thought on this text is as follows: What *changes* does Eckhart make to the text in his translation? (references in italics in the text):

1. He provides the *sameritânâ* not only with a pitcher, but also with a rope. His purpose at first seems to be to make the text more vivid to his audience: the sense, however, as we shall see, lies deeper. In the course of the narrative, he provides a dramatic heightening, for, when Jesus reveals his special knowledge, Eckhart has the woman drop rope and pitcher with alarm.
2. Second change: the Samaritan woman, not Jesus himself, gives an account of the different religious laws of the Samaritans (Eckhart here calls them 'heathens': a reference to the normal term for Muslims!) and the Jews: praying on Mount

Gerizim and praying in the Temple at Jerusalem. The problem is thus raised by her for the Messiah to solve, with Eckhart here heightening the tension of the narrative by means of question and answer. We have to keep in mind here that the audience (perhaps in Erfurt) experience in their own lives the tension between Synagogue and Church (the buildings are a stone's throw apart!). *It is for this reason that Eckhart does not repeat at this point in his translation the words of Jesus reported here by John, 'Salvation is from the Jews'!* That would have compelled him to provide a specific commentary, but he has something else in mind here.

3. A third alteration to the text: instead of '*no longer* on the mountain or in the Temple' he says: '*not only* on the mountain and in the Temple'. The audience probably understand this in real-life terms as: not only in the synagogue and in the church here, in this place. In this way, Eckhart emphasizes 'worship in the spirit' – which the Father desires, according to Jesus' explicit testimony – not as the *dissolution* of previous places of worship, but as their *extension* to the individual: everyone can *also* worship God in his or her heart, as well as in the synagogue and the church; can have God find him or her, just as the Samaritan woman in all her imperfection had herself found by Jesus.
4. Eckhart speaks to his audience in a fourth alteration to the biblical text, seeking, with the immediacy and suddenness of the change in the Samaritan woman, to entice them into an immediate experience: in his version, the Samaritan woman reacts by breaking out in ecstatic jubilation. But *Jubil* is immediately translated into commitment: the woman becomes proactive, sets off and begins to preach in her village. What she has experienced so changes her that she becomes a messenger of the Messiah. The disciples' amazement at the situation – Jesus is speaking with a heretic, and a woman to boot! – *is not shared by Eckhart*. He is already clear in his mind: for him, Jews and Christians, men and women, even 'heathens' (Muslims), are actually included 'in the spirit'. Synagogue and Church are there, but what is important is what is going on *in the hearts of people*: the essential experience, and the consequent changing of lives.²⁰

Meister Eckhart

The hour is coming, and is already here, when true worshippers will worship the Father in the spirit and in the truth; for so does the father wish to be worshiped. God is spirit, and all who worship him must worship in the spirit and in the truth.

²⁰ For Eckhart, the heart is still intellectually informed; it is the centre of corporeal existence, out of which human beings think and understand.

‘Not only on the mountain or in the Temple’: so says Eckhart, instead of, as in John’s text, ‘neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem’; which would signify today, in the ‘spirit’ of Eckhart:

True worshippers will pray to God the Father or the Mother not only in Jerusalem, *not only* in Rome, not only in Mecca, but at all places in the gift of the spirit and in the truth that liberates.

The scene at the well, like the story of the Good Samaritan, is frequently portrayed in art. Many cities have their ‘Samaritan’s Well’ (a particularly fine example is to be found in Freiburg in Switzerland). Scenic details are important to the setting in Eckhart’s translation: the *rope* is used because the well is very deep (‘Jacob’s Well’ can still be seen; it is 32 meters deep, a fact that was presumably not unknown in Eckhart’s time).

The encounter with the woman is fraught with *misunderstandings*, as is often the case in John’s Gospel. The woman speaks of water at the empirical, physical level; Jesus of ‘living water’ at a metaphorical level. Similarly, the word ‘*schöpfen*’, ‘to draw’ (water, breath, confidence, hope, courage, etc.) can signify the sensual level. In order to relay water, a *vessel* is needed. The woman remarks quite soberly that Jesus does not even have a vessel for his water. *The human being is the vessel*. The human being is the ‘place’ of God. The life-giving power of God streams through human beings: through every human being. When the human being is the place, ‘places’ become secondary.

This raises the question: must we fight so over Jerusalem and Mecca, Church and Synagogue, like the Jews and the Samaritans over the mountain of true worship; like, later, the religions of the Christians and the Muslims, who, each in turn, took away the others’ places of worship to align them in another direction, the Christians towards Jerusalem, the Muslims towards Mecca; when it was always a matter of only one or two meters’ difference in the same easterly direction? Eckhart would have us ask what moves people to pray, what circumstance, and not to what point of the compass and what prominence they direct their prayer.

‘Life’, as in ‘living water’, links the two levels of body and soul. The water of the senses is necessary to life; the water of the spirit quickens life.

So the water of life is not the water that drives the mills of intellect (‘Paris’) and power (‘Avignon’). It is the water that comes to human beings themselves in their purified state, streaming into them. It is the moments in which human beings are more intensely alive. That is something different from merely living.

What (according to John and Eckhart) does Jesus mean by ‘in the Spirit and in truth’? Human beings themselves, as manifest creatures of God, are the new locations of worship. ‘For whom it fits’, Eckhart says on this point, for him or her ‘it fits everywhere’. A change of location does not bring a change of heart. We

recognize that change of heart by virtue of actions appropriate to it: 'Why do you venture out? You carry the truth essentially within you' (Sermon 13 *MW*; Pr. 5b, *DW* 95,6).²¹

We are used to separating places and people, especially by religions. Jesus removes this separation: in reminding us of humans as the central image of God in Creation, and by his own existence as a human, which guarantees the full presence of God.

With the Jesus of John's gospel, Eckhart's text says: '[...] the time shall come, and is now [...]'. It is by no means as if humans have to wait for something in order for the text to be realized. Christ comes anyway, through human beings, meaning that he comes not only among people of our own tradition and spiritual home, but also, to our embarrassment, among strangers. 'They were amazed that he was talking with a Turkish woman at the bus stop' would bring the disciples' reaction up to date in today's terms. The image is apt insofar as Eckhart's 'heathen' woman may well represent a Muslim (see above).

A final point of the sermon should not be overlooked: that a Samaritan woman, thus a 'heathen' up to now, is sent as a witness without being required to amend her life. This is conceived similarly to the tale of the sinful woman in Luke 7, who has shown 'great love', for which Jesus (as, later, explicitly Eckhart) is satisfied with the new direction in her life.

7 Analytical logic and metaphorical speech: understanding Eckhart's thinking

Eckhart can be understood today only when we consider that, as *magister* of theology in Paris, he is a metaphysician. His propositions and inquiries (*quaestiones*) operate at the logical-analytical level of metaphysical conjecture. His expositions of biblical texts, though, envision a doubling of language in terms of an outer 'shell' and an inner 'core'. Eckhart's sermons in Latin and German, which attest to his calling as a member of the Order of Preachers, belong, as he himself asserts, to the same active context as his biblical expositions; that is to say, they use this doubling of language to which metaphor is fitted. To depict by the use of metaphor is at the same time to imply an awareness of the linguistic frontier that it is precisely the task of metaphor to cross. In this context, a word refers to something

²¹ Cf. Sermon 2, *DW* I (8 *MW*): *Möhtet ir gemerken mit mînem herzen, ir verstündet wol, waz ich spriche, wan ez ist wâr und diu wârheit sprichet ez selbe.*

and at the same time refers away from itself. Jesus' phrase in John's gospel where he talks about praying 'in the spirit and in truth', whose exposition by Eckhart I have reproduced here, is given cogency by the fact that it leads beyond the classic 'places' of worship (Jerusalem, Mount Gerizim), without replacing them with any alternative location. The spatial dimension (and the temporal dimension too) is thereby transcended. By 'transcend' is here meant 'to refer beyond itself', or 'to describe something for which there is no specific word for rendering one to one the thing described'.

We cannot, therefore, understand the transcending self in the sense of a spatial change. Transcending in Eckhart's sense leaves space, time, and matter behind. It steps across the normal conventions of the anchoring of the self in place, time, and corporeality, but those conventions remain in place, although *sous rature* (as Derrida correctly perceived: 'under erasure', Derrida *apud* Margreiter 1997, 398). Now it is possible to understand this removal from space, time, and corporeality, in which location in space, time, and body nevertheless persists, as transcending into 'another state' (as remarked by Robert Musil in reception of Eckhart), insofar as this other state belongs to the human condition, for example in states of ecstasy, in sexual love, or in hate. This element is familiar to Eckhart. To him, the senses are ecstatic, and are the realm of longing and rage. But his understanding of the flux of transcendence is not primarily anthropological, but theological. That is to say, transcendence is not a product of humanity's search for God; God is the active party: 'pure *Wirklichkeit*', active always and now. Transcendence, then, is not setting up a ladder 'from below' to God, like the biblical Jacob's ladder often received in religious literature and art to represent the path 'from below upwards'. Eckhart speaks not of a ladder, but of a sudden *Durchbruch* ('breakthrough'), with humans not acting through their own power, but being drawn by a power whose thrust comes, as it were, into them from above. The human being, aware of this inner flux, and at the same time changing his or her life to fit it, transcends. Self-transcendence is therefore always conceived of from the aspect of its being enabled by God: thus theologically. Nicholas of Cusa discovered Eckhart for himself, received him, and took up these thoughts, while another recipient was Schelling in the 19th century. Ever since, there has been widespread interest in Eckhart's philosophy and theology, and in interfaith spirituality. What is specific to Eckhart is that he makes flux and movement the basis for his metaphorically-grounded verbalization of a process that binds the divine and the human realms. I suggest the image of a vertical ellipse with two foci, but in motion. This may be compared with an old-fashioned paternoster lift that never stands still, and takes you with it when you jump into it from the floor where you are at. Similarly, the human 'breaks through' by taking a leap into movement.

Eckhart is also able to liken constant flux to the water cycle: water comes from the spring via stream and river to the sea, where it condenses, forms clouds, which soak the ground with rain, so that springs burst forth.²² In this conception, there is no substance (perhaps in the sense of Panentheism as *deus sive natura*), but only relations. Relations define being, the verb defines subject and object. In a flowing movement, different signs exist only in passing. Immediacy reigns overall. There is no third interposed element. Markus Vinzent has recently shown how Eckhart himself eliminates mediators in other spiritual writers (Mechtild von Magdeburg) in favor of immediacy.²³ Here too belongs the doctrine of ‘non-distinctness’ between God and humanity, especially in the figure of Christ, but hence also in all who participate in the general process of God’s becoming human. In order that this should not be equated with the destruction of difference, Eckhart uses the figure of argumentation *distinctio per indistinctionem*, or ‘distinction by non-distinction’.²⁴ Behind this lies the thought that all distinctions need a category external to the thing to be contrasted, a ‘third’, to come to the aid of the distinction. According to Eckhart, this functions only if God and humans are distinguished as differently being, perhaps locating God as an *ens a se* beside other beings. This is not possible if, as Eckhart’s programmatic assumption has it, being is God (*esse est deus*). His position is that being cannot be doubled: God is not a stone among other stones. It is therefore not possible to distinguish categories of being. This is presumably what Derrida understood when he distinguished *différance* from *difference*. Eckhart attempts to represent immediacy as the ‘two in one’, thus as difference and unity at the same time, taking fervent loving union as an image, designating it as a metaphor but at the same time referring beyond it.

8 Self-transcendence on the way into the Modern Period

Eckhart’s spiritual influence during the transition from Late Medieval to Modern Period is marked by something of a hiatus. While the Dominicans Johannes Tauler (1301–1361) – received by Luther – and Heinrich Seuse (1300–1364) linked to him each in his own way, so that it is possible to speak of a ‘Dominican Mysticism’,

²² The motif of the water cycle may be found, for example, after Book of Wisdom 11:23, in Sermon 94 *MW*. It is also in Marguerite Porete’s *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (1927) in chapter 82, see *cf.* Mieth 2017c, 31.

²³ Mieth 2019.

²⁴ *Cf.* Mieth 2014a, 22.

Eckhart's problems regarding his reception by the Church were not without effect, above all in the Netherlands. Devotio Moderna, which was founded there by Gerrit Groote (1340–1384) as a spiritual counter-movement against Parisian scholasticism, promoting a life of penitence and retreat from the 'world', exerted an influence on Innerlichkeit, not only that of Erasmus of Rotterdam, but in spiritual Protestantism, which evolved into Pietism.²⁵ In many places, communities following Devotio Moderna were absorbed into Lutheran communities. Pietistic Innerlichkeit, in the sense of pious withdrawal, and linking with Devotio, leads from Eckhart and Tauler and their reception by Luther. Eckhart, Tauler, and Luther saw the rise of worldly commerce as an encouragement to self-transcendence rather than an impediment.²⁶ To Pietists, Innerlichkeit meant withdrawal from worldly superficiality. Like Devotio, it is thoroughly associated with handicrafts in the sense of the ideal link between prayer and labour. Eckhart's *Wirklichkeit*, as the re-enactment of God's works, and his Innerlichkeit in the midst of commerce, is associated with Pietism insofar as the latter sees Creation in the contemplation of the dynamic, and God at work in human lives. But Pietism lacks Eckhart's immediacy, independent of time and place, which may be termed *Durchbruch* ('break-through'). All of these movements are concerned with finding the correct, pious means for us to realize ourselves as human beings. It was accordingly a long time before Eckhart's vertical immediacy found intellectual consummation again in German Idealism (Hegel, Schelling).

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²⁵ Cf. Mieth 2017e.

²⁶ Cf. Mieth 2018.

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Magnus Schlette

The inward sublime: Kant's aesthetics and the Protestant tradition

Imagine great natural objects, scenes or events: waterfalls, the ocean churned up by stormy winds, or still and motionless, formations of clouds in the sky, thunder, deserts, a panther, preferably not behind bars but in its natural habitat. We may call all of this sublime, and if we do so, everybody will understand what we mean even if they do not agree. This general and colloquial use of our language refers to experience which for the first time was made a central subject of philosophical investigation in British 18th century aesthetic theory (cf. the classical overview of this tradition in Monk 1960). Joseph Addison and his successor, Edmund Burke, claim that we predicate natural objects or events as sublime if they have aroused the sensation of an 'agreeable Horror' in us (Addison 1965 [1711/12]). Whatever evokes the idea of pain and danger in an undirected lustful manner we call sublime (cf. Burke 1990 [1757], 36). The sublime experience (i.e. the experience of the 'sublime') is one of potential, but never of actual domination; personal safety is the prerequisite of our experiencing the sublime. Possible candidates have properties such as extensive size, overwhelming power, unpredictability, lack of contour or structure, infinity.

English philosophers give us a good description of what happens to us when we experience the 'sublime'. 'Horror' – and even more so 'terror'¹ – may be a strong word for our feelings, but it certainly points in the right direction. There is something repelling about the sublime – being brought about, as Kant says, 'by the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces' (Kant 1953 [1790], 91) – and this effect has to do with the threat that we sense in the sublime. This threat appears to be latent, since no effective and identifiable power is actually used against us, and therefore our repulsion contains, however faint and vague, *eerie* feelings. This is exactly what makes the sublime a source of 'horror'. Burke as well as Kant emphasize, though, that this repulsion is only an integral part of an experience that contains attraction as well: the horror – in Addison's original words – is 'agreeable'. Burke even gives etymological references to support his argument that the differentiation between horror and delight, repulsion and attraction is a merely analytical one. The Greek term 'thambos' means 'fear' or 'wonder', 'deinos' is 'terrible' or 'respectable' (Burke 1990 [1757], 54). Colloquial

1 'Indeed terror is always, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime' (Burke 1990 [1757], 54).

language proves, says Burke, that there are seemingly diametrically opposed feelings which are intrinsically connected, and the ‘sublime’ stands for (the source of) such ambivalent feelings. But neither Addison nor Burke has a satisfying answer to the question, though, as to *why* something that is identified as the source of a potential threat creates some sort of delight in us.² The relief we feel when we realize that we are not affected by a potential threat caused by extensive size, overwhelming power, unpredictability, lack of structure or infinity is not synonymous with the feelings the ‘sublime’ arouses in us. Kant clearly saw this predicament inherent in English theory (cf. Kant 1953 [1790], 110). I am not going out on a limb when I say that Kant’s ‘Analytic of the Sublime’ in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is the most influential philosophical approach to the phenomena in question. But although Kant’s phenomenal analysis bears much similarity to Burke’s, the core of the interpretation is diametrically opposed to that of Burke.

The sublime, according to Kant, is based on two different classes of phenomena. *On the one hand*, great natural objects, scenes or events, if they are of extraordinary dimension, transcend ‘every standard of sense’ (Kant 1953 [1790], § 25, 98). Therefore the imagination is incapable of comprehending what it has apprehended and representing it as a coherent form or a qualitative whole (cf. *ibid.*, § 26, 99). The feeling of the sublime marks precisely the *transition* from the limits of understanding to the incomprehensible. It is aroused when our imagination evokes the idea of theoretical (i.e. mathematical) infinity in us but cannot sufficiently represent it – to sum up Kant’s approach to the ‘mathematically sublime’. *On the other hand*, great natural objects, scenes or events may obviously transcend our power to resist them and therefore be a potential threat to us (cf. *ibid.*, 110). ‘But, provided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness; and we readily call these objects sublime, because they raise the forces of the soul above the height of vulgar commonplace [...]’ (*ibid.*, 110–1) – to sum up Kant’s approach to the ‘dynamically sublime’. Since these two concepts of the sublime are not mutually exclusive, something can be both mathematically and dynamically sublime, and often enough we would say that something is experienced as dynamically sublime because of properties which are the necessary and sufficient conditions of the mathematically sublime. In any case, the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime coincide in their contra-finality for their comprehension by us as rational beings. In Schiller’s words, the mathematically sublime rejects our *Fassungskraft* (‘power of comprehension’) and the dynamically sublime our *Lebenskraft* (‘power of life’) (Schiller 1992 [1801], 610).

² Burke offers some speculative explanations in reference to contemporary corpuscle theory, which to us do not sound convincing anymore. Cf. Burke 1990 [1757], 122–3.

Kant concedes that nature *causes* the experience of the sublime in us. Here he is still in agreement with Burke. But in contrast to the Englishman, he rejects the idea that nature is also the *object* of the sublime. Once for all he states that 'the broad ocean agitated by storms cannot be called sublime' (Kant 1953 [1790], 92) – but Burke would have claimed precisely this. For Kant the ocean is 'horrible'. Burke would have agreed. But while he would have taken exactly this property as substantial to the ocean's sublimity, for Kant the churned up waters are *just* horrible – and nothing else. Obviously Kant plays on Addison's words: The agreeability of the horrible (which creates horror in us) has a source that does not lie in nature (*ibid.*). According to Kant, in our supposed confrontation with the sublime in nature, we experience the contra-finality of nature as *illustrating* our ideas such as infinity, eternity, freedom and might which we nevertheless can *think* very well (cf. *ibid.*, 103) and – as far as they have (or should have) an impact on our practical life – *feel* committed to (*ibid.*, 116). Nature evokes these ideas in us, but in such a way that at the same time we are conscious of its inability to demonstrate the intelligible. Hence the experience of the sublime is the experience of the individual as belonging to the community of rational beings. It is an experience that makes us aware of the idea of humanity in us and of our infinite superiority to the non-intelligible, i.e. to physical nature. It is only by a 'certain subreption (substitution of a respect for the Object in place of one for the idea of humanity in our own self – the Subject)' (*ibid.*, 106) that we attribute to nature what actually is respect for our own vocation as rational beings. While our theoretical faculty of reason is mathematically sublime, our practical faculty of reason is dynamically sublime: Threatening natural objects or events might destroy our individual physical nature, but they could never even touch the rational vocation that defines our self-identity. In short: Organisms can be killed, not *persons*.

There are conceptual reasons for denying that Kant's theory of the sublime turned out the way it did because of his primary intention either to give a coherent interpretation of a phenomenon within his project of criticism and therefore to fulfill the standards of systemic coherence or to solve the immanent problems and imperfections of his predecessor's theories. *First*: Even if the author of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* was forced to interpret the sublime according to the epistemological standards set by the author of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, the final criterion for the validity of his theory is not systemic coherence but the appropriateness of the phenomenon's representation. Appropriateness again is defined by the probability of intersubjective rational consent. Therefore, explaining Kant's new way of thinking about the sublime by referring to the pressure of systemic coherence would provoke the question as to the origin of an increasing probability of intersubjective rational consent to Kant's theory of the sublime. *Second*: The claim that Kant represents the creative continuation of a particular tradition of aesthetic thinking

(Burke) by means of its immanent criticism does not explain why Kant adopted this particular tradition and not a different one. Basic philosophical intuitions may be articulated in certain vocabularies handed down by tradition, and they may be specified by the inferential pressure inherent in any philosophical vocabulary chosen or developed, but they arise somewhere else. I propose that they are rooted in fundamental *empractical* patterns of understanding, which have been incorporated by individual thinkers during their socialization.³ The very idea of *empractical* patterns of understanding serves a *heuristic* function in my argumentation. It facilitates the hypothesis that Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime' is founded in a collective attitude of mind as well as the correlating disposition to inner-directed experience and action which originates from the dominant version of Protestant piety in 18th century Germany. These originally religiously-generated attitudes and dispositions are weak determinant factors, in so far as they increase the chance that within a distinct frame of cultural space and time, which is dominated by Protestant inwardness, a way of thinking as it is displayed in Kant's idea of the sublime may emerge. From now on, I will call this way of thinking – in Kant's words, this 'Denkungsart' – simply and briefly, the worldview of 18th century German Protestant piety.

In the following I will present the integral function of aesthetic experience within Protestant piety according to its religious ethics (I) and thereby focus on Johann Arndt's *Wahres Christentum*, the best known and most acknowledged edification book among Protestant believers in the early 18th century. It presents a 'programme' for leading the Protestant believer to 'true' Christian life. Then I will illustrate the aforesaid function of aesthetic experience within the worldview of Protestant piety by a close reading of three prominent German poems, which reflect and poetically codify the Protestant-Pietist experience of nature.⁴ After a close reading of Paul Gerhardt's *Geh aus, mein Herz* (II), Gerhard Tersteegen's *Gott ist gegenwärtig* (III) and Barthold Hinrich Brockes' *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht* (IV) the results of the interpretations are discussed with reference to the concept of the sublime (V), which will lead me back to Kant. I read his concept of the sublime as a philosophical transformation of what I will call the Protestant-Pietist worldview (VI).

³ I call *empractical* patterns of understanding convictions about what the case is and what should be the case within the meaning-laden world. These convictions take the form of practical attitudes and dispositions, be they attitudes of mind and experience or dispositions of action, and are displayed in thought, experience and action. They are so fundamental that the individual may not even be conscious that she expresses them in her particular way of thinking, experiencing and acting. And they develop in processes of *longue durée*, which are capable of adopting the most heterogeneous contents.

⁴ For the complete original text of these poems see the appendix.

1 At the spring of Protestant piety: Johann Arndt and the 'silent Sabbath' of inwardness

Johann Arndt's *Vier Bücher vom Wahren Christentum* (1605–1609) was not just any publication among the diversity of edification books that flooded the book market of early 17th century Germany. It was more widely spread than any of Luther's books at the time. Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* and his *Paradiesgärtlein voller Christlichen Tugenden* (1612) 'may be looked at as the most influential devotional books in German Protestantism' (Schmidt 1979, 127; my translation – M.S.). Johann Arndt counts as the direct predecessor or even founder of Pietism (cf. Stoeffler ²1971, 202; Wallmann ²1986a, 14 (incl. fn 51); 1990, 15; Brecht 1979, 148ff., 153–4; 1993, 131; cf. Sommer 1988, 135–42 on the history of research about Arndt), whose protagonists not only read his books intensively but also translated and published them, prayed and taught out of them.⁵ 'In the late 1600s and early 1700s Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* was a common feature in almost every Lutheran family's private library in Northern Germany' (Wallmann 1986b, 176; my translation – M.S.), which is not even astonishing if one considers that between 1605 and 1740 this book was published in 123 editions (cf. Lehmann 1980, 114–5). 'Those who deal with Arndt', writes Johannes Wallmann to illustrate the importance of this author for German cultural history, 'do not ascend a lonely peak in the history of piety, but find themselves at the spring of a river that for centuries has traversed, irrigated and fertilized the land of Protestant piety' (Wallmann 1995, 5; my translation – M.S.).

In his *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum*, Arndt came to terms with his experience with the average piety of the Protestant population during the times when the denominations developed and differentiated.⁶ His book intends to

⁵ Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke published *Wahres Christentum*; Nikolaus Ludwig Graf Zinzendorf translated it into French; Spener published his *Pia Desideria* at first as a preface to Arndt's *Evangelienpostille*, before it was published separately and advanced to being one of the most influential theological texts of Protestantism itself. Spener also held the so called *Predigten über des seligen Johann Arndts Geistreiche Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (prayers on Arndt's *Wahres Christentum*) and published them in 1711 in Frankfurt, Germany. August Hermann Francke strongly recommends, in his *Idea Studiosi theologiae*, that Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* become the most personal reference to every student of theology and be maintained through his whole life (Francke 1969 [1721], 174).

⁶ Cf. Schilling 1988. On the pastoral motivation of Arndt's literary production cf. Mager 1992. Wallmann interprets Arndt as a frustrated parish priest whose long years of tiring and resignating pastoral work brought about his desire to search for the spiritual springs of belief in the Protestant (as well as Catholic) literary tradition (Wallmann 1995, 9).

overcome the denominational bounds in the name of a vital *praxis pietatis* that would unify all Christian believers.⁷ He wants to reach his goal with the idea of an *imitatio Christi*, which he interprets as the personal imitation of Jesus' life through ascetic self-discipline, the consequent rejection of worldly interests and a rigid exercise of Christian virtues. According to Arndt, we are obliged to lifelong repentance and this attitude should take the form of active contrition. Arndt is confident that true Christians may free themselves from the burden of sin caused by the transgression of Adam and Eve by resolute determination to virtuosic acts of repentance, while trusting the help of Christ as a 'doctor and spring'.⁸ The acts of repentance count on the help of Christ in a way that is analogous to the sick, whose care for their precarious health contains the regular use of their medicine. Consequent abstinence from all worldly affairs is the key orientation for the sinner's intended radical change. The turn to God progresses as a renunciation of the world by means of contemplation and reflexion.⁹ For Arndt, the love of God is primarily neither a practical attitude, nor the attention to the canonical religious texts (i.e. the bible). Instead, it is the realm of feeling where the believer 'meets' her God in loving togetherness.

Since there is nothing more beloved for the loving soul than Jesus, and no good higher and sweeter than God', our life would be 'the finest and most perfect if it returned to its origin, which is in God. But this can only happen if man goes within himself with all his might and renounces his knowledge, desire and memory of the world and all carnal affairs and turns his soul with all his desires to God through the Holy Spirit, rests and celebrates in distance from the world in a silent Sabbath; then God will begin to act on him

(Arndt 1845 [1605/09], 219, 325; my translation – M.S.)

Arndt presupposes that our soul is virtually different from the sinful world and that God, to whom man shall turn through contemplation, is 'inside' us and can be 'found' there.

⁷ Cf. Weber 1969. The purity of dogma has to be preserved, Arndt says, but the observance of a sacred life needs a much greater dedication: 'Die Reinigkeit der Lehre ist mit wachenden Augen zu bewahren; aber die Heiligkeit des Lebens ist mit größerem Ernst fortzupflanzen' (Arndt 1845 [1605/09], 310). Even Hans Schneider, who stresses Arndt's antipathy for the Calvinists, concedes that his edification book rejects the common *theologica polemica* of his times and adapts pre- and non-Lutheran traditions (Schneider 1992, 297).

⁸ 'Arzt und Heilbrunnen' (Arndt 1845 [1605/09], 136).

⁹ Arndt formulates this by combining the term 'Kehre' (a sharp turn or bend) with different prefaces ('hin', 'ab', 'ein', corresponding to the English prepositions 'to', 'off' and 'into'), which shall express that the practical orientations of turning to God, renouncing the world and contemplating the Christian truth 'in my heart' have the same root: *Hinkehr* through *Abkehr* by *Einkehr* myself.

With reference to a prominent passage in the Gospel of Luke, Arndt explains precisely what we should understand by man's affectionate contemplation of his loving togetherness with Christ. The intention of his edification book was to show, 'how you may search and find the Kingdom of God in yourself' (ibid., 319). Arndt understands the Kingdom of God in a rather spiritualistic sense. He locates it in particular mental states of the contemplating believer with a variety of sensuous and emotional qualities that are identified by the use of an appropriate vocabulary. The verbalization of the believer's 'togetherness' with his God serves as reflexive insurance, because – as Kant put it with his deistic skepticism – how does one know 'that it was God speaking to him' in his emotional *tete-à-tete* (cf. Kant 1998 [1798], 333). Arndt uses an imagery of sensuous affection to conjure up the inner experience of salvation that is supposedly spontaneous and culminates in mystical states. Again and again he suggests the sensuous qualities of salvation by analogy to aesthetic experience: The Holy Spirit pours itself into the believer's soul and puts it into a state similar to our experience of the sun shining from within, the day shining from within, the fountain flowing from within and the rain flowing from itself and dampening everything (cf. Arndt 1845 [1605/09], 320). This repeated analogy intends to express the 'quasi-sensible' state of religious experience that William James pointed to¹⁰ and founded in 'mystical states of consciousness'.¹¹ The intended 'peak' of mystical experience is reached by creating a 'peaceful silence' (*Stille*) brought about by the radical abstinence from all worldly affairs. It is conveyed by a 'darkness' (*Finsternis*) of the mind, which we have to understand as surrendering its work of processing outer data and delivering representations of the empirical world to us. The meditative contraction of our consciousness to a point of utter concentration culminates in a moment which Arndt predicates as the rise of the 'godly light'. His imagery of light illustrates the 'togetherness' with God as a form of permeation and illumination characterized by a synthesis of recognition and union (*unio mystica*). It may hardly be verbalized, though, because whatever happens in this ominous moment, 'neither mind nor will nor memory may grasp or keep' (Arndt 1845 [1605/09], 333; my translation – M.S.). Because of the immediateness of its experience it is not sufficiently accessible in retrospect and therefore cannot be appropriately represented. It is

10 In his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James argues (and also plausibly shows by interpreting conversion reports) 'that in the distinctively religious sphere of experience, many persons [...] possess the objects of their belief, not in the form of mere conceptions which their intellect accepts as true, but rather in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended' (James 1987 [1902], 64).

11 'I think that personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness [...]' (ibid., 342).

‘hidden in the most inward depths and substance of the soul’ (ibid.; my translation – M.S.). On the other hand, this incommensurability of the mystical experience may preserve its impact on everyday life, because what cannot be said appropriately maintains a never-dwindling source of interpretation and may be remembered as such: a mystical possession of the soul that has ‘the Kingdom of God and its happiness in itself’ (ibid., 331; my translation – M.S.).

Repentance, succession and regeneration are the central thoughts that are developed in the first three books of Arndt’s *Wahres Christentum*. Now these three books are followed by a fourth one, which combines the edificatory intentions with metaphysical contemplation. For Arndt, the manifold forms in nature are formulations of the *liber naturae*, in which the true believer, who has undergone the process of repentance, succession of Christ and final regeneration, may read the creator’s profession of loving us. Arndt intends to create the attitude of ‘tasting’ God’s love and feeling ourselves within it by evoking a sentimental emotion at the sight of natural beauty – thereby returning God’s love *by means of* an intentional stance toward nature. Our joy in nature and its usefulness for us have the status of a service. It makes us conscious of nature as a creation whose epitome we ourselves prove to be: the crown of creation as creation’s internal self-consciousness – being created by God to feel the joy at all the things we have at our (aesthetic and practical) disposal.¹² The consciousness of nature’s beauty as creation is a speculum of our soul’s own beauty and proves our resurrection as the image of God,¹³ which is why actually God celebrates himself as the creator of all things by means of our – in Kant’s words – aesthetic reflection. The true believer’s aesthetic reflection on natural beauty is a form of godly self-celebration.¹⁴

I said that Arndt intends to return God’s love by means of an intentional stance toward emotionally, sentimentally perceived nature. Of course, this is not the only way to return God’s love, and it is not the primary one. As the design of his edification book clearly shows, the metaphysical contemplation of nature’s beauty shall follow the believer’s repentance, his succession of Christ and his regeneration, which again is founded in generally inner-directed and particularly mystical

12 Arndt 1845 [1605/09], 417 (der Mensch, ‘von Gott geschaffen, daß er sich dessen freue, was er hat’).

13 Sommer 1999, 216: ‘Our amazement at the greatness of creation in all of its parts and of the care of God in it reaches a climax in the creation of man [...] The praise of God in his creatures and the beauty of the human soul, when God reflects himself in it – with this essential feature Arndt has returned to the beginning of the whole book’ (my translation – M.S.).

14 The fact that Arndt’s cosmology is based on the belief that God’s love had been objectified in nature may also have been motivated by giving a consoling answer to the apocalyptic cosmologies of the baroque, which read natural objects and events as signs of the end of all times. Cf. Kemper 1987, 34–65.

states of consciousness. The soul is the original 'location' where God is found, not nature. And the perception of nature's beauty derives from the experience of a beauty that is of a different kind: internal, non-sensuous, but 'quasi-sensible' (W. James), discovered in the most private mental states of the supposed 'togetherness' with God. Therefore it is Arndt's inner-directed piety that 'charges' the contemplation of nature sentimentally and turns the natural sphere into a reservoir of sentimental allegories, which not only appear in the 4th book, but generally and often in *Wahres Christentum*. The sentimental disposition of the believer toward nature is not the result of an immediate experience of nature, but its prerequisite. The subject becomes sentimental in his mystical experiences of permeation by and union with the godly might, and these experiences mediate the experience of nature, which is posterior to the latter.

Arndt's edification book intends to establish an aesthetically sensible, sentimental attitude toward nature as part of an overall concept of true piety. The goal of this piety is to guarantee salvation by means of quasi-sensible experiences through contemplation. *For the believer*, the object of this experience is God 'in myself'. I would thus like to call the basis of the true believer's certainty that she is on the right path *a relation to God expressed as an emotional inner-directed self-relation*.¹⁵ The object *in itself* of this relation is also relational (the *self*), but neither in terms of a reflexive nor in terms of an egological relation. We have to conceptualize it as a pre-intentional co-consciousness in any state of mind that this particular state of mind belongs to *me*.¹⁶ The self-relation (in terms of a relation to the non-egological and non-reflexive self) is *inner-directed*, when the mental states have been evoked by inner stimulation (by bodily sensations or thoughts). Inner-directed self-relation therefore means the relation to inner-directed mental states (states evoked by inner stimulation) that I am pre-intentionally and co-consciously aware of as *my* mental states. The self-relation is *emotional* in as far as it is an emotional relation to the inner-directed mental states in question. Of course it is cognitive, *too*, because I must be capable of *identifying* discrete states of mind, but more importantly these states of mind are subject to an emotional

15 In the following I will operate with the distinction of 'inner-directed' and 'other-directed' self-relations. These terms will be exclusively used in the way I define them. They do not bear any similarity of meaning to David Riesman's differentiation of 'inner-directed' and 'other-directed' characters in Riesman 1989.

16 The philosophical discovery of this non-intentional co-consciousness is one of the great achievements of late 18th century philosophy. Rousseau calls it *sentiment de l'existence*; Novalis, *Selbstgefühl*. Cf. Manfred Frank's brilliant reconstruction of the historical genesis of Novalis' *Selbstgefühl* in German 18th century epistemology (Frank 2002). Also cf. Schlette 2005b (particularly in reference to contemporary conceptualizations of this self-relation in the Philosophy of Mind).

relation; the self-relation's weight in the logic of belief derives from its emotional character. The second-order relation (i.e. the believer's relation to the relation he is as a self) is basically an *emotion-bound interpretation* of the first-order relation; it establishes what the object *itself* of the religious experience in question is *for the believer*. For him the first-order relation is a relation in which he not only relates to himself, but also to God ('in himself'). The believer interprets his first-order relation as a pre-intentional awareness of God. This interpretation is what takes place in a second-order relation to the (in itself relational) self, and it is emotion-bound, because for Arndt no cognitive relation may prove the authenticity of the supposedly identified mental state, but only the spontaneous emotional reaction to it.¹⁷

The attitude toward nature derives from the emotional inner-directed self-relation. I would like to call it an *emotional other-directed self-relation*. The first-order relation of the self in this case comprises the pre-intentionality and co-consciousness of myself in those mental states that have been evoked by *outer* stimulation (namely natural objects, scenes or events). Again, the second-order relation is basically an emotion-bound interpretation of the first-order relation. Also in this case the first-order relation is a relation for the believer in which he relates to God 'in himself'. Again he interprets his first-order relation as a pre-intentional and co-conscious awareness of God. But whereas in the inner-directed self-relation, the mental states that prove God's presence to the believer are founded in the 'depths of his soul', i.e. in situations of inner stimulation, in the case of other-directed self-relation the mental states that prove God's presence to the believer are founded in situations of outer stimulation (by nature). In short: Whenever I see (or have just recently seen) the beautiful natural, I feel God 'in myself'. Aside from the mere cosmological argument that nature is God's creation and God therefore – in the widest panentheistic sense – appears in nature, there is an experiential argument that God is present in nature. Because if I feel God in me whenever I approach the beauties of nature aesthetically, this presence of God 'in myself' must have been caused by something godly outside of me. But still I would not even sense it if I had not been previously assured of the existence of God in the mystical states of consciousness.

¹⁷ Actually the logic of pietist belief according to Arndt is far more complicated, because the spontaneous emotional reaction has to be made subject to an even higher-order observance. 'Examine the depths of your heart, how it is there', Arndt requires of the true believer (Arndt 1845 [1605/09], 148; my translation – M.S.); cf. other characteristic examples of the demanded observance in the records of Philipp Jakob Spener's pietist collegia: Spener 1979 [1687], 479 [and repeatedly]). This may initiate a *regressus ad infinitum* that leads into the struggle of penance (*Bußkampf*) which characterizes the most dominant form of pietism in the 18th century, the Hal-lensian pietism, established by August Hermann Francke. Cf. my reconstruction of the pietist logic of belief in Schlette 2005a.

It will be interesting to see how this 'logic' of piety – particularly the proportion between the inner-directed and the other-directed self-relations which Arndt introduces to us theologically – is expressed in a worldview, i.e. in empirical patterns of understanding. When I assign the texts I interpret to the *Arndtian tradition of Protestant piety*, then I mean this in terms of a *praxis pietatis* that has been most effectively explicated as well as initiated – although certainly not exclusively initiated – by Arndt's edification literature. I do not mean this in terms of *direct causation*. Although all of the authors I deal with were shaped by a religious milieu that was inspired by Arndt, it would not make sense to say that reading Arndt caused these authors to write and think the way they did. Growing up in this milieu greatly increased the *chance* that the way these authors thought, experienced and acted took the form it did. Let us now – using Pierre Bourdieu's distinction (cf. Bourdieu 1974, Chap. IV) – focus on an *opus operatum* that paradigmatically expresses the *modus operandi* of the piety in question.

2 'Go forth my heart and pleasure seek': Paul Gerhardt and the Protestant piety of nature

The *opus operatum* of inner-directed Protestant piety that I will discuss first is the church song *Geh' aus, mein Herz, und suche Freud*¹⁸ by Paul Gerhardt.¹⁹ Again this is not just one text among many, but the most well-known example of Protestant piety of nature.²⁰ Understanding this poem brings us to the heart of 18th century Protestant Germany. And it is no coincidence, as I will show, that Gerhardt's

18 'Go forth/out my heart and pleasure seek', as the title is usually translated in English editions.
19 Paul Gerhardt was born in 1607 in Gräfenhainichen (Palatine Saxony) and went to the royal school (Fürstenschule) in Grimma, before he began to study theology in Wittenberg in 1628. Between 1643 and 1651 he worked as a tutor in Berlin where he later worked as a deacon at St. Nicolai. Not willing to renounce his orthodox-Lutheran polemics against other confessions during church services, as he was required to do by the ruling prince, he was relieved of office in 1666. In 1669 he became deacon in Lübben (Niederlausitz), where he died in 1676. The most productive phase of his poetry was during his time as a tutor in Berlin. Between 1647 and 1736 his church songs were published in more than 40 editions of the Protestant hymnbook *Praxis pietatis melica*. Johann Georg Ebeling published the first complete edition of his songs in 1667 under the title *Pauli Gerhardi Geistliche Andachten*. Generally on Gerhardt cf. Bunnars 1993; on the poetological assessment of Gerhardt cf. Hillenbrand 1992; particularly on Gerhardt's song *Geh aus, mein Herz, und suche Freud* cf. *ibid.*, 101–106; Schmidt 1982, 285–302.

20 On the relation between church songs and Protestant piety in 17th century Germany cf. Brecht 1993, 188–203; on the religious poetry of nature in Germany cf. Krummacher 1976; Kemper 1981.

poem was added to 19th century editions of Arndt's *Wahres Christentum*. A close reading of it shall prepare the appropriate attitude toward the subject of the fourth (cosmological) book because Gerhardt's language evokes the very sentimentalism that correlates with Arndt's theology of piety psychologically.²¹

- 1) Geh' aus, mein Herz, und suche Freud' / In dieser lieben Sommerzeit / An
deines Gottes Gaben; / Schau an der schönen Garten Zier, / Und siehe, wie sie
mir und dir / sich ausgeschmücket haben.
- 2) Die Bäume stehen voller Laub, / Das Erdreich decket seinen Staub / Mit einem
gruenen Kleide; / Narzissus und die Tulipan, / Die ziehen sich viel schöner an
/ Als Salomonis Seide.
- 3) Die Lerche schwingt sich in die Luft, / Das Täublein fleucht aus seiner Kluft
/ und macht sich in die Wälder; / Die hochbegabte Nachtigall / Ergötzt und
füllt mit ihrem Schall / Berg, Hügel, Tal und Felder.
- 4) Die Glucke führt ihr Völklein aus, / Der Storch baut und bewohnt sein Haus,
/ Das Schwäblein speist ihr Jungen; / Der schnelle Hirsch, das leichte Reh /
Ist froh und kommt von seiner Höh / Ins tiefe Gras gesprungen.
- 5) Die Bächlein rauschen in dem Sand / Und malen sich und ihren Rand / Mit
schattenreichen Myrten; / Die Wiesen liegen hart dabei / Und klingen ganz
von Lustgeschrei / Der Schaf und ihrer Hirten.
- 6) Die unverdroßne Bienenschar / Zeucht hin und her, / sucht hier und dar / Ihr
edle Honigspeise; / Des süßen Weinstocks starker Saft / Kriegt täglich neue
Stärk und Kraft / In seinem schwachen Reise.
- 7) Der Weizen wächst mit Gewalt, / Darüber jauchzet Jung und Alt / Und rühmt
die große Güte / Des, der so überflüssig labt / Und mit so manchem Gut
begabt / Das menschliche Gemüte.
- 8) Ich selbst kann und mag nicht ruhn, / Des großen Gottes großes Tun /
Erweckt mir alle Sinnen: / Ich singe mit, wenn Alles singt, / Und lasse, was
dem Höchsten klingt, / Aus meinem Herzen rinnen.
- 9) Ach, denk ich, bist du hier so schön / Und läßt du's uns so lieblich gehn /
Auf dieser armen Erden: / Was will doch wohl nach dieser Welt / Dort in dem
reichen Himmelszelt / Und güldnem Schlosse werden!
- 10) Welch hohe Lust, Welch heller Schein / Wird wohl in Christi Garten sein! /
Wie muß es da wohl klingen, / Da so viel tausend Seraphim / Mit eingestimm-
tem Mund und Stimm / Ihr Alleluja singen!

²¹ On the mystical strains of Gerhardt's piety in his songs cf. Petrich 1914, 197ff.; van Anel 1976, 173–9. Gerhardt's piety of nature 'derives from Arndt's "LIBER NATURAE" and participates in the very old dogma about nature as the second book of God's revelation (next to the Liber Dei, the bible) that reaches back to Augustine and Origines' (Haufe 1978, 73; my translation – M.S.).

- 11) O wär ich da, o stünd ich schon, / Ach, süßer Gott, für deinem Thron / Und trüge meine Palmen! / So wollt ich nach der Engel Weis / Erhöhen deines Namens Preis / Mit tausend schönen Psalmen.
- 12) Doch will ich gleichwohl, / Weil ich noch / Hier trage dieses Leibes Joch, / Auch nicht gar stille schweigen; Mein Herze soll sich fort und fort / An diesem und an allem Ort / Zu deinem Lobe neigen.
- 13) Hilf nur und segne meinen Geist / Mit Segen, der vom Himmel fleußt, / Daß ich dir stetig blühe; / Gib, daß der Sommer deiner Gnad / In meiner Seelen früh und spat / Viel Glaubensfrücht erziehe.
- 14) Mach in mir deinem Geiste Raum, / Daß ich dir werd ein guter Baum, / Und laß mich wohl bekleiben; / Verleihe, daß zu deinem Ruhm / Ich deines Gartens schöne Blum / Und Pflanze möge bleiben.
- 15) Erwähle mich zum Paradeis / Und laß mich bis zur letzten Reis / An Leib und Seele grünen: So will ich dir und deiner Ehr / Allein, und sonst keinem mehr, / Hier und dort ewig dienen“ (Gerhardt 1992 [1667], 71).

Let us focus on the first stanza of Gerhardt's song.²² In our context, 'Geh aus!' has the performative meaning of an encouraging invitation to leisurely leave a closed space and enter an open one. The addressee of this invitation is metonymically referred to as the *alter ego* of the lyric self ('mein Herz'),²³ and thereby the dichotomy of 'inside' and 'outside' is specified as the opposite between the inwardness of emotional life and the openness for sensuous impressions.²⁴ As a form of the lyric self's invitation to itself, the beginning of the stanza expresses a relation, which contains the lyric self in two intentionally different ways: directly as the invitee and indirectly as the inviting instance. The poem takes off from an innerly self-relation, a way of addressing oneself to turn to the outside. Now, if one wants to seek pleasure in the outer world, it should be such that one may also find what one is looking for. The temporal reference 'in dieser lieben Sommerzeit' charac-

22 For a translation I suggest the following: *Go forth, my heart, and seek pleasure in this beautiful summertime, enjoying the gifts of your God. Look, see the beauty of the delightful garden's decorations and see how they have decked themselves out for you and for me.*

23 Another logically possible way of reading the formulation would be the assumption of another person that is referred to using a nickname. This version can be excluded considering the further context of the poem.

24 Bunnens' suggestion that the invitation to go out expresses the 'turn to God' is semantically unfounded and caused by the projection of the end of the poem into its beginning (cf. Bunnens 1993, 198). Lothar Schmidt also refers to the form of address, without having much to say. It was a common topos that could be shown in German lyricism from Friedrich von Hausen to Christine Busta, as he remarks (L. Schmidt 1982, 285). His claim this is a mere formula ignores the necessary interpretation and thereby fails to identify the logic of contentual development in this poem.

terizes the outer world as the most pleasurable natural season (certainly for most people in the 17th century). The suggested emotional dedication of the heart to a sphere external to the heart is corresponded to by reference to a natural season that is compatible with the sentiments of the heart.²⁵

So far the stanza lacks an explicit reference to God: It merely encourages the sentimental admiration of nature. But this is followed by a subtle indication (the last one until the 7th stanza) that Gerhardt wrote the church song with the intention of praising God: the pleasure may be sought for '[A]n deines Gottes Gaben'. The flourishing nature that has been evoked by reference to the natural season of summer is predicated as a gift of God, and this God is being called the God of the heart ('among the gifts of *your* [the heart's – M.S.] God'), which characterizes the joy felt at the sight of nature as a sentimental form of worship. Above all, if God is the God of the heart, then the relation to God is characterized by their 'togetherness', whose utmost possible privacy is reached through mystical states of consciousness.²⁶ The relation to nature and to God through his 'perception' in nature are subordinated to the latter. The gifts of God 'speak' to the heart that *originally* senses him inwardly and only secondarily becomes aware of him by outer stimulation.

The fourth line of the first stanza is the paratactical continuation of the preceding three lines, and it specifies the encouragement to 'go forth' as an invitation to *look at* the ornamental decorations of the natural beauties. The sentimental self (i.e. 'the heart') shall seek the pleasure of *aesthetically contemplating* nature. It is *not* encouraged to *practically engage* in its shaping, arrangement and practical exploitation. The scenery that is being evoked alludes to the peaceful idyll of the Garden of Eden, in which we see God walking among his creation with the pride of a successful craftsman (cf. Gen 3, 14). The aesthetic contemplation determines what the lyric self is specifically focusing on in nature. It is its decorativeness – in Kant's words: its aesthetic finality – that appeals to the contemplator. The fifth line says that the natural beauties have decorated themselves 'for me

25 This becomes obvious if you substitute the attribute 'kalt' (cold) for 'lieb' (lovely), which would ridicule the invitation, whereas a 'stormy' or 'hot' summertime would allude to the emotional opening as an erotically compulsive one.

26 This becomes more obvious, indeed, if you consider Gerhardt's poetic production as a whole. Lines like 'Was ist's, o Schönster, das ich nicht / In deiner Liebe habe' are formulated in the spirit of mystical contemplation that seeks visualization of the passion of Christ and unification with Jesus. Gerhardt was greatly inspired by St. Bernhard, whom he explicitly refers to as a primary source of his poetic imagination (cf. his *Passionssalve des heiligen Bernhards an die Gliedmaßen des HErm JESU*, containing Gerhardt's maybe most famous church song 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden', a masterpiece of poetry that belongs to the pantheon of German literature for its authentic articulation of German Protestant inwardness).

and you', suggesting that nature's aesthetic finality may unify reason and heart. This arrangement does not reveal an order, though, which has been established in nature by a gardener (whether it be man or God), because the gardens have decorated *themselves* ('Und siehe, wie sie [...] / Sich ausgeschmücket haben'): It reveals an order nature has established itself. God may be present in all the astonishing natural objects, but above all he is present in the 'heartbeat' of an organism that may unfold itself to the diversities of natural forms according to the immanent logic of its (the organism's) development.²⁷

Gerhardt evokes a harmonic correlation between aesthetic and teleological finality. And within Gerhardt's religious worldview, as it is being expressed in his church song, the explicit consciousness of nature's teleological finality follows the aesthetic awareness of its beauty. Accordingly, stanzas two to five refer to the beauty of nature,²⁸ before stanzas six and seven accentuate nature as a teleological ensemble.²⁹ It is not until the seventh stanza that God as the originator

27 The second half of the second stanza confirms this interpretation: 'Narzissus und die Tulipan, / Die ziehen sich viel schöner an / Als Salomonis Seide' (*the daffodils and tulips are dressed finer than in Salomo's silk*). These lines metonymically allude to Salomo's enormous wealth. But silk is also a symbol of the orient's aesthetic sophistication. Gerhardt indirectly approves of this because the comparison says that the delicate fabric that we associate with the name of Salomo is surpassed by the flowers, whose splendour adorns the gardens. Gerhardt may also have been inspired by Mt 6, 29, where Jesus tells his successors to learn from the lilies, which grow on the fields: they were not working, nor spinning, but even Salomo, in all of his splendour, had not been dressed as beautifully as any one of them. The passage in the bible is intended as an allegory of God's care, though. The same way in which God knows how to dress the useless flowers, he also knows to give man all he needs. This meaning is not preserved in Gerhardt's implicit allusion to the biblical text because for Gerhardt the beauty of nature derives from its own impulse to beautification. It is this impulse that is primarily of godly origin.

28 Nature's beauty is referred to as the movements and melodious sounds of the birds ('Die Lerche *schwingt* sich [...] [*the lark is swinging itself into the air*]; 'die [...] Nachtigall *ergoetzt* und füllt mit ihrem *Schall*' [*the nightingale enralls and fills with its song*]); the characteristic properties of the wild animals common to the habitat of Central Europe ('der *schnelle* Hirsch, das *leichte* Reh' [*the fast stag, the light deer*]); the sound and the quasi-artificial course of the creeks ('Die Bächlein *rauschen* [...] und *kränzen* sich [...] [*the creek is rustling ...*]); the pleasant order of the natural scenery as a whole ('die Wiesen tranken sich *dabei*' [*the meadows lie next to it*]). Being aware of the acoustic and visual stimuli merging to a qualitative unit, the heart may seek its pleasure. – L. Schmidt has mentioned the affinity of Gerhardt's song to the literary tradition of the *locus amoenus* (Schmidt 1982, 288). Gerhardt brings anacreontic and biblical motives to a harmonic fusion.

29 The teleological finality is merely seen out of a physico-teleological perspective, of course, that interprets the natural design as an order serving the needs of man (whereas it is logically possible to conceptualize the teleological finality merely in functional terms). Gerhardt refers to the honey production of the bees, the flourishing of the vine, the growth of wheat. Hillenbrand

of nature's finality is explicitly mentioned again. And here Gerhardt primarily points out the *aesthetic* qualities of nature again: Everybody, young and old, praises the great loving kindness of Him who 'so abundantly refreshes the human soul with a good many faculties' ('... so überflüssig labt / Und mit so manchem Gut begabt / Das menschliche Gemüte'). The essentially contemplative and aesthetic features of this song are confirmed even in those passages, which stress the utility of nature for man. These features are even more accentuated by the fact that the loving kindness of God is not only praised for the sake of nature, but also for the sake of the joy we may feel while contemplating nature's aesthetic and teleological finality. With no doubt 'a good many faculties' refers to our capability of feeling joy at the beauties of nature. The piety of nature expressed in the song culminates in the reflection that this pietist capacity of joy in nature itself came to be through God. From now on the lyric self expresses nothing but enthusiasm due to its insight into God's hidden effects on man. Therefore, the seventh stanza is the turning point of the poem: In what follows, the lyric self exclusively focuses on God, of whom it became aware through aesthetic contemplation.

It is not difficult to detect the relation to God by means of inner-directed and other-directed self-relations in the *opus operatum* (Bourdieu) of Gerhardt's song. The opening up to the world of summer can be decoded as an emotional other-directed self-relation, in which nature serves mainly as a confirmation of the qualitative content that is 'found' in the self's more fundamental inner-directed self-relation. This inner-directed self-relation is the experiential background of the poem and it is only indirectly evoked by the imperative phrase.³⁰ More specifically, the poem articulates a religious experience whose development may be reconstructed as the elevation of the self: from an *intuitive feeling of God* – which belongs to the inwardness of the (ideally) mystically aroused religious self (indirectly expressed by the implicit meaning of the imperative's address at the beginning of the first stanza); over the *sensuously mediated experience of God* – through the aesthetic (stanzas 1–5) as well as teleological (stanzas 6–7) contemplation of nature; and the *explicit recognition of God* – through self-reflection as

deciphers these passages as hidden biblical references that intend to evoke the 'eschatological dimension of salvation' (Hillenbrand 1992, 101; cf. *ibid.*, 103). Hillenbrand's interpretation is plausible, but it cannot disprove that the text primarily articulates a particular religious attitude toward nature. Thus it has maintained its attraction to Protestant believers and still is a prominent keystone of liturgy.

30 That is why the way from the inward to the outward relation to God by means of natural experience and back is not a hermeneutic circle, as Schmidt claims (1982, 290). The hermeneutic circle consists of preliminary judgments, their revision, transformation and reestablishment on a higher level, which for Gerhardt would be a blasphemously relativistic perspective on the revelation of truth in the inward states of mystical consciousness.

a contemplator of nature (stanza 7) as well as the reflection of nature as corresponding to the attitude of contemplation (stanza 7 and 8); to the *direct experience of God* – through the contemplation of his transcendence (stanzas 9–11), which ‘takes off’ from empirical experience by ascribing an allegorical meaning to some of the objects and facts experienced. The eleventh stanza is the peak of this elevation. The four last stanzas serve the function of an epilogue: The lyric self declares his humble acceptance of human faith (stanza 12) and prays for support in the struggle for religious authenticity and salvation (stanzas 13–15).

Gerhardt's song paradigmatically expresses the Arndtian worldview. It will be interesting to see how this worldview, which is commonly associated with the notorious forms of sentimentalism in 18th century Germany, proves to be fundamental to sentimentalist as well as rationalist attitudes of mind and experience. In what follows, I will contrast Gerhard Tersteegen's church song *Gott ist gegenwärtig*, a paradigmatic poetic example of religious sentimentalism, with Barthold Hinrich Brocke's poem *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht*, which is no less paradigmatic for the rationalist worldview. Both authors have been shaped by the Arndtian tradition of Protestant piety.

3 ‘let me [...] let you affect me’: Gerhard Tersteegen and the sentimentalist transformation of the piety of nature

Let us first take a look at Gerhard Tersteegen's complete poem, before we particularly focus on the sixth stanza³¹:

³¹ Gerhard Tersteegen, born in Moers in 1697, grew up in a Reformed family and went to the local Latin school for over nine years. Financial considerations caused his family to push him to move to Mühlheim an der Ruhr and start an apprenticeship as a merchant there. Tersteegen made contact with quietist circles and, after having had a conversion experience, he resigned the job his family had chosen for him and worked as a weaver until 1728, when he gave up this work to dedicate himself exclusively to religiously edifying activities in the context of quietism. He translated Jean de Labadie and Thomas a Kempis, wrote a collection of songs under the title *Geistliches Blumengärtlein inniger Seelen* and between 1733 and 1753 a major biographical work called *Auserlesene Lebensbeschreibungen heiliger Seelen*. The sermons he held between 1769 and 1773 have been published under the title *Geistliche Brosamen*. Tersteegen died in 1769 in Mühlheim an der Ruhr. On the literary significance of Tersteegen cf. Kemper 1997, 58–95; on the impact of mysticism on Tersteegen's opus cf. van Andel 1973 and – for the opposite reading – Wolff 1989. Whereas van Andel characterizes Tersteegen as a quietist mystic, whose piety contradicts the principles of reformation, Wolff accentuates its compatibility with Lutheranism. Also cf. the

- 1) "Gott ist gegenwärtig! Lasset uns anbeten, / Und in Ehrfurcht vor ihn treten. / Gott ist in der Mitte! Alles in uns schweige, / Und sich innigst vor ihm beuge. / Wer ihn kennt, Wer ihn nennt, / Schlag die Augen nieder, / Kommt, ergebt euch wieder.
- 2) Gott ist gegenwärtig, dem die Cherubinen / Tag und Nacht gebücket dienen; / Heilig! heilig! singen alle Engel-Chören, / Wenn sie dieses Wesen ehren; / Herr, vernimm Unsre Stimm, / Da auch wir Geringen / Unsre Opfer bringen.
- 3) Wir entsagen willig allein Eitelkeiten, / Aller Erdenlust und Freuden; / Da liegt unser Wille, Seele, Leib und Leben, / Dir zum Eigenthum ergeben: / Du allein Sollst es sein, / Unser Gott und Herre, / Dir gebührt die Ehre.
- 4) Majestätisch Wesen, möcht ich recht dich preisen, / Und im Geist dir Dienst erweisen ! / Möcht ich, wie die Engel, immer vor dir stehen, / Und dich gegenwärtig sehen! / Laß mich dir Für und für / Trachten zu gefallen, / Liebster Gott, in allen.
- 5) Luft, die alles füllet, drin wir immer schweben, / Aller Dinge Grund und Leben, / Meer, ohn Grund und Ende, Wunder aller Wunder, / Ich senk mich in dich hinunter: / Ich in dir, Du in mir, / Laß mich ganz verschwinden, / Dich nur sehn und finden.
- 6) Du durchdringest alles: laß dein schönstes Lichte, / Herr, berühren mein Gesichte: / Wie die zarten Blumen willig sich entfalten, / Und der Sonne stille halten, / Laß mich so, Still und froh, / Deine Strahlen fassen, / Und dich wirken lassen.
- 7) Mache mich einfältig, innig, abgeschieden, / Sanfte, und im stillen Frieden, / Mach mich reines Herzens, daß ich deine Klarheit / Schauen mag im Geist und Wahrheit. / Laß mein Herz Ueberwärts, / Wie ein Adler schweben, / Und in dir nur leben.
- 8) Herr, komm in mir wohnen, laß mein'n Geist auf Erden / Dir ein Heiligthum noch werden: / Komm, du nahes Wesen, dich in mir verkläre, / Daß ich dich stets lieb und ehre; / Wo ich geh, Siz und steh, / Laß mich dich erblicken, / Und vor dir mich bücken. (Tersteegen 1927 [1729], 235)

psychological analysis of Tersteegen's biographical development in Hoffmann 1982 and the publications on Tersteegen in Kock/ Thiesbonenkamp 1997. On the significance of Tersteegen's song *Gott ist gegenwärtig* for his overall piety cf. Ludewig 1986 (with a theological perspective on Tersteegen) and Kemper 1997, 58–95 (from the standpoint of literary studies). Tersteegen's songs are examined particularly in context of pietist song production in Althaus 1997.

Now, rather than starting at the beginning of Tersteegen's song, I would like to begin with the sixth of eight stanzas.³² Gerhard Kaiser (1996, 33) has pointed out that it ideally exemplifies how, within the mindset of 18th century pietism – almost a hundred years after Gerhardt's song was written – the sentimental experience of nature becomes independent from its original religious origins. My main intention in the following is to question this popular thesis, which has become common textbook knowledge about pietist literature in German Studies. Kaiser writes that this stanza articulates the sensitivity to ('Einführung in [...]') a precisely observed natural event. The flowers are not only a metaphor for the human soul, but according to Kaiser (1996, 34) they are described as entities that have a soul themselves. And he explicitly contrasts Tersteegen's individualized way of writing about nature with the supposedly merely allegorical approach of Gerhardt in *Geh aus, mein Herz, und suche Freud*. And indeed, Kaiser is right about the higher degree of poetic individualization in Tersteegen's poem. Whereas Gerhardt's poem seems to be about *experienced* nature, Tersteegen's deals with actually *experiencing* it. Whereas Gerhardt gives us a *panorama*, Tersteegen gives us a *situation* (of experiencing). But let us focus on the stanza more closely. What does the lyrical self *say* about the flowers? It describes the flowers' sensitivity to sunshine as a conscious act; the flowers unfold *willingly* and remain still in the sun. This formulation logically implies that flowers take an intentional stance toward their own sensuous states (which are caused by sunshine). But what the lyrical self says is not identical with what the text *means*. It does not mean that the flowers *intend* a qualitative mental state, and it does not mean that they *intend* to unfold and to remain still in the sun. It does not even mean that they have any qualitative mental states at all. The text does not give us a biological hypothesis about natural life. Instead, these lines can only be understood metaphorically. Let me try to reconstruct the logic of aesthetic perception that is expressed in the stanza.

It begins with the proposition that God (to whom the personal pronoun refers) permeates everything. This proposition formulates a conviction that can be interpreted either as a claim or an expressive statement. Our stanza does not make this conviction plausible; it *presupposes* its plausibility. Either the lyric self has proven it in the foregoing stanzas or it does not do so at all. In any case, the sixth stanza only continues with what follows from this conviction. Now it is unlikely, of course, that God's actual permeation of everything is meant in a physical sense. Therefore, the very use of the verb 'permeate' is metaphorical. It

³² As a paraphrasing translation I suggest as follows: *You permeate everything. Let your most beautiful light, my Lord, touch my face: How the gentle blossoms unfold willingly, and hold still in the sun: let me this way, quietly and gladly, grasp your rays and let you affect me.*

indicates the effect of God in the world (including his effect on man, of course) as a form of unification or fusion; it indicates a panentheistic worldview. This conviction makes the lyric self appeal to God with his request: ‘Let your most beautiful light, oh Lord, touch my face’ (‘laß dein schönstes Lichte, / Herr, berühren mein Gesichte [...]’). And we are right to believe that the Godly acts of permeation are metaphorically illustrated by the word ‘light’, since that refers to the apparently least material matter we may most clearly perceive and therefore ideally serves the illustration of a spiritual permeation. God’s might is visualized by its illustration as a light that he shall instruct to touch the face of the lyric self. But at this point Tersteegen manages a subtle fading of the noumenal into the phenomenal sphere. Strictly speaking, he would have to say that the light of God was told to permeate the soul or heart or even the mind of the lyric self (as the common mystical formulations go), but certainly not *touch its face*. The focus of the lyric self changes from the contemplation of God’s might to empirical sensuous experience. We witness a metamorphosis of the metaphorical use of the term to its literal use, from the metaphysical entity that permeates everything to the physical light that touches everything, from God to sunshine. We almost feel enticed to appeal to the lyric self with Gerhardt’s words: ‘Go forth, my heart, and pleasure seek [...]!’ But in contrast to Gerhardt’s heart, the lyric self in Tersteegen’s song does not need any invitation, although the context of our stanza gives us all rights to identify it with the same semantic sphere to which Gerhardt alludes by using the term ‘heart’ as a metonymical reference to the lyric self’s emotional inwardness. Why is that so? Why does ‘the heart’ in Tersteegen’s text not need any invitation to go forth and seek pleasure in the natural world? To answer this question we are forced now to consider the foregoing stanzas of Tersteegen’s song.

The song begins, in the first (and again in the second) stanza, with the exclamation ‘Gott ist gegenwärtig!’ (God is present!), and thereby introduces itself as a form of expressive communication. The lyric self never explicitly tells us exactly *in what* God is present; instead it evokes the idea in us of what it is to *feel* this presence. At first this feeling still seems to be integrated into a liturgical context.³³ But then the lyric self begins to worship in a way that fully abstracts from all possible aspects of communal experience. It reaches its destination in the fifth stanza, where the liturgical context has fully disappeared behind the emphatic expression of the self’s atmospheric stimulation: ‘Air that fills everything, in which we hover/ ground and life of all things that be, sea without bottom and end, wonder of all wonders ...’

33 Cf. the first stanza: ‘Lasset uns anbeten [...] Gott ist in der Mitte’ (‘Let us pray to God [...] God is among us’ [or: ‘God is in the centre’ – depending on the interpretation]). Cf. the songbook of the German Protestant church (EKG), where Tersteegen’s song is printed in the chapter ‘Service’ under the category ‘For the entry’ (‘Zum Eingang’) (EKG, no. 128).

(Luft, die alles füllet, drin wir immer schweben, / Aller Dinge Grund und Leben, / Meer, ohn Grund und Ende, Wunder aller Wunder,'). Hans-Georg Kemper does not fully grasp its character. He writes that 'in looking at nature the biblical-personal God [...] literally vanishes into the "air" and "ocean" – that is the elements' (Kemper 1993, 138; my translation – M.S.). In fact, the language does not – as Kemper claims – evoke a view or look *at* nature, but a 'quasi-sensible' awareness of God that is more appropriately described as an overall bodily sensation of inner (not outer) stimuli. This sensation temporarily revokes the subject-object-dichotomy, which is always implied when we visually focus on something (like the air or the ocean). Therefore we cannot speak of a natural experience in the strict sense of the word here, since it is not an experience of something that may serve as a distinct intentional object of the experiencing subject. 'Air' and 'ocean' are metaphors that illustrate the *nunc stans* of a mystical experience. They seem appropriate because it is their properties – a seeming *infinity* (air and ocean), *immateriality* (air) and, last but not least, a tactile bodily stimulation (ocean) – which create the impression of a *dissolution* in the surrounding waters that corresponds to the particular mystical state articulated by the lyric self. Its inner stimuli result in a sensitivity to the suddenness (symbolized by the infinity of air and ocean), the spirituality (symbolized by the immateriality of the air) and the 'quasi-sensible' lustfulness (symbolized by the dissolution associated with the ocean) of the experience. Consequently the stanza ends with the lines: 'I sink into you: I in you, you in me, have me fully disappear, only you to see and find' ('Ich senk mich in dich hinunter: / Ich in dir, Du in mir, / Laß mich ganz verschwinden, / Dich nur sehn und finden').

These lines directly precede the sixth stanza which begins with the proposition 'You [i.e. God – M.S.] permeate everything'. We can see now that it is the articulation of subjective, 'quasi-sensible' evidence gained by mystical experience. And we can also see why this experience seems to intrinsically move the emotionally aroused self toward the perception of nature, whereas in Gerhardt the emotionally determined self (i.e. the heart) needed an explicit invitation. The inwardness indirectly alluded to in Gerhardt simply must be *different* from Tersteegen's inwardness. The latter is much more sensuously determined than Gerhardt's. It is therefore determined to a greater openness to nature. The overall sensitivity to atmospheric stimulation is apt to turn the self to the outer world. Let us see now how precisely this attitude is formulated in Tersteegen's text. As we said, the request for spiritual permeation in the first two lines of the sixth stanza fades the noumenal into the phenomenal. What goes on in the lyric self is actually similar to the state of day dreaming, where we may suddenly become aware of already long-perceived, but not yet consciously represented data from the outer world, just because the contents of our day dreams dispose us to consciously focus on the perceived data. Analogously, the lyric self's sensuous contemplation of a God that may permeate

everything is disrupted by the sudden and immediate evidence of the sunshine which seems to touch everything in a gentle manner. The metaphysical contemplation has suddenly drawn the attention to a ‘physical’ fact and the perception of this fact superimposes the metaphysical contemplation. Therefore, the second line oscillates between the articulation of an inner and an outer sensation. More importantly, the perspective from which the outer sensations are consciously represented is determined by the previous inner sensation of God. Therefore, the proposition, which articulates the awareness of the ‘physical’ fact (namely ‘The gentle flowers willingly unfold and remain still in the sun’), is adjusted to the grammatical frame of a comparison, whose function is the formulation of an allegory.

Let us return now to the two crucial lines about the flowers. What the lyric self *says* is not what is *meant*, as I claimed in contradiction to Gerhard Kaiser’s interpretation. The lyric self suggests the sensitivity and intentionality of the perceived flowers. But considering the context, this means that a ‘physical’ fact is seen in the light of the self’s own mystical inspiration. It projects features into the flowers that are actually features of the self’s mystically generated disposition to a given experience at a given moment. After God has revealed himself to the self with inward, yet ‘quasi-sensible’ evidence, the self is prepared to see the world as it is articulated in the third and fourth line of the sixth stanza.³⁴ Consequently, the following two lines (‘let me this way, quietly and gladly, trasp your rays and let you affect me’) express another change of attention: They return to metaphysical contemplation that has merely been enriched by outer perception. In the seventh stanza, the lyric self appeals to God again: ‘Mache mich einfältig, innig, abgeschieden [...]’ (‘make me simple, heartfelt, isolated’). After our soul has been purified, Tersteegen once wrote, ‘God may well once grant us such holy delight (Divertissement) and promenade; yes, he may well lead us outside once to look at his depictions and illustrations, only to lead us back, then, inward to him, to contemplate the idea and essence of truth; and by going in and out like this with our Good Shepherd, we find pasture and food everywhere’ (Op. cit. *ibid.*; my translation – M.S.).

Unquestionably, Tersteegen’s depiction of nature shows a higher degree of individualization than Gerhardt’s. But the actual object of individualization is not the natural, but its experience, whose qualitative content does not derive from the perception of nature as something incomprehensibly unique, but from inward mystical experience and its projection into the natural sphere. Like Gerhardt, Tersteegen expresses a spirituality that establishes a relation to God by means of the

³⁴ According to Ludewig, the development of the song corresponds to the biographical development of Tersteegen’s piety. ‘In his later years’, says Ludewig, he found ‘a noticeably positive attitude toward nature’ (Ludewig 1986, 205; my translation – M.S.).

dialectic between emotional inner-directed and other-directed self-relation. I would like to compare Tersteegen's text with another poem now, which *prima facie* seems to show no affinities to Tersteegen's inwardness. Again my discussion of the following text serves to paradigmatically exemplify religiously determined attitudes toward natural experience in the context of the Arndtian tradition of Protestantism.

4 “In a reflective mood I saw”: Barthold Hinrich Brockes and the rational explanation of nature

The poem I would like to focus on is Barthold Hinrich Brockes' *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht*.³⁵ This is the complete text³⁶:

35 Brockes was born in Hamburg in 1680 as the son of a wealthy merchant. From 1691 to 1697 he went to the “Gelehrtschule des Johanneums,” thereafter to a college preparatory school. He studied law in Halle (a.d. Saale), then traveled extensively through Italy (1703) and continued his journey going to Geneva, Lyon, Paris, Brussels, Antwerp and Leiden, where he received a law degree. In December 1704 he returned to Hamburg. He married Anna Ilsabe Lehmann, the daughter of a merchant in Hamburg, and had twelve children (of whom four died before reaching their 18th birthday). In 1720 he was elected senator of Hamburg. For diplomatic affairs he met the kings of Denmark and Prussia and the Palatinate Prince of Hanover. Brockes wrote several librettos and founded the *Teutsch-übende Gesellschaft* in Hamburg. He was elected *poeta laureatus* by the German emperor for poetry published between 1721 and 1748 in nine volumes (the last one *post mortem*) under the title *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott*. Brockes died as a well-acknowledged patrician of Hamburg in 1747 and was buried in St. Nicolai. On Brockes' position between early Enlightenment and Protestant theology Chraplak 2015. On the relation between the sacred and the secular in Brockes' poetry cf. Fry 1990, on Brockes' position within the history of natural lyrics cf. Peters 1993 (with specific reference to Brockes' flower-poetry). On the sublime in Brockes' poetry cf. Zelle 1990.

36 A paraphrase of the contents of what follows (translation according to <https://sites.google.com/site/germanliterature/18th-century/brockes> [hit 30th of July, 2018]): In a reflective mood I saw / recently a cherry tree in blossom / on a cool night by moonlight; / I thought nothing could be more white. It was as if snow had fallen; / every branch, even the smallest, / carried a full and equal load / of delicate white round balls. / No swan is this white, for on each petal / -since the moon's soft light / permeates the delicate leaves - / even the shadows are white and without blackness. / Impossible, I thought, that on earth / anything whiter could be found.

Then as I wandered here and there / in the shadow of this tree / by chance I looked up / through all these blossoms into the air / and I witnessed a still whiter light / a thousand times so light, so clear, / so astonishing it almost bowled me over. / The snowy blossoms seemed almost black / set against this white gleam. A white light fell / into my face from a bright star / that shone right into my soul.

I thought as much as God delights me / in earthly things he has still greater treasures. / The greatest beauty of this earth / cannot be compared with that of heaven.

Ich sahe mit betrachtendem Gemüte
 Jüngst einen Kirschbaum, welcher blühte,
 In kühler Nacht beim Mondenschein;
 Ich glaubt, es könne nichts von größerer Weiße sein.
 Es schien, ob wär ein Schnee gefallen.
 Ein jeder, auch der kleinste Ast
 Trug gleichsam eine schwere Last
 Von zierlich weißen, runden Ballen.
 Es ist kein Schwan so weiß, da nämlich jedes Blatt,
 Indem daselbst des Mondes sanftes Licht
 Selbst durch die zarten Blätter bricht,
 Sogar den Schatten weiß und sonder Schwärze hat. Unmöglich, dacht ich,
 kann auf Erden
 Was Weißers angetroffen werden.

Indem ich nun bald hin, bald her
 Im Schatten dieses Baumes gehe,
 Sah ich von ungefähr
 Durch alle Blumen in die Höhe
 Und ward noch einen weißern Schein,
 Der tausendmal so weiß, der tausendmal so klar,
 Fast halb darob erstaunt, gewahr.
 Der Blüte Schnee schien schwarz zu sein
 Bei diesem weißen Glanz. Es fiel mir ins Gesicht
 Von einem hellen Stern ein weißes Licht,
 Das mir recht in die Seele strahlte.

Wie sehr ich mich am Irdischen ergetze,
 Dacht ich, hat Gott dennoch weit größere Schätze.
 Die größte Schönheit dieser Erden
 Kann mit der himmlischen doch nicht verglichen werden (Brockes 1992
 [1721/48], 38).

The first stanza of the poem evokes a situation of spontaneous contemplation whose objects are the blossoms of a cherry tree under a full moon.³⁷ The past tense of the text indicates that the lyric self is retrospectively evoking a past experience. In the first four lines it communicates its utmost astonishment about the

37 The poem does not mention a *full* moon, but we have to presuppose it, otherwise the effect of the blossoms would not be physically believable.

perceptual impressions caused by the cherry blossoms. Their whiteness is said to have transcended everything the lyric self has experienced so far (cf. line 4). The following four lines specify the phenomenon in question; the next four lines deliver an explanation for its cause, before the stanza ends in the last two lines with a confirmation of the phenomenon's outstanding character. The specification of the phenomenon as well as its explanation are framed by the lyric self's asseveration that the characteristic properties of the cherry blossoms overwhelm the power of comprehension. Their whiteness on that very night was not just whiter than the usual appearance of this colour 'on earth', it was outstanding. And although the lyric self undertakes a close rational investigation of the phenomenon – which proceeds by careful and detailed observation and results in a 'causal theory', according to which it was the particular mode of light radiated by the moon that created the stunning effect³⁸ – the rational act of comprehension surrenders to the impression. Impossible, the lyric self concludes, to find anything on earth that could be even whiter!

Indeed, the analytical description and causal explanation of natural phenomena hardly serve the *sufficient* representation of these phenomena in Brockes' poems. The poet writes about nature in the tradition of the *liber naturae* cosmology; and the objects observed always reveal a higher order than the merely functional one, which we may define in physical terms.³⁹ But usually an admission of nature's incomprehensibility refers either to its *teleological complexity*, presupposing a *principally* understandable finality,⁴⁰ or to the *aesthetic* 'drama'

38 Cf. line 10 and 11: 'Indem daselbst des Mondes sanftes Licht / Selbst durch die zarten Blätter bricht [...] (since the moon's soft light permeates the delicate leaves).' *Kirschblüte bei Nacht* gives a rather modest example of Brockes' rational way of looking at nature. The poet often displays a 'rational matter-of-fact style', which often enough proceeds according to an order that is demonstrated by 'the succession of theorem, proposition, line of reasoning and inference', as Wolfgang Martens has shown in reference to his poem *Die Heide* (Martens 1989, 269, 266; my translation – M.S.).

39 On the tradition of the Book of Nature and Brockes' adaptation of Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* and Christian Scriver's book *Seelenschatz* cf. Fry 1990, 252–69.

40 In *Das Blümlein Vergissmeinnicht*, Brockes clearly articulates his confidence that man – a proper, namely pietist, mind presupposed (cf. Brockes' first stanza of his poem *Die Welt* (Brockes 1992 [1721/48], 18)) – may successfully read (in) the Book of Nature: 'In so viel tausend schönen Blättern / Aus dieses Weltbuchs A B C / So viel, so schön gemalt, so rein gezogne Lettern, / Daß ich, dadurch gerührt, den Inhalt dieser Schrift / Begierig wünschte zu verstehn. / Ich konnt es überhaupt auch alsbald sehn / Und, daß er von des großen Schöpfers Wesen / Ganz deutlich handelte, ganz deutlich lessen' (Brockes 1992 [1721/48], 77). The following stanza from *Die Welt* does not contradict this confidence: 'O unbegreiflichs Buch! O Wunder-A B C! / Worin als Leser ich und auch als Letter steh!' (ibid., 21). The wonders of nature may factually never be fully comprehended by us, but only because we are always restricted by a partial perspective on the whole, of which we are part. Brockes would never question the fact that nature is principally

of natural events, which mysteriously show the harmony of its elements and thereby *indicate* their baffling finality,⁴¹ or it even refers to the *teleological faculty* of perceiving the natural order through its delightful appearance. But incomprehensibility is seldom described as a single 'secondary quality' *as such* that is said to be outstanding as it is in *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht*. You may hardly find a more significant example for the *principal surrender* of rational explanation to the 'wonders' of nature than in this poem, since the incommensurability of the perceived object is not at all explicable in teleological terms. Neither is the fascinating object fascinating as something mysteriously teleological, nor as something that mysteriously illustrates the finality of the natural order. It is simply fascinating as something that is mysteriously white, whiter than anything that has ever been white before.

The fact that we are not likely to find anything 'on earth' whiter than these cherry blossoms even prepares an outbidding of the superlative. While casually strolling in the tree's shadow – caused by the 'gentle' moonlight, we may suppose – the lyric self, as it reveals to us in the second stanza, becomes aware of an even whiter white, something so indescribable that Hermann Glaser called it rather enthusiastically a 'super-white infinity' (Glaser 1980, 25–7). Indeed, this white – the lyric self is talking about a 'bright star' (st. 2, line 10) – is not from this world, it is literally extraterrestrial and therefore evokes the idea of the infinite in us that we usually associate with the common features of the universe. What Walter Benjamin said about the aura of natural objects – that they were 'the unique appearance of something distant, no matter how close it might be'⁴² – surely characterizes the lyric self's impression of the cherry blossoms. But even more so it fits to the perception of the starlight. In both cases, a metaphorical meaning of 'distance', illustrating the incomprehensibility of the aesthetically experienced object, may stand for the colour; but in the second case even the literal meaning of distance is appropriate: The star's colour is from another actual world, a world

comprehensible, and he even thinks, again, that we are also principally capable of comprehending, as long as we as true believers transcend our partial perspective: 'Laß grosser Schreiber!', the stanza continues, 'mich im Buche dieser Erden / Zu Deines Namens Ruhm / ein lauter Buchstab werden!'.

41 Let me exemplify this by a stanza out of *Die Sonne*, which deals with sunrise: 'Drauf erzeugt dein Glanz und bildet / Farben, Morgenröt und Tau, / Malt, bepurpurt und verguldet / Das gemischte Silbergrau, / Und der Himmel scheint ein Schleier, / Der aus Rosen, Gold und Feuer / (Von der Luft Saphir bezirkt) / Wunderbarlich schön gewirkt' (Brockes 1992 [1721/48], 117).

42 According to Benjamin, we define the aura of natural objects 'als einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag'. His example: 'An einem Sommernachmittag ruhend einem Gebirgszug am Horizont oder einem Zweig folgen, der seinen Schatten auf den Ruhenden wirft – das heißt die Aura dieser Berge, dieses Zweiges atmen' (Benjamin 1980 [1935], 479).

that is infinitely far away. And although the lyric self rather dryly remarks that it was 'almost half astonished' by that sight (st. 2, line 7), we are not puzzled by the fact that this light emotionally arouses the self, as it openly admits in the last line of the second stanza. Maybe after the surprise of the cherry blossoms nothing can really increase its astonishment anymore. The fact is that the light shines into the self's soul in the same way it was sought to 'touch the face' of Tersteegen's lyric self and would have warmed the 'heart' that is addressed in Gerhardt's poem.

In Brockes' text, we actually seem to find what we missed in Tersteegen's and Gerhardt's church songs: the conceptualization of the natural as something that may surprise us by its qualities. The cherry tree clearly does not serve the lyric self as a mirror of religious projections; it therefore does not seem to be the external, yet integral part of a pietist self-relation. In *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht* the lyric self is not oriented inwardly – just the opposite: it is overwhelmed by something unexpected, which awakes its curiosity. The rational investigation, anticipating the great spirit of the naturalist societies which rise in the later half of Brockes' and the beginning of the following century, proves this curiosity. We would expect, now, to find the lyric self in the third stanza praising the Lord for the wonders of nature, which so astonishingly outrule its power of comprehension and surprise it with ever new qualities. But irritatingly the opposite is the case: The contemplation of the starlight makes the lyric self conscious of God's even 'greater treasures' that it cannot become aware of sensuously. How is this sudden change of mind possible? Why does the self, after the cherry blossoms and the starlight have evoked the idea of the infinite, of the superior, turn away from nature and deny its impression by minimizing it in relation to the wonders of God?

The *prima facie* interpretation is as follows: Brockes 'stages' the increase in beauty from the terrestrial blossoms to the extraterrestrial starlight because he wants to introduce us to an allegorical meaning. The starlight is a sign for the heavenly beauties, which are incomparably greater than the earthly ones. The lyric self reads this sign correctly, and with him so do we. But I do not think that this interpretation is appropriate to the text. Let us therefore take a look again at what was happening in the summer night we read about. Let us suppose that the poem reconstructs an experience. Let us suppose that it is *really* about someone walking around in a mild early summer night and suddenly becoming aware of the incommensurable materiality of whiteness that characterizes cherry blossoms in full moonlight. In my opinion it would not make any sense to suggest that this person, by accidentally focusing on the stars,⁴³ would abruptly

43 Brockes makes it quite clear that the change of focus is accidental: 'Indem ich nun bald hin, bald her [...] gehe/ Sah ich von ungefähr [...]' (*Then as I wandered here and there ...*).

shift from immediate sensuous perception to allegorical reflexion. It would not make any sense to presuppose that the self *originally* intended the starlight as an allegorically meaningful object referring to the treasures of Heaven. That would not be plausible for the simple fact that within the logic of the very experience articulated there is a 'primacy of perception' over understanding. The starlight, if intended *accidentally*, would first have to be perceived in the same way the cherry blossoms had become subject to the lyric self's attention. More precisely, the experience must have proceeded in the following way: The self, attentionally occupied with the whiteness of the blossoms (1), continued its walk and caught the stimulus of some other 'whiteness' (2), on which it then intentionally focused (3), identified as a star (4) and succeeded to compare with the whiteness of the previously perceived blossoms (5), before it finally ascribed an allegorical meaning to it (6), which it retrospectively articulated according to the dichotomy of 'earth' vs. 'Kingdom of Heaven' (7). The allegorical understanding is the final result of an experience that is based on the primacy of non-allegorical perception.

What follows from this? Simply that the cherry blossoms and the starlight originally belong to the *same*, namely the physical, sphere. The allegorical interpretation displayed in the third stanza does *not* represent a previous 'allegorical perception'.⁴⁴ And therefore it does not represent an astonishment that derives from the allegorical meaning of the perceived object. The lyric self's excitement is directly linked to the primordial (non-allegorical) perception of the starlight. The third stanza represents a thought (st. 3, line 2: 'Dacht ich') that has been motivated by the perception of the 'super-white infinity' (Glaser). We already encountered this thought in the 9th stanza of Gerhardt's song, in which the lyric self also 'thinks' that the Kingdom of Heaven must be indescribably (more) beautiful, since God had already created so much beauty in *our* world.⁴⁵ But we have to consider that Gerhardt's 'point of departure' differs from Brockes'. Whereas Gerhardt's poem indicates the primacy of inner-directed self-relation, Brockes' 'enlightened' self seeks to still the curiosity which has been evoked by the unpredicted quality of superior whiteness. Brockes' lyric self is not encouraged to seek

⁴⁴ Principally 'allegorical perception' is possible. This would mean that with the prerequisite of the according dispositions something is spontaneously perceived as representing an absent entity. Exactly this is not the case with Brockes' lyric self in *Kirschblüte bei Nacht*. It perceives an astonishing whiteness, 'an even whiter glance', before it can identify this as the appearance of a star whose exceptional brightness may serve allegorical purposes.

⁴⁵ 'Ach, denk ich, bist du hier so schön / Und lässt du's uns so lieblich gehen / Auf dieser armen Erden: / Was will doch wohl nach dieser Welt / Dort in dem reichen Himmelszelt / Und güldnem Schlosse werden!' (Ah, I think, if you are so beautiful here and show and show us such lovely sights on this poor earth, how wonderful it would be, after this world, there in the rich heavens and life in the golden palace).

the relation to its God in an other-directed self-relation which is defined by clearly determined dispositions. Brockes' lyric self is simply outdoors. It happens to find itself wandering around. It does not project, it curiously perceives.

Therefore, the thought of the lyric self, which we get to know in the third stanza, is not motivated immanently by the development of the poem. After the lyric self has enthusiastically surrendered to the incommensurable impressions of blossoms and starlight, it suddenly and mysteriously denies the sensuous evidence of natural greatness in the name of intelligible, clearly non-sensuous evidence. Denied is not only the primordial impression of the cherry blossoms, but also the primordial and non-allegorical impression of the starlight, in so far as both belong to the empirical sphere of sensuous perception. They could not be compared, as the lyric self claims, to heavenly beauty. The starlight may only serve to illustrate the 'much greater treasures' as an allegorical sign, as a stimulus for metaphysical contemplation. But as the natural source of sensuous and incommensurable impression, its quality is denied. The surrender of the rational observer to the incommensurable beauty of the natural sphere, whether terrestrial or extraterrestrial, which the self attentionally became aware of, is finally turned into the opposite: the surrender of natural beauty to the greater one of intelligible entities, which – as we must add – are not sensuously perceivable, but reveal themselves *inwardly*.

We see now that Brockes' poem finally re-establishes the relation to nature as an other-directed self-relation – which was also expressed in Gerhardt's and Tersteegen's poems and which we find in many of Brockes' poems. But whereas in the case of Gerhardt and Tersteegen it was made plausible as an internal aspect of a primarily inner-directed self-relation, Brockes' text starts out rather differently. It does not allude to any sort of inward contemplation or even *unio* with God. Instead the self is originally set into the openness of unpredictable sensuous perception. Only the apodictic judgment in the third stanza hints at the fact that every aesthetic relation to nature is an other-directed relation to God in me and that it is subordinate to the relation I can directly establish with the Creator.⁴⁶ – How do our results make sense in relation to the concept of the sublime?

⁴⁶ J. A. H. Reimarus has handed down to us that Brockes – similar to the logic of the piety of nature displayed in Tersteegen's text – used to begin his service in nature with the service in church (Strauß 1876, 8).

5 The inward sublime

First of all, none of the three poems discussed deal with the kind of natural phenomena which Burke or Kant would call candidates for the sublime. Gardens, particularly flowers, and more so ‘secondary qualities’ such as colours are neither mathematically nor dynamically sublime. They are of no incommensurable extension, they do not come with any vagueness or obscurity that may create unease in us, and they certainly do not appear to us as a potentially dangerous power. Instead, they are simply beautiful. Still, we may find traces of the sublime in Tersteegen’s text. Whereas Gerhardt’s *Geh aus, mein Herz* is restricted – in Kant’s words – to the sphere of aesthetic and teleological finalities, Tersteegen’s *Gott ist gegenwärtig* clearly goes beyond it. But he does not do so in the sixth stanza, where he refers to the natural world (namely the ‘gentle flowers’), but in the fifth, in which the lyric self circumscribes the *unio* with God within the inner-directed self-relation. ‘Air’ and ‘sea’ are characterized in their incommensurable extension (‘air that fills everything’, ‘sea without bottom and end’). But here they serve as metaphors for the ‘sublimity’ of God in us. And obviously the powerful might that we associate with the sea (and with the air, where we do not try to visualize oxygen, but the open sky and wind) does not create unease in the lyric self, because it actually *intends* to ‘disappear’ into this might. The attribution of unease (or horror) to the experience of the sublime presupposes the will to resist and to maintain autonomy, but exactly this is not the case in mystical contemplation. In Tersteegen’s song, the mystical relation to God via inner-directed self-relation is characterized in terms of the sublime. But it is the *inward* sublime, which in the following stanza prepares the lyrical self to contemplate natural beauty.

Brockes’ text, like Gerhardt’s, does not reveal any traces of the sublime. The cherry blossoms as well as the starlight are referred to as *beautiful* (indirectly in st. 3, line 3), and indeed both would not fulfil the criteria of sublime objects. In fact, according to Kant their outstanding whiteness would not even be called beautiful in the strict sense of the word, as it is defined by the validity claim of an aesthetic judgment. Mere ‘secondary qualities’ such as colours may evoke a ‘positive emotional reaction of the subject in his relation to the world’ (Kulenkampff 1978, 75; my translation – M.S.). But this emotional reaction, according to Kant, defines the agreeable, not the beautiful. Agreeability is neither a sufficient nor even a necessary condition of an aesthetic judgment that evaluates the beautiful, because beauty, in Kant’s terms, is a function of the interplay of our cognitive powers, engaging our imagination and the epistemic categories of quantity, quality, modality and relation. Thus, an object is beautiful if it is final to

this interplay, not just emotionally agreeable.⁴⁷ But certainly the praised whiteness in *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht* fulfils Burke's criteria of the beautiful, which differ substantially from Kant's concept. By beauty, Burke means 'that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it' (Burke 1990 [1757], 83), and he clearly stresses that beauty is no matter of proportion – as Kant's finality of the beautiful object to our cognitive powers surely is – and therefore 'demands no assistance from our reasoning; [...] the appearance of beauty as effectually causes some degree of love in us, as the application of ice or fire produces the ideas of heat or cold' (ibid., 84).

Burke's definition of the beautiful yields to those characteristics that Kant exclusively ascribes to the sublime, namely the incommensurability and/or incomprehensibility of the aesthetic object. And he puts emphasis on the possible suddenness which may accompany the perception of beauty. This definition fits perfectly to the experience of the lyric self in Brockes' poem. The whiteness of blossoms and starlight surprises the attentionally perceiving self, who repeatedly stresses the incommensurability of the perceived. The whiteness resists the self's 'causal theory' about the physical origin of the stunning impression and therefore proves to be incomprehensible. By minimizing the physical beauty in relation to the metaphysical, yet non-sensuous, beauty, Brockes denies the exceptionality of an appearance that is particularly characterized by effects on the perceiver – namely incommensurability and incomprehensibility – which Kant ascribes to objects commonly called 'sublime'.⁴⁸ Therefore it will be interesting to see how Brockes deals with the sublime in the strict sense of the word. Let us take a look at a stanza in his poem *Die Sonne*:

Siehet man des Meeres Breite,
 Muß man nicht erstaunt gestehn,
 Daß die ungeheure Weite
 Fast entsetzlich anzusehn?
 Dennoch schwimmt, samt dem Gefäße,

47 On the difference between the agreeable and the beautiful, cf. Kulenkampff 1978, 75–8; Früchtl 1996, 69–71. Früchtl points out that aesthetic judgment is to be located somewhere between determinant experience judgment and mere perception judgment, and suggests calling it a third order-perception judgment – which is a judgment about the agreeable object that can be generalized, since it abstracts from the mere agreeability of the object in favour of its finality to our cognitive powers.

48 According to contemporary aesthetic theories, we may even have some reason to ascribe sublimity to the phenomena in question. At least *prima facie* there seems to be an affinity between the 'super-white infinity' in Brockes' poem and monochrome paintings, which Lyotard refers to as examples of the sublime in modern art.

Dieses Weltmeers Tief und Größe
 In der Sonnen Meer von Glut
 Wie ein Tropf im Weltmeer ruht

(Brockes 1992 [1721/48], 116, stanza no. 45).⁴⁹

The stanza clearly refers to the natural sublime. But – unlike the first two stanzas in *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht* – it does not take the personal perspective. It wants to prove a general point about the sublime in nature, as the impersonal form in the first line ('If *one* sees the width of the ocean') shows. First it refers to the ocean's 'enormous expanse' that is 'almost terrible to look at'. This is reminiscent of Burke (1757, 53) ascribing the effect of terror to the sublime. The reservation of its being *almost* terrible creates the impression of a defensive attitude toward the object by trying to play down what actually would be overwhelming. 'Nevertheless', the stanza continues, the ocean and the planet that contains it swim in the glow of the sun. The overwhelming features of nature, which are exemplified by the attributes of the ocean rather than precisely observed, are neutralized by something even larger that is brought into play. The ocean is described as small compared to the sun, no matter how large and terrible it may appear at first. Now, it may seem that one case of the natural sublime has simply been just outdone by another case that arouses our sentiments even more intensively. But from the beginning of the poem it is clear that the sun serves an allegorical function: it pictorially illustrates a metaphysical truth. No immediate and unpredicted perception is articulated, as it is in *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht*. Instead, *Die Sonne* is a hymn on a star, and the depiction of its sublime properties as well as their sublime effects on the world – which, by the way, are not said to create the least feeling of terror in us, although its dominating might is clearly admitted in several stanzas – serve as symbols in the worship of God. The approach therefore is neither motivated by a sudden phenomenal surprise nor by the curiosity of the natural scientist who wants to understand the astonishing. In short: it is not phenomenological like in many of Brockes' other poems, including *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht*. It is allegorical from the start. The hymn-like appeal to the sun serves as a 'bridging principle' to turn the reader's attention to the godly properties and the praise of the Creator. The poem is a praise of God mediated by the praise of the sublime sun. It stimulates our respect for the infinite, the eternal and the mighty in us, which brings us to the actual inhabitant of these attributes. It expresses

⁴⁹ *If one sees the width of the ocean, doesn't one have to astonishingly admit that the tremendous vastness is almost appalling to look at? Nevertheless, this ocean's depth and size floats with its vessel in the sun's sea of blaze like a driblet rests in the ocean.* (My translation – M.S.)

a relation to God by means of an other-directed self-relation.⁵⁰ Clearly the sun's incommensurable and incomprehensible greatness, since it illustrates the metaphysical greatness of God, is thought to be a faint image of the latter, which is non-imaginable. Therefore it is denied (by minimizing it) after it has successfully done the job of 'leading' us to God:

Edle Quelle güldner Klarheit,
Deine Größe, Kraft und Pracht
Zeigen uns die große Wahrheit,
Daß der Gott, der dich gemacht
Unbeschreiblich schöner, größer,
Unaussprechlich heitrer, besser,
Unbegreiflich herrlicher,
Höher und gewaltiger (Brockes 1992 [1721/48], 116, stanza no. 64).⁵¹

Let me summarize: Tersteegen, as well as Brockes, ascribe predicates of the sublime *primarily* to God whom we, again, *primarily* sense inwardly. The contemplation of nature may evoke our idea of God and our feelings for him in us, because it refers to him, but it does so in a rather platonic mode: like a faint image of the original idea. Just as we must know the original idea to be capable of identifying something as its (faint) image, the relation to God by means of an other-directed self-relation is founded in a relation to God that is established by an inner-directed self-relation. In Gerhardt's texts, as well as in Tersteegen's and Brockes', we can detect the conceptualization of nature as an integral element of the pietist self-relation. Here, nature is subject to the disposition of seeing 'outside', what is felt 'inside'. The way nature is perceived reflects states of consciousness which are caused by inner stimulation. But Brockes' *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht* exemplifies a disposition that goes clearly beyond this. The objects (blossoms and starlight) attentionally perceived surprise, dazzle the perceiver, whose disposition toward nature is based on curiosity for the new, for the unknown and non-predicated – let it be cherry blossoms or

50 Cf. the 56th stanza: 'Wenn man, was wir hievon lesen, / Und, was glaublich ist, erwägt, / Welch ein majestätisch Wesen / Gott der Sonne beigelegt, / Was für Macht er drin gesenket, / Ruft mein Herz, das dies bedenket: / Welch ein König! Welcher Thron! / Welch ein Reich und welche Kron!' ('If we consider ... what a majestic nature God has given to the sun, the might He has bestowed her with, then my heart, while contemplating all of this, exclaims: What a King, what kind of throne, empire and crown'; my translation - M.S.).

51 *Noble source of golden clarity, your size, power and splendour show us the great truth, that this God who made you, is indescribably more beautiful, greater, ineffably more cheerful, better, incomprehensibly more glorious, much higher and tremendous.*

flies or whatever natural object the wanderer may run into in Brockes' poems. But it is also guided by an eagerness to explain it. In the end, however, this disposition is not carried through the whole process of the articulated experience. The factual incommensurability and incomprehensibility of the perceived *as such* – whether it repels the perceiver or not⁵² – makes her turn to a metaphysical contemplation of these characteristics and evaluate the actual stimulus of this contemplation as minor to the intelligible content of what is perceived. The *factual* incommensurability and incomprehensibility of the natural object is minor to the *ideas* of incommensurability and incomprehensibility, which are part of our contemplation of God and the 'Kingdom of Heaven'. Incommensurability and incomprehensibility are central features of the sublime. Brockes' poem *Die Sonne* confirms the logic of reinterpreting natural phenomena, as was displayed in the final stanza of his *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht*: The factual sublime is minor to the idea of sublimity, which is originally stimulated by the former and which is part of our contemplation of God. The natural sublime is surpassed by the inward sublime.

6 Kant's aesthetics and the Protestant tradition

Let us finally return to Kant. I previously argued that the particular form which his theory of the sublime takes cannot be explained merely in terms of systemic coherence and historical reference – whether critical or affirmative – to predecessors. I argued that it had to be understood as an *Ausdrucksgestalt*, an expressive articulation of empractical patterns of understanding, which originate from the Arndtian tradition of Protestant piety. But I also restricted the 'empractical' to a heuristic concept, whose plausibility depends on empirical evidence, i.e. on the results of the foregoing interpretations. According to these results, Gerhardt, Tersteegen and Brockes are different, though structurally related, examples of the inward worldview, whose concept of nature is determined by an other-directed self-relation, which derives from an inner-directed self-relation. The poems analysed display this other-directed self-relation without explicitly dealing with it. The other-directed self-relation is expressed in the way the poems semantically make sense of their

⁵² Hans Blumenberg characterizes Brockes – not very charmingly, but trenchant – as an 'honest' poet, who displays a 'homely' attitude toward the world and was 'pedantically busy' to teach us the wonders of creation. He calls Brockes' *Irisches Vergnügen in Gott* an edifying book for the 'placid senses' of the bourgeois (cf. Blumenberg 1986, 180, 181, 182). The incomprehensible, particularly the sublime, despite its fascination may very well have repelled a character like Brockes.

topics; it determines – again borrowing Bourdieu's words – the *modus operandi* of the *opera operata*, which have been discussed. Another *opus operatum*, expressing a worldview that has been shaped by the inward tradition of Protestant pietism, is Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime'. It is the philosophical transformation of the inward sublime we found in the previously interpreted texts, particularly of an attitude toward aesthetic incommensurability and incomprehensibility, which Brockes displays in *Kirschblüte bei der Nacht*. Let me once again refer to one of Kant's central passages that clearly locates the sublime inwardly and interprets the outward sublime as a comparatively insufficient presentation of the inward: 'All that we can say is that the object lends itself to the presentation of a sublimity discoverable in the mind. For the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather concerns ideas of reason, which, although no adequate presentation of them is possible, may be excited and called into the mind by that very inadequacy itself which does admit of sensuous presentation' (Kant 1953 [1790], 92). But the fact that a specific sensuously perceived object may present the inward is not simply arbitrary. The 'substitution of a respect for the Object in place of one for the idea of humanity in our own self' (*ibid.*, 106) has a *fundamentum in re*. The object is incommensurable, it is incomprehensible: it does not just *seem* to be so. But this substitution is only possible under the condition that we are already acquainted with the ideas of the incommensurable and incomprehensible, which *as such* – as ideas – may clearly be comprehended by thinking them (*cf. ibid.*, 115). Our awareness of the gap between what may be perceived and what may be thought, i.e. 'the feeling of the unattainability of the idea by means of the imagination, is itself a presentation of the subjective finality of our mind in the employment of the imagination in the interests of the mind's supersensible province, and compels us subjectively to *think* nature itself in its totality as a presentation of something supersensible, without being able to effectuate this presentation *objectively*' (*ibid.*, 119). 'Thinking nature', which arouses our restricted faculty of imagination, is nothing else but an invitation to its allegorical interpretation; Kant, too, stands in the tradition of the Book of Nature.

But, of course, the meaning that is allegorically understood by *thinking* nature as presenting something supersensible to us differs substantially from the poets' understanding of the matter. Kant gets rid of all ontological claims regarding the supersensible, whose awareness is being aroused by nature, and he is sceptical about its personalization as God. From a subjective standpoint, he writes in *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, religion is the recognition of all our duties in terms of godly commandments (Kant 1998 [1793], 822). The validity of these duties does not derive from their supposed godly origin because this origin is a mere hypothesis. It derives from our consent to them, because as rational beings belonging to the 'space of reason' (Sellars), we are *intrinsically* forced to

agree upon them. For various *practical* reasons, we may (and even *should*) represent these duties *as* godly commandments. But this practical acknowledgement does not have any ontological consequences, nor is it based on such. Kant argues similarly about the sublime. Whereas the discussed poets seek the contemplation of *God* by means of the perception of nature, Kant seeks the stimulation of *ideas*, the dignity of which derives from the mere fact that we are capable of thinking them. We may represent those ideas, of which we become aware through the supposedly sublime in nature, as attributes of God, but this personalization does not represent any ontological knowledge. What we actually become aware of with the utmost certainty is our faculty of thinking the infinite, the eternal, the almighty. And whereas Brockes, Tersteegen and Gerhardt were also and even primarily aware of God by means other than the contemplation of nature, according to Kant we have an internal faculty which enables us to think the supersensible without any reference to the ‘outer’ world. All three of those poets presuppose a relation to something supersensible by means of an inner-directed self-relation, which integrates an other-directed self-relation. But within the Protestant tradition of piety, the correlated ‘other’ within this inner-directed self-relation is understood as God (‘in us’); whereas Kant conceptualizes it as ideas, which on the one hand are generated by our individual activity of thinking (thereby being ‘in us’, so to speak), but on the other hand transcend this activity by their objective, i.e. logical validity.

In as far as the natural sublime makes us aware of our intelligible faculty, it is functionalized for the inner-directed self-relation of rational beings. We may think the *noumena* without being aware of thinking them. But then the natural sublime puts us in a state of ‘monitoring’ our faculty of thinking, thus making us aware of our superiority over the phenomenal sphere. Particularly the dynamically sublime has a practical impact on our everyday life, since it is predestined to arouse the awareness of a moral vocation in us that is superior to all sensible motivations of our actions. At one point, Kant claims that we generally say of a man ‘who remains unaffected in the presence of what we consider sublime, that he has no *feeling*’ (ibid., 116). But according to his argumentation, we may also say that being affected by the so called natural sublime *causes* a feeling in us. It is a feeling for our moral commitments as rational beings and their superiority over the phenomenal sphere, and it is conveyed by the confidence that we – as rational, as moral beings – may prevail over (our) nature. Consequently, it is *psychologically* important in everyday life because it helps the individual who has become entangled in his ordinary affairs to (ever again) sensuously discover his supersensible vocation as a *subject* (cf. Früchtl 1996, 481–90). According to Kant’s theory, the awareness of our faculty of thinking seems to make our normative commitments valuable to us. We are supposed to intrinsically follow our vocation, but the fact that we confidently do so, although we are factually more likely disposed to fail, seems to be based on

the fundamental satisfaction we gather from consciously thinking the *noumena*. Otherwise it would not make any sense to associate any sort of attraction with the sublime because the attraction merely derives from the attention it draws to our own faculty of thinking the (specifically practical) ideas. Thinking them seems to result in evidence that not only forces practical consequences on us, but also makes them valuable to us.⁵³ The ideas are valuable as the outcome of inferential thought.

But how can our mere thought be the source of practical values that direct our actions? Following Kant's argumentation, the reader gets the impression that thinking the ideas seems to elevate us over ordinary life in a way similar to that of religious believers crossing the threshold from the profane to the sacred. For Kant, the 'sacred realm' is an inward sphere, too: we may be stimulated by nature to cross the threshold, but when we do so, we shut ourselves off from the phenomenal sphere. Kant does not explicitly point to the quasi-religious implications of his theory, but Schiller has clearly seen them. In *Über das Erhabene*, which he wrote as a sort of supplement to his *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, the individual experience of the natural sublime, which he interprets within the framework of Kant's theory, is characterized in a way that resembles classical reports of conversion experiences.⁵⁴ Indeed, the natural sublime is the source of 'conversion'. It is not a conversion to God, but to our vocation,⁵⁵ which becomes sensible to us in moments of enthusiasm caused by nature. Nature may stimulate us to discover our vocation, but ultimately we discover it 'inside'.

53 The recognition of the moral law means both: the understanding of its inferential necessity and the respect we feel for it. Cf. Kant 1998 [1785], 28.

54 'Das Erhabene verschafft uns also einen Ausgang aus der sinnlichen Welt [...]. Nicht allmählich [...], sondern plötzlich und durch eine Erschütterung reißt es den selbständigen Geist aus dem Netze los, womit die verfeinerte Sinnlichkeit ihn umstrickte [...]. [...] so ist oft eine einzige erhabene Rührung genug, dieses Gewebe des Betrugs zu zerreißen, dem gefesselten Geist seine ganze Schnellkraft auf einmal zurückzugeben, ihm eine Revelation über seine wahre Bestimmung zu erteilen und ein Gefühl seiner Würde, wenigstens für den Moment, aufzunötigen' (Schiller 1992 [1801], 612). Bjørn K. Myskja emphasizes the moral significance of the sublime and he clearly sees its importance in initiating a conversion as a necessary condition for cultivating the character. Cf. Myskja 2002, 194–203, 216–23. Myskja's book offered a great deal of inspiration when writing this essay.

55 According to the phenomenological description of Kurt Goldammer, a conversion 'takes place when a new truth has been recognized, a new and deep dimension of the Sacred, of the will of God, has been disclosed and has led to an inner change, when a new path to salvation is found, when a new life begins [...]' (Goldammer 1960, 454–5; my translation – M.S.). In terms of Kant's philosophy of religion, we may say that indeed a truth is discovered, and indeed this discovery leads to an inner change and a new beginning in life. But the truth derives from the reasonable validity claim of our practical ideas, and it is contingent that we represent this truth as the will of God. By thinking the ideas and consequently acknowledging them as our guiding principles in life, we also take something like a path of salvation: it leads us to our 'Glückswürdigkeit' and our unanimity with ourselves.

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Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt

Transcendence and freedom: on the anthropological and cultural centrality of religion

The fact that rigorous philosophical thinking is not possible without reference to transcendence, as it is also expressed in the notion of God, was already instilled in platonic and neo-platonic antiquity, which emphasised the dependence of human thought on transcendence. Defenders of religion in modernity have called to mind these references to transcendence with respect to the systematic of human thinking in a move counter to the modern critique of religion, and have concentrated on the definition and clarification of a *concept* of religion. In the German Enlightenment, the critique of religion was therefore not committed to its dismissal but rather the self-illumination of the status of religion, much differently than in France, where a radical critique of religion was brought forward by the circle around the *Encyclopédistes* and Voltaire, or in England by David Hume.¹ These differences make it clear that religion need not fall victim to Enlightenment critiques,² as the so-called ‘New Atheists’ maintain today by means of old arguments.³

On the contrary, the conceptual clarification of religion can itself also prove to be a critical undertaking, namely, by permeating religio-theoretical aspects of

1 Karl Gabriel has recently shown that the formation of the relationship of the theology of the Reformation to the Enlightenment is due to the special relationship between the state and religion, or religious communities in Germany, which – differently than in French Catholicism and in southern Europe as we have said – did not behave in a reactionary and hostile manner towards reason, but rather fostered a constructive relationship between faith and reason. A connection of this kind can enable an entirely different relationship between religion and the public realm, or between religion, the law and the state than in the anti-religious atmosphere of secular France (cf. Gabriel, Gärtner, Pollack 2012).

2 As such, describing the Enlightenment as a constitutive process of secularisation does not correspond in any way to the image of the epoch, but rather proves to be a projection backwards from the crises of the 20th century. Ulrich Barth expresses succinctly the misunderstanding with respect to the relationships of Enlightenment and the critique of religion (cf. Barth 2009).

3 It is the religious-critical voices of Karl Marx, Ludwig Feuerbach, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche, which are found again today, nearly unchanged in, ‘New Atheism’ in its various forms. Although according to their genetic reduction, religion had already reduced to an epiphenomenon, the return of such theorems are being celebrated today in the neuro-biological and motivation-theoretical levelling of religion (cf. Boyer 2004; Schmidt-Salomon 2006; Dawkins 2006; see also the critical response to Dawkins by McGrath 2004; Harris 2007; Dennett 2008).

life with reflection. Further, belonging to the conceptual clarification of religion is the task of making clear its relation to the other remaining aspects of existence. It is in this connection between religion and existence in its subjective and intersubjective associations that one of the culturally central roles of religion becomes manifest.

Approached categorially, two spheres which, previously unseparated, yet have been in the process of separation from one another since the onset of modernity, must therefore be differentiated for the clarification of the concept of religion. These are the anthropological sphere, which encompasses the sociological and biological dimensions, and the sphere of metaphysics or transcendental philosophy. Consequently, it is not appropriate to consider one of these spheres without also taking the other into account respectively. This is because the question of religion raises the question of the whole, the question of unity. However, after the metaphysical turn in modernity this question no longer relates directly to being (*Sein*). On the contrary, it is focused on its mental visualisation. It is precisely at this point that religion asserts its ontological and metaphysical critical capacities. This, however, does not make the object of metaphysics superfluous. Rather – on the mental level – the ontologically and metaphysically determinative questions are repeated. They remain present on the level of theoretical consciousness, which is oriented directly towards a ground which grounds the whole, and which first makes it possible to assume a systematic nexus of thought. This connection presupposes an interrelationship between being and reason, and safeguards reality as a result. The treatment of religion by sociology and evolutionary biology – that is, on the anthropological level – does not have these relationships in view, but it likewise does not remain untouched by them. Sociology and evolutionary biology are right to fight back against a pre-critical re-ontologisation. But their rejection of these ontological and metaphysical connections does not necessarily lead to a rejection of reality and normativity. They can be present in the guise of the relational aspects of consciousness as entailed in the theory of freedom, that is, in the guise of the practical processes of implementation and interpretation.

Following Kant, and interacting with Kant's criticism, the representatives of German idealism such as Fichte, Hegel and Schelling in particular, have felt obligated to this task, but so have especially Schleiermacher, Hölderlin and Kierkegaard. In connection to the theologian Schleiermacher, I would like to turn to the question of what meaning and function is befitting a notion of transcendence for thinking and acting, how this relation to transcendence is put together and how it comes to be in this relation to reflexive subjectivity on the one hand and, on the other hand, to the self-established irretrievability (*Nichteinholbarkeit*) of this relation. We shall see that it is precisely the individual in its singularity,

which in its indefensibility and opacity stands for the irretrievability corresponding to transcendence.

The proposition that transcendence serves as an epistemological and action-theoretical function of the concept of religion will be unfolded in three steps. *Firstly*, I will determine the challenge of religion in its contemporary situation. Its presence, not only sociologically, in the so-called ‘return of religion’, but rather more precisely in the philosophical striving for a ‘New Realism’ (cf. Gabriel 2013; 2014; Ferraris 2014) just as with a ‘New Atheism’,⁴ gives occasion for assuming there is sustained interest in a point of access to reality, which means, in fact, that the question of reality, i.e. of validity and normativity, has not been suspended. This being the case, however, structurally presupposes the previously mentioned reference to transcendence for holding onto reality, respectively identity and normativity. Therefore, I want, *secondly*, to turn to the protagonist who was concerned with the topic of religion in precisely this way, namely, to Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher. I will do so through his recourse to Kant, for in this Schleiermacher, in critical interaction with Kant, attended to the work of providing a conceptual clarification of religion or transcendence in a similarly metaphysical-critical manner. To the extent that he continued the modern program along Kant’s line – though with critical distance – he can provide inspiration for the contemporary debates on the recovery of reality and validity. The contemporary relevance of this question does not, in the last instance, arise from the fact it can be shown that transcendence, which for Schleiermacher is what religion stands for, need not be tied absolutely to explicit forms of religion, but rather that it can also be tied to implicit aspects of transcendence in other phenomena in life. In a *third* section, it will consequently be shown that a critical concept of religion that is open to a variety of phenomena can have emancipative potential coming to bear precisely on those relations accompanying subjectivity and rationality which can be characterised as representing that which is unfulfilled and unattainable. This presupposes that the human being remains thematically oriented, and therefore as such, to the understanding (*Verstehen*) of reality, that is, oriented to the relationships between the world and itself in an unobstructed way.

⁴ This is because there are even traces of a ‘return of religion’ in this field, for example in Dworkin 2014.

This shifts the hermeneutical connection of experience and understanding into a kind of view wherein its focus on interpretation (*Deutung*) cannot determine reality universally, but only to the extent that it holds onto it and the validities that spring out of it symbolically. The effective power of the interrogation of the emancipatory power of religiously determined individuality will be measured by the extent to which it is successful in asserting its symbolically determined connection to transcendence in accordance with theoretical approaches to rationality and freedom, without, however, thereby wiping out its existing ties to transcendence. The meaning of religion for individuality and vice versa might culminate in the fact that in the consolidation of the religious as such, it shows itself to be the symbol of the specific character of irretrievable singularity according to its form, which thus turns out to be compatible with modernity. Consolidated in the symbol, religion then encounters individual self-assurance with universal purpose as a space for resonance. This possibility of the place and significance of the individual in its religious character is to be portrayed in reference to the development running from Kant to Schleiermacher.

1 The new inquiry about being and its lost ground: religion and the problem of its conceptual clarification in modernity

It was not with Luhmann, but rather with Kant, that it first belonged to the concept of religion to become its own object in its special clarification beyond the traditional trappings. That is, both the critique and the affirmation of religion go hand in hand. It was indeed the case that the critique of religion, being expressed concurrently with the assertion of the natural scientific worldview of classical mechanics and the positive understanding of the sciences upon which it was built, that concealed this shared bond between the critique and affirmation of religion. The transcendental aspect of consciousness, which belonged to Enlightenment criticism, was pushed to the background, prepared not least by the anthropological turn, which was then perceived solely in sociological and evolutionary biological ways and not received in a philosophical manner with regard to its consequences for the theory of religion. This positivistic paradigm shift in the self-understanding of all the sciences, oriented towards the natural sciences as it was, then radiated onto society, not only distorting insights about religious matters in the process but also things taken for granted in philoso-

phy. Whatever was to be accepted as *clare et distincte* would need to prove itself before the tribunal of a natural-scientific (or, alternatively, a logical) positivism. Religion therefore came under pressure for legitimacy in two respects. It had to maintain its claim, not only before the tribunal of reason, but also in contrast to empirical-positivistic thinking. The danger of mixing world view and science goes hand in hand with this double and yet asymmetrical demand,⁵ which can potentially yield fundamentalist consequences on both sides. A conceptual clarification of religion which remains obliged to the critical enterprise of modernity will endeavour to uncover such mixtures and dissemblances (along with attempting to clarify religion in its tension between affirmation and critique), as well as being able to clarify both its critique and its affirmation in an appropriate manner. This critical-affirmative clarification of religion also has consequences for the understanding of reality and validity.

Religion signals its claim to reality in its being-out-for (*Aussein*) the whole. With respect to the question of the place of religion in the light of reason, the questions raised at the beginning about the 'New Atheism' and the 'New Realism' therefore carry some importance, albeit they are explicitly concerned with questions revolving around the understanding of reality. In this regard, it is necessary to pay attention to two things in a conceptual clarification of religion: on the one hand, that it takes the empirical-critical challenge to religion into account, but on the other hand, that this process of clarification preserves a reference to the continuing importance of the transcendental for retaining reality and validity. Neither descriptions from cultural anthropology and the sociology of religion are sufficient for this, nor is a return to speculation. The practical claim of religion is only satisfied when the leading determinative criteria are neither exclusively of an empirical nature nor of a solely speculative one, but rather when theoretically grounded procedures on the conceptual level are applied, as would be formulated in the modern-critical understanding of religion. It is for this reason that the practical claim retains its fundamental significance in modernity, now conveying what was previously allocated to the metaphysical dimension. The practical task upholds the claim to reality as well as the claim of normative rules, thus avoiding becoming lost in subjective or merely individualistic questions of taste or expressions of certainty. A post-traditional and postmodern society could manage quite well with something like this, albeit a social arrangement of this kind would

⁵ There is no question about whether empiricism is methodologically justified in science, however, the fact that this only represents a subdomain of our understanding of reality should not be concealed. If this distinction is not retained by the counterpart, but on the grounds of empirical thinking instead, then this task vanishes all too quickly in a dismissal of the notion of transcendence from the area of science.

not do justice to the theoretical standards of the modern study of religion, nor would the actual importance of religion for the individual and social way of life (*Lebensführung*) on the one hand and the profiling of categorical thinking on the other hand come into view. The importance of religion actually hangs on its reaching out to the individual towards the transcendental nexus which guarantees reality and normative validity. This far-reaching effect is noticeable in various spheres which have emancipated themselves from explicit religion in the sense of a specific sphere – such as in art, but not only there; its effect is also felt in the economic and political sphere, in science or sport. The variety of expressions of religion which arise from this, even in its concealed form, should also be considered.⁶

Additional difficulties with the definition of religion emerge from this, since religion, or respectively, everything that is permeated by religion, is itself diffuse in these phenomena and developments. It is necessary to reckon with fuzzy, transitional and interim religious phenomena. At this point, with respect to the study of religion, it is necessary to consider ‘invisible’ religiosity (cf. Luckmann 1991), as it has been defined by Thomas Luckmann, or even wandering religiosity, or the so-called phenomena of an ‘affinity for religion’ (cf. Osthövenner 2015, 358–77). Only in considering this multifacetedness, does it become apparent, in its full sharpness, that the efficacy of a conceptual clarification of religion matters for questions of normative character. This comes to the fore especially when the varying potentialities for marking distance and difference, which have constructed themselves in the field of religion during modernity, are perceived as potentialities from which claims to reality and normativity are fed.

In this distance to religion, which, in being distant, is equally indebted to the religious sphere or to transcendence respectively, the increasing complexity of religion consequently becomes apparent, which for its part must be embraced conceptually. This occurs in that, this insight into the indispensability of transcendence in both forms, i.e. of the critique as well as the affirmation of religion, is evidenced in various ways. Consequently, it is the aspect of transcendence that is found in the individual which suggests itself to be an instrument available for the clarification of the function of the religious beyond its explicit religious forms.

⁶ Nevertheless, philosophers like Herbert Schnädelbach, however, rightly resist rash usurpations, which are undertaken during the course of the clarification of religion as an anthropological constant. Not all vital questions are religious ones and not all interpretations of meaning are drawn from or rooted in transcendence. This must be clearly labelled, precisely in order not to jeopardise the prerogative of religious questioning (cf. Schnädelbach 2009, 3).

2 The function of religion as a clarification of the transcendentally grounded individuality of humanity, with particular consideration of Schleiermacher in connection to Kant

Schleiermacher's theory of religion can be conceived as a continuation of Kant's critical enterprise. He wants to continue systematically the limits on thinking about the ground with respect to the conditions for thought posed by Kant. It is in the network of tension between criticism on the one hand and the emphasis on transcendence on the other that religion has its systematic place. The inheritance of Kant's liberating critique and the liberal achievements of enlightenment and secularism demonstrate themselves at this point – as we shall see – in connection with religion and freedom.

2.1 Kant

Kant did not fight his battle with dogmatism only to oppose it with vain subtleties (Kant 1799, 876 [AA XII, 360]). He stood in service of the Enlightenment, in service of reason and of understanding, and especially in service of freedom, the freedom of thought, the freedom of action and the freedom of the word. In accordance with human dignity, emancipation and maturity are for the attainment of sovereignty, opposing both immaturity and authoritarianism as well as opportunism and cowardice. A pre-requisite for this was, however, that freedom and maturity could be arrived at by means of thought, because this alone serves for assessing the reason being used. Its arrival at the limits of pure reason ought not therefore result in an explaining away of religion – as is sometimes alleged – but rather in designating its location within the framework of his critique of reason. A conceptual clarification of religion, on the contrary, is also for Kant, one of the leading requirements of reason. But it is not directly graspable and communicable on the level of reason, and is therefore to be seen as falling within the limits of reason. The limits themselves are, however, likewise a mark of the theoretical standards of a conceptual approach to religion and as such ought not be disregarded. They have a precisely determined place which for reason itself is not an arbitrary one, but rather one which remains significant for the question of the foundational and orientating function of thinking and acting.

Kant posited the issue of the meaning of transcendence without running through it argumentatively, but rather by programmatically dismissing such

argumentation altogether. This is where the notion of ‘reverence for the moral law’, which he developed in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, finds its conceptual home. Kant presupposes the religious dignity of humanity, which, being veiled within human morality, appears in every act of respect for the moral law. This feeling of respect refers humanity to the transcendent foundations of freedom, or more aptly, to its being grounded in a ground. Being transcendent, this ground is therefore not something that one can directly experience or communicate, but rather access only indirectly along the way of experience of this respect. In this moment of reverence for the moral law, freedom runs up against its own limits, which show themselves to be bound to something transcendent. In this experience of reverence, the humanity of the human being becomes apparent, which in Kant’s understanding is attributed and promised to it through the humanity in human beings. Kant therefore saw human dignity for its part as something inherently bestowed to humanity and not something which humanity itself can produce, not even via processes of recognition. Demonstrating this dignity in a gracious manner, being able to provide its expression in being as well as in thought, encapsulates the meaning of the question of enlightenment and maturity, of human rationality and freedom.

Kant therefore knew something about the meaning of humanity’s consciousness of transcendence. When Kant takes reverence into account for the moral law, as well as the need to develop ideas that give thinking its guidelines, this points precisely to the transcendent fundament of human being, which is only accorded in experience and encounter.⁷ This is the point where the proponents of German idealism, by critical engagement with Kant, sought to move beyond him. Recourse to the subjectivity of reflection plays a role in this endeavour in various ways. In the following, this will be unpacked with reference to Schleiermacher whose aggravation with Kant’s criticism consists of focusing on the individual with respect to its experience of transcendence. This secures for him an indication of reality and validity as a religious experience and thus can take over the function of providing orientation for thinking and action. In Fichte’s ‘Philosophy of the Ego’ the subjectivity of reflection is exalted as the hermeneutical anchor point in the status of ultimate justification; while in Schleiermacher it carries similar importance, it is differentiated by a relativising critical function opposite thought and its competence for argumentation. The sum of his intention to carry on with Kant’s criticism does not consist in closing the hole in the foundation

⁷ He ultimately took account of this dimension in his critique of pure reason, which is to include not only the theoretical, but also the practical reason and the power of judgment, and not least of all in his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (cf. Heidegger 1963, 14).

of the modern critique of metaphysics, but rather to strengthen its justification, albeit with the consequence – and this is what distinguishes him from Kant, just as much as from other representatives like Fichte and Hegel – of making this justification plausible. At this point the individual person plays an indispensable role, since this establishment of plausibility cannot conceptually bypass every individual's experience, or more precisely, every experience of transcendence.

2.2 Schleiermacher

Schleiermacher stands at the beginning of reflection on the theoretical clarification of religion, which he developed in critical interaction with Kant's critiques. These appeared to him, however, not only to be rudimentary, but also somewhat misguided. It was this deficit that he sought to address in his early writing on religion. Even though Kant was aware of the epistemological significance of religion, Schleiermacher nonetheless goes beyond him on this point (cf. Barth 2004, 272–5). His difference with Kant becomes apparent in that Schleiermacher understands religion to be foundational for morality. This is because, for Schleiermacher, there is no pure reason, no knowledge without presuppositions. Rather, knowledge and reason are always bound up with social and historical conditions. Without taking into account the 'need for reason' and without heeding the 'respect for the moral law', he became aware, by considering the individual's experience of religion, of the residuum of a ground and the need for grasping the whole. These subsequently become guiding aspects for thinking and action.

By means of religion, Schleiermacher points towards that which is always already given to and not retrievable from consciousness, but which also cannot be excluded from it. Whereas Kant only diagnosed and postulated the achievements of the theoretical and practical reason in view of the limits of its impact on thinking and action, Schleiermacher, with his deliberations on the theory of religion as such, fully and thoroughly explores the limits of this conceptual sphere in its function for thinking and action. The possibility for doing this arises from his knowledge of the religious consciousness as that which concurrently positions all action and thought processes alike.

These connections between religion and other aspects in an individual's daily conduct of thought and action mark the anthropological turn of religion. But this should not be misunderstood with respect to Schleiermacher in the sense of a biologizing attempt to explain away religion. The turn to anthropology rather, marks Schleiermacher's turning to focus on the attempt to theorise about consciousness and the individual. In this vein, he holds in his 'Second Speech: On the Essence of Religion' (Schleiermacher 2001, 74–115; ET: Schleiermacher 2014,

18–54) that religion represents its own province in the mental and spiritual faculties of humanity (*Gemüt*). As such, religion is identified indeed as a distinct area not dependent on knowledge and morality which, albeit appears in the individual, it never does so in and for itself, but rather always in connection with knowledge and morality, and as that which actually grounds both (cf. Schleiermacher 2001, 79–87).⁸

The salient point of Schleiermacher's theory of religion will therefore be misunderstood when its affinity to and its critique of Kant's critical enterprise are not taken into equal account (cf. Barth 2004). It is not a subsequent conclusion about reverence for the moral law as it is with Kant, for this would be secondary for Schleiermacher. A provisional intention prevented Schleiermacher from dismissing the absolute and the unfulfilled which are thematised in concert with religion. The absolute is postulated by Kant by means of the theory of reason with ideas and postulates – even if in a hiatus opposite theoretical apprehension. This kind of absolute is not postulated by Schleiermacher, rather it emerges as a dimension guiding knowledge and action in its effect in precisely this feeling or in immediate self-consciousness. This notion, or both notions respectively represent religion for Schleiermacher. It is the ineluctable and irretrievable entity of the individual, located in the immediate self-consciousness. In this it demonstrates a degree of sovereignty which affords a constructive-critical engagement with thought and action.

The position of religion will therefore be misunderstood if it is identified either with knowledge or morality, or if knowledge and morality as independent of religious consciousness are understood as the pre-determined conditions of all perception. In this way, the possibility of subsuming religion into knowledge and morality in the sense of traditional metaphysics is ruled out. According to Schleiermacher, such a metaphysics is obsolete and can be seen as superstitious, and such an ethics, corresponding to this, rightly falls victim to being judged as mere unsophisticated and uncritical conformism. If, however, these connections were simply to be dismissed, then bare relativity and arbitrariness would find their way into thinking. On the other hand, if with Schleiermacher, the religious consciousness is envisaged as leading action and thought, this has normative consequences. In this case, it is not possible to prohibit the operations of consciousness in their reaching out towards the goal and intended purpose in service

⁸ At this point it was clear to him that the thesis about the foundational function of religion for knowledge and morality would be met with resistance to the extent that he challenged the self-understanding of every theoretical and practical science, of the natural sciences just as much as that of economics and philosophy – and even that of conceptual metaphysics (cf. Schleiermacher 2001, 57–73; ET: Schleiermacher 2014, 3–17).

of the rejection of metaphysics and the recognition of scientific capacities. On the contrary, its analysis on the level of action and its reflective apprehension on the level of thinking belong to the self-transparency of the sciences. Schleiermacher is committed to precisely this kind of analysis of the implications of the religious conscious presented in this way.

This consolidation and validation of religion does not lead Schleiermacher in any way – as many allege – to a dismissal of Kant’s concerns, but rather to a specification, say, with regard to the concept of the transcendental. To the extent that he takes on these fundamental epistemological concepts from Kant, Schleiermacher entirely shares in Kant’s basic epistemological orientation. This means he maintains that presuppositions of knowing are not only to be found in empirical, social and historical conditions, but also that these are subject to categorical presuppositions. However, Schleiermacher takes this approach further. He makes recourse in an even more basic manner to the conditions of the presuppositions of what Kant designates as the *a priori* transcendental determination of thinking. He sees these presuppositions – contradictory as this may seem – as being bound to experiences, that is to ungraspable experiences, namely, to the ‘Whence’ of absolute dependence (cf. Schleiermacher 2003, 32–40 [§4]; ET: Schleiermacher 2011, 12–9 [§4]). Thus, in his thought, God is situated in the ground (of experience) instead of being postulated. An *a priori* attached to experience actually represents a square circle, but one which rests on a different concept of empiricism. What is decisive at this point is the distinction in the concept of experience. Experiences clarified in this way are not to be confused with observable empiricism; on the contrary, they ought rather to correspond – even in their irretrievability – to the Kantian *a priori*, which for Kant precedes empirical and rational clarifications. This is precisely what is made possible by the special formation of the individual in whom the immediate impressions of such experience, themselves not accessible to empirical experience, are being called forth. This is how the individual in Schleiermacher’s thought advances into the categorical horizon of the determination of validity.

The clarification of the concept of individual thereby changes the weight of Kant’s transcendental theory. The character of the transcendental changes as the feeling of religious experience generated in the individual becomes the focal point; it transcends the dichotomy between *a priori* and *a posteriori* via pre-empirical, as it were, categorical ‘atmospheres’, which for Schleiermacher are consolidated in religious feeling, that is, in immediate self-consciousness. These ‘atmospheres’ or moods are not congruent with empiricism and observable experience. Furthermore, they only correspond with the *a priori* to some extent, namely insofar as they concern the pre-empirical conditions of the presuppositions of knowledge and action. Resembling moods, they surpass Kant’s pre-empirical *a priori* in

two respects: firstly, in that they – certainly not in a finite manner – do not aim at a whole *qua* idea or postulate, but rather can be followed back to a ground, which is presupposed as such; and secondly, through the effects emanating from those moods, which ultimately arise from feeling. According to Schleiermacher’s insight into the anthropological function of religion one can or must assume that these effects indicate precisely this obligatory character of religion. This sense of obligation does not disappear, rather it secures, for being as such, epistemic reality and moral normativity. It is in this way that these effects join in the categorical function of transcendence.⁹

The moments of expanding reflection which are the marks of Schleiermacher’s concept of religion are expressed in these aspects of autonomy, interpenetration and reflexive apprehension of knowledge and action; the latter two resting in a ground which is irretrievable but which accompanies all experiences atmospherically. For Schleiermacher, Kant’s understanding of the *a priori* itself must be understood as an abstraction. It misunderstands the specific way humans are always already placed in the world through a foundational dispatching (*Disponierung*), just as all other categorical forms are. It is consequently the *status* of the *a priori* which, being retained in terms of the theory of validity, are conceived formally as being bound up in dispositions which substantively colour all knowledge and action. These dispositions evince a remaining, radical transcendence which is bundled in the individual, who represents the place at which the effects of being and essence (*Da- und Sosein*) consolidate into the experience of transcendence. Reality and validity thus posited are vouchsafed in experience as if from a ground. Schleiermacher illustrates the interconnection of transcendence and reflection on the grounds of the immediate self-consciousness in the individual with the bare asymptotic convergence of the real to the ideal: – as in the *Dialectic* (Schleiermacher 1986) (which focuses on the whole); in *The Christian Faith* (cf. Schleiermacher 2003, 39) (focusing on the ground); or with the infinite, the ‘universe’ in its effects – as in the *Speeches on Religion* (Schleiermacher 2014) (in which both the whole and the ground are considered).

What we can say is this: with regard to the history of ideas, Schleiermacher is looking to adopt concerns previously held by metaphysics about the apprehension of reality and the warrant for orientation, but he does so in alignment with critical shifts which accept neither a being-in-itself nor the notion of ahistorical truth. Schleiermacher changes track in line with this critical perspective and even takes it further – not in order to close the gap which had widened

⁹ One could reproach him for mixing origin and validity; however, he rather conceived them as interlocking in a way in which they could not be detached from one another.

between questions of being and validity, but in order to concretise thought and action. He accomplishes this feat by ascribing to the transcendental both a meaning emphasising a fundamental reaching out to the transcendent, as well as a meaning emphasising its being bound back onto experience. He can do this because he implements a distinction between the ground and the whole. This stands in service of rational comprehensibility, if not even retrievability. Such a distinction is possible in the case of religion because in the individual the ground can be identified in contradistinction from an apprehension of the whole. To the extent that religion coalesces in distinct and independent ways with morals and metaphysics or knowing, it adds that which is withdrawn from us but on which we nevertheless depend on as so far as reason asks for orientation. Therefore religion accompanies conceptual systematisation and practical action. This allows Schleiermacher to include specificity for being and validity without having to make a claim to rational apprehension.

The constellation of thought stands and falls with the said position of the individual, which Schleiermacher retains opposite modern subjectivity and which reveals the aporetic complex of criticism with respect to the understanding of reason. This culminates not in rationality, but rather in a specific capacity for perceiving respect for the whence of one's being addressed and the wither of the answer for which the individual stands. As a result, there is a kind of passivity embedded in the individual which the theories of self-determination of subjectivity can contour and critically reflect. This does not thereby lead to solipsism – as is always suspected when discussing modern reflective subjectivity – but rather to positing a mode of responsivity geared towards hearing and communication which dwells within the individual. This responsivity is inaugurated by a withdrawal which is always already intrinsic to the individual, manifesting itself as a singularity, but which is not the same as solipsism, but which rather – precisely because it is withdrawn – is able to overcome it by means of communication.¹⁰

On the theological level, what is withdrawn is to be integrated as an *extra nos* and indeed as nothing less than what makes being human into a *humanum*. This is not something, however, that the human being itself brings about on its own. The *humane* demands transcendence as a mode of being called into the formation of its human being as a person in its individuality (cf. Herms 2003). It is an invocation to the formation of its individuality and freedom which does not

10 What distinguishes Schleiermacher from Kant is the distinction between the ground and the whole. This makes it possible to make this distance plausible via transcendence, which in the self-consciousness demands for freedom as self-limitation and that means for freedom as social freedom, in order to make inter-subjectivity possible, that recognizes others as the others. As a result, this approach is essentially suited for pluralism.

consume the human being solipsistically, but rather places it in community with others. This kind of community understands itself to be ineluctable with such individuated ‘selves’ who are united together in personal freedom – and that is what distinguishes this self from the ‘selfish’ self, for which, say, Kierkegaard is misguidedly stigmatised, and also from the reflective subjectivity of Kant, which is marked by an essential self-referentiality. Freedom is in need of such selves in order to be able to approximate their goal of a community of those who are free.

In this turn into the inter-individual, religion demonstrates its spiritual-theoretical (*geisttheoretisch*) take-off power, which is also where the externally won and freedom oriented quality of Schleiermacher’s approach is asserted. This person-, freedom and community-forming ascending power can only be demonstrated by religion, as and in consciousness of the distance and the difference of reason to its ground in the individual. The distinction with respect to Kant and the representatives of German idealism is that Schleiermacher does not identify the individual with liberal reflective subjectivity, but rather that precisely the opposite is advanced: the individual is understood as pre-given, constituted in its ineluctability allowing it to be and to act. In the individual, as a singular and original category, the determinations of validity and reality which the subject draws on for accomplishing freedom and reality are interconnected. This means it is precisely this ground which appears in the religious consciousness as something external, so to speak, which cannot be made into an object, neither directly in speaking about God, nor indirectly as idea or postulate.¹¹ This is precisely the reason why the *externality* is not to be apprehended as ‘pure’, – and not to be located as pure reason – but instead as being bound up in historical circumstances. Reference to it ought to therefore only be made in terms of a *perspective* and in re-enactment of its effects in moments of convergence – or in expressions of distance.¹²

11 If this insight had remained in view, then the long sustained and constantly reappearing critique of Schleiermacher’s *Christian Faith* would have long been pronounced guilty of untenability and deceitfulness (cf. Barth 1980; see also Bayer 1985, 1005–16) This is because apart from piety as a feeling or as a consciousness-dependent subjectivist ‘play version’ of piety, which the so-called *extra nos* put up for negotiation, precisely this evaluation will be exposed as incorrect through the demonstration of the affinity of the religious with morals and metaphysics or philosophy.

12 Schleiermacher’s reconstruction of dogmatics corresponds meticulously to this insight in this context. Schleiermacher indeed introduces the anthropological turn in that he emphasizes the anthropological and cultural relevance of religion. However, he likewise demands the dogmatic reformulation of faith in all its connections. Thus, the anthropological turn for Schleiermacher does not mean an empirical dismissal of theoretical questions about validity. This means that in and through this interweaving of thinking and acting with religion, religion itself must be seen as contextual and therefore also conditioned by time and processes of development, irrespective,

It is precisely on such ground that Schleiermacher states in the ‘Second Speech’, ‘that one religion without God can be better than another with God’ (Schleiermacher 2001, 112; ET: Schleiermacher 2014, 54). This is true precisely on the grounds that a religion with recourse to God squanders its efficacy when God functions in it as a placeholder who merely refers to a special area of life which has neither anything to do with the other areas of life, nor is integrated into them.¹³ The task of Schleiermacher’s investigation and reformulation of Christian doctrine is not God in God’s self, but rather what appears under the perspective of faith defined as consciousness of difference.

3 The symbolic function of the concept of religion in service of emancipation and freedom

In order to achieve progress in the conceptual clarification of religion, I have weighted the phenomenon of religion in this paper with respect to its transcendental function by means of Schleiermacher’s work. It is significant to bear in mind that the concept of religion emerges in a time in which it must likewise also serve as a placeholder, namely, a placeholder for lost metaphysical and ontological self-understanding. As a result, it does not only accommodate various forms of explicit religion and a broad array of their symbols, but also forms that are hidden and not immediately identifiable. This interrelationship has been argued for in terms consonant with the sociology of religion about vague and diffuse religiosity all the way to an ‘affinity for religion’, which comes to bear as a decided mode of delimiting religion (cf. Luckmann 1991; Osthövener 2015).

As will become clear, this diagnosis is relevant for the present investigation insofar as it is not at all arbitrary whether one knows about the context of even such hidden forms or the multifacetedness of what it is that religion stands for or not. Such forms of religion, as placeholders, precisely mark the place at which transcendence can be thematised and actively retained in its function for

however, of its transcendental connections. It is obligated in this regard to take into account the definitions of value and validity of a specific time. These are to be thoroughly examined for their potential to illuminate within the context of the authority of this time’s dogmatic framework. Cf. on this also the introduction by the editor Rolf Schäfer (Schleiermacher 2003, XV).

¹³ To the extent that Schleiermacher undertakes the methodological implementation of such an account in his dogmatics, Christian dogmatics as such expounds the explication of its determination at the beginning of the religious self-consciousness within and for its own time (cf. Herms 1984).

thinking and acting. This is because without a reflective self-reference which actually presupposes this reference to transcendence, there can be no discussion of a self-apprehension of subjectivity and consequently of autonomy and freedom – and along with them, of inter-subjectivity. To the extent that this reflective self-reference induces human beings to face themselves it leads them to maturity and responsibility with respect to self and the world. However, reference to reality cannot be waived if this process of self-reflection which sets forth claims to normativity and validity as such is to occur. This reference to reality, however, – as ought to have been demonstrated here – can be vouchsafed by the transcendental aspects characterising irreducible individuality.

Schleiermacher's theory of religion is open to an interpretation which makes apparent that the religious sphere is not finally put to rest in modernity but instead flows into the larger cultural sphere. It is precisely in such an interplay that the multifacetedness of a clarification of religion points to its ineluctable moments. Those are the two complementary ways in which distance, or difference, and transcendence can be determined, both of which subsequently consolidate in the concept of the symbol. The concept of distance stands for the essential self-understanding under normative conditions, which arise from the reaching out to the whole and aim to achieve unity in order to make possible the reflexive relationship of the self to itself (*Sich-zu-sich-selbst-Verhalten*). The concept of transcendence, on the other hand, stands for the necessity of the presupposition it shows of a ground which vouchsafes orientation. As a result, both concepts – distance and transcendence – stand for the polar diametrically opposite ends of the condition of being human, meaning they signify the attainment of autonomy and freedom as those emancipatory determinations of humanity which were striven for in the Enlightenment and which possess the potential to critically accompany its dialectic. They therefore appear to me to need to be declared as the support structure or bedrock of every conceptual clarification of the concept of religion. This is because in all striving towards autonomy, religion makes reference to transcendence as a category of presuppositions to rational thought which holds it open for the Other – for the stranger – and therefore makes distance to its own self possible.

This openness for others and this interpretability consequently revolve around the symbolic function of the concept of religion itself as placeholder for the lost metaphysical ground which must be considered with regard to the self-understanding of humans and to their orientation in thinking and acting. If the emancipatory potential of the Enlightenment is not to be squandered, then the relation to reality represented by means of the symbol must be guaranteed. However, this can only be the case by the reaching out of the individual towards something transcendent which has always already imposed itself on the

individual and which can symbolically uphold this connection to reality. From the position of reflective self-assurance, religion in its symbolic function can stand for the regaining of the individual so that the emancipatory, modern subject does not have to be abandoned, but can rather be critically-constructively accompanied through the aforementioned connections. A fundamental connection between religion or transcendence and reason such as this will be concealed by the proponents of the theory of secularisation and also – by no means to a lesser extent – by unreflective references to a return of religion which argumentatively serves to ban any kind of critique of religion. It will not, furthermore, be thwarted any less by a revelational positivism or metaphysical adherence to ahistorical truths and pre-existing orders of being. All of these perspectives misplace the symbolically consolidated moments of openness in religion which evoke responsivity in particular and through which the grounding in reality is produced.

In its symbolic function, the concept of religion, considered as a placeholder for the transcendental elements, ensures humankind of its humanity and consequently warrants that the Enlightenment need not fall victim to its own dialectic and that freedom and emancipation need not regress into alienation and heteronomy. Rather, it is not to be adduced at all without being anchored in the individual as the place where the interconnection of transcendence and experience takes place. The task of a conceptual clarification of religion in its service towards self-assurance and self-determination is to remain aware of the symbolic meaning of religion as an anchor for the emancipation of thought and freedom in action, as was presaged by Kant, developed more extensively by Schleiermacher and as was then to be concretised by Kierkegaard with respect to the determination of the individual. Though for now, this final proponent of transcendence, must be reserved for another examination.

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Matthias Engmann

Taking Job as an example. Kierkegaard: traces of religious individualization

Individualisierung [...] bedeutet auch, und vielleicht vor allem, die Verantwortung des Menschen für sich selbst, die er auf nichts abschieben kann und die ihm niemand abnehmen kann [...]

(Simmel 1999, 331)

1 Introduction

Kierkegaard does not use the term ‘individualization’ (dan. *Individualisering*) in any of his writings. Nevertheless, there are enough anchor points and evidence to extrapolate an implicit concept of individualization, foremost as a concept of becoming oneself. However, rather than giving a broad overview on possible interpretive approaches to individualization, this article wants to explore Kierkegaard’s idea of existential appropriation as the condition of religious individualization actualized in edification.

Two points have to be mentioned here. Firstly, most of Kierkegaard’s writings do not explicitly theorize the ‘self’, even though that may be an implicit result. The aim of the texts lies in their reactive effect on the reader, intending a hermeneutical process of discovering one’s own self-relation (and its actualization). That aspect is covered by Kierkegaard’s idea of existential appropriation. Secondly, to realize that existential aim, Kierkegaard uses a specific strategy to mediate the contents of existence and the self. For that purpose, he never called himself a theologian or philosopher but a religious writer who establishes a situation of existential communication that avoids objectivity and imposes subjectivity. Instead of mediating specific knowledge, Kierkegaard’s way of communication guides one to an awareness of one’s own capability to realize existential actuality.

A systematic perspective on existential communication and appropriation leads then to a productive examination of individualization in Kierkegaard when his work is not only understood as source of theoretical investigation, but above all as an example of how individualization can be actualized by any individual *through* or *based on* a literary work. Therefore, this article looks on Kierkegaard as a thinker who uses language and (philosophical) concepts to go beyond them with the aim to initiate and induce lived individualization concretely. For that

matter, this article will look more closely at one of Kierkegaard's *Upbuilding Discourses* in order to understand how individualization is mediated by Kierkegaard.

The chosen Discourse, *The Lord Gave, and the Lord Took Away; Blessed Be the Name of the Lord*, re-traditionalizes one of the most known figures in the *Old Testament*, Job, and presents him not only as a role model for how the individual reader may enter into an existential lived relation to God, but also as an example or 'prototype' [*Forbillede*] of a 'teacher and guide of humankind' (e.g. *SKS* 5, 115 / *KW* 5, 109).¹ From the very start of the Discourse, Job is presented in a systematic tension. Just as Camus portrayed Sisyphus almost 100 years later, Job is presented as an individual with concrete life-world experiences *and* is a proto- or ur-representation of the *condition humaine*. Being at the same time both concrete and general, Job represents figuratively the (concrete and general) possibility of discovering one's own personal relation to God. The Discourse on Job becomes thereby one example of Kierkegaard's strategy for giving the reader the possibility at hand to enter into the 'individual's relation to himself before God' (*SKS* 7, 397 / *KW* 12.1, 436f.).²

However, before we dive deeper into Kierkegaard's interpretation of Job, it is necessary to examine some of the above-mentioned concepts and to give a picture of what kind of texts the *Upbuilding Discourses* are (section two). How are the concept of edification and Kierkegaard's idea of existential appropriation related to the Discourses? The developed framework will help to interpret the Discourse on Job (section three). That includes two questions here. Firstly, how is the literary figure of Job characterized by Kierkegaard as an authentic believer and what does it mean to be such a believer in a concrete existential way by experiencing contingency, suffering, and thankfulness? Secondly, how does the Discourse offer the possibility of existential appropriation in regard to Kierkegaard's focus on language? The concluding section will the resulting particular understanding of 'religious individualization'.

2 Upbuilding discourses

Especially from 1843 till 1846, the years between *Either-Or* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard presents his work

¹ For the citation of Kierkegaard's writings, see the references.

² That is the core definition of the most religiously individualized life-form in Kierkegaard, the concept of inwardness. On (religious) inwardness regarding the aspects of life-form and individualization, see Engmann 2017, 310–82.

in two parallel published text corpora. On the one side, we have the famous pseudonymous writings. On the other side, there are 21 small Discourses published under Kierkegaard's own name in compounds of two, three, and four 'talks'. In 1843 and 1844 Kierkegaard published the so called *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, in 1845 the *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*. However, there are two possibilities for dealing with the Discourses, specifically with the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. On the one hand, you can read them as a separate collection of texts parallel to but quite separate from the pseudonymous works (see e.g. Greve 1990, 280 (fn. 57)). On the other hand, you can read each of the given compounds as strongly related to the pseudonymous works. In the latter regard, the connection between the different text corpora appears mostly in the inner conceptual correlations between one or more of the Discourse compounds and one (or sometimes two) of the pseudonymous works. But sometimes there are also obvious external correlations, e.g. when Kierkegaard published his famous writings *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* together with *Three Upbuilding Discourses 1843* on the same date, the 16th October.³

2.1 Content and aim

It is helpful to consider some differences and similarities between the *Upbuilding Discourses* and the pseudonymous works. The very first and obvious point is the fact that Kierkegaard published the *Upbuilding Discourses* autonomously. In this regard, one might claim that Kierkegaard writes not with a literary strategy of hiding himself as an author but of showing his thoughts directly to the reader. Quite the reverse! The Discourses are multilayered texts communicating their content indirectly, which brings them close to the pseudonymous writings. The name 'Kierkegaard' on the cover pages of each compound is, in effect, a pseudonym.⁴ Like the 'real' pseudonyms, e.g. 'Constantin Constantius' (*Repetition*) or 'Johannes de Silentio' (*Fear and Trembling*), the name 'Kierkegaard'⁵ represents a specific perspective on the task of existence. The focus of 'Kierkegaard' is generally different than the focus of the 'real' pseudonyms. The difference lies not

³ The Discourse on Job was published on 6th December 1843. It is the first Discourse of *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1843*, a compound that remains not only in conceptual relation to the named pseudonymous works but paves also the path for the basic religious-existential concept of 'patience' in the *Two Upbuilding Discourses 1844*.

⁴ I follow hereby Jan Sløk. See Hagemann 2001, 69.

⁵ The further mentioning of 'Kierkegaard' (in quotation marks) refers to the pseudonymous nature of the *Upbuilding Discourses*.

in the intention of how the reader has to deal with the texts but in the intended anthropological presupposition. While the ‘real’ pseudonyms demand a decision of the reader about how to position him/herself to the text and its offer of living a religious existence, the pseudonymous ‘Kierkegaard’ presupposes a religious stance on the part of the reader and wants him/her to recognize the constant repetitive practice of such specific mode of existence. ‘Kierkegaard’ focuses on the renovation of practice that indicates his basic claim: the individual is already religious but does not realize his/her own religiousness in existential continuity.⁶

Hopefully two aspects become clear. Firstly, Kierkegaard uses, not only in his pseudonymous writings but also in the Discourses, his ‘postmodern talent’ to decentre himself as a writing self (see Mooney 2003, 122). Thereby, the historical person Søren Kierkegaard is not the responsible (or direct) author of the *Upbuilding Discourses*, which is furthermore underlined in the prefaces of each compound where you can read that the person who wrote the Discourses ‘does not have authority’. Therewith, the implicit spirit and intention of communication becomes obvious. Kierkegaard wants to avoid a reading of the Discourses as ‘sermons’. They are not intended to educate the reader in religiousness but to prepare the reader for his/her own conditions of realizing a lived religiousness. If Kierkegaard put himself forward as an author who literally has something important to say on religiousness, the reader of the Discourses would take Kierkegaard’s words as one opinion on religiousness but not as an invitation for his/her own self-practice. The important existential aspect of the Discourses is not the presentation of objective content but the subjective involvement of the reader *in* what is said.

That leads to the second point. The *Upbuilding Discourses* mediate religiousness in its practical dimension. If we look at the communicative situation, then we can see that the main content of all the Discourses, the individual’s relation to God,⁷ is contextualized and embedded in a variety of observations and descriptions of lived experiences (see Deuser 1985, 155–60), e.g. happiness, sadness, suffering, thankfulness, patience, anxiety, expectancy, sorrow, earnestness, courage, fear of death etc. The Discourses thematize existence in its different modes and moods, its possibilities of emergence, and what kind of thinking and experiences are thereby involved. By exploring and focusing on the plurality of factual experience, the Discourses offer possibilities of thinking and living

⁶ The aspect of constant practice appears in the Discourse on Job very clearly. Regarding the relation between the reader of the Discourse and Job’s proverb, ‘Kierkegaard’ underlines permanently the aspect of ‘memory’ and to practice ‘not to forget’.

⁷ On the aspect that the relation to God is the central point of the Discourses, see e.g. Bjergsø 2009, 5f.; Harrits 2000, 128; Pattison 2002, 121.

without value judgement. That is important because the reader has to position himself (see Lotti 2003, 141). Therefore, the Discourses are treatises on the issue of how the individual can relate him/herself to the possibilities of existence. 'Kierkegaard' supports that by creating a very specific atmosphere of fictionality that simulates concrete life-forms. He establishes a rhetorical situation in which the reader starts to search for his/her own life-experience in the given descriptions; and the beauty of the poetic language helps to engage the reader. The aim of such a literary endeavour is to initiate a subjective dialogue⁸: not only between the reader and the text. The Discourses invite the reader 'to think': to have what has, since Socrates, been defined as a dialogue with oneself. Therefore, they are guides to finding new self-relations.

To understand this correctly we have to acknowledge the implicit and explicit existential subject of the Discourses: the practice of one's own religiousness, i.e. the lived relation to God. Insofar as the Discourses give a poetic and existential 'catalogue' of descriptions of human experience, you can call them meditations on existence. If we consider here the intended impact on the reader we can call them mediations on the practice of asceticism, not only in the etymological sense of 'exercise', but also in the sense of getting into a state of mind in which oneself is withdrawn from the world by understanding one's own self-actuality as an expression of one's relation to God. For that, an existential change of perspective is necessary. God is not supposed to be seen as an other-worldly and abstract possibility but as a concrete part of one's own life-world and by that as the ground of one's own being. The transformation of the individual's standpoint lies in a qualitative leap to find a new perspective on and position to the same life-world. Such an existential approach appears in the *Philosophical Fragments* as (religious) 'rebirth, by which he enters the world the second time' (SKS 4, 227 / KW 7, 19). Accordingly, the *Upbuilding Discourses* describe the practice of religiousness in forms of self-transcendence, i.e. as an experience of re-positioning oneself in a 'relationship of opposition to God' (SKS 4, 77 / KW 6, 210). Especially one existential concept in the Discourses expresses such self-transcendence in its core: the concept of 'nothingness' or self-annihilation. If one has to withdraw from the world to find a new relation to the same world grounded and fulfilled by God, one has to withdraw from oneself as part of this world too, to find a new relation to one's own self 'before God'. For that matter we can say with George Pattison, that the *Upbuilding Discourses* are 'giving us a larger and deeper picture of what it might actually mean to live as if "before God", counting ourselves "as nothing"' (Pattison 2002, 166).

⁸ On the dialogical aspects of the *Upbuilding Discourses*, see Deuser 1985, 155f.; Harrits 2000, 133; Lotti 2003, 139f.; Pattison 2002, 122 and 141; Shakespeare 2003, 93f.

Now we can underline an important aspect regarding the presentation of thought in the Discourses. Although the Discourses ‘talk’ about the practice of religiousness in a not-at-all-hidden literary mode of religious-affirmative language, they never avoid the philosophical aspect of what it means to have a *true* self-relation (before God).⁹ However, this philosophical component does not mean that the Discourses are theoretical treatises arguing in a philosophical (and/or speculative) manner and creating on the textual surface objective knowledge about religious self-relation. ‘Kierkegaard’ resists the temptation to speak on religiousness in an academic way,¹⁰ which differentiates the Discourses fundamentally from the works of some of the pseudonyms, especially Vigilius Haufniensis (*The Concept of Anxiety*) and Johannes Climacus (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*), who are famous for their systematic investigations of existential religiousness (although they have ‘upbuilding’ passages and use indirect communication). The difference between the literary enterprise of the Discourses and an academic style of writing lies in the following: in the former, rather than guiding the reader to more talkativeness of mind, he/she is supposed to reach a state of ‘stillness’, a concept of inward devotion mediated by ‘Kierkegaard’ (see Mooney 2003, 121). The reader is not supposed to stop thinking in such stillness, but the way he/she starts to think while reading the Discourses is different from an academic-systematic style. The priority lies not in objective categorization. Important is the subjective understanding of oneself *in* what is said, recognizing one’s own existential possibility.¹¹ The effect is an actualized existential transformation, from self-discovery (by reading the Discourses) into an engagement of existence. For the aim of such overcoming of self-distance, Kierkegaard sees in any intellectual (objective) exploration and mediation of religiousness the avoidance of enforced self-practice. In other words, Kierkegaard focuses on the difference between an authentic, lived religiousness and an imagined one.

9 Especially the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1844* explore the religious self in its true relation before God by describing the existential process of religious self-annihilation.

10 On Kierkegaard’s avoidance of academic writing in the Discourses, see Mooney 2003, 114–6; and Pattison 2002, 161f.

11 In *The Concept of Anxiety* the pseudonymous voice gives the right expression for that: ‘To understand a speech is one thing, and to understand what it refers to, the personal, is something else; for a man to understand what he himself says is one thing, and to understand himself in what is said is something else’ (SKS 4, 442 / KW 8, 142). To understand *what* is said means to understand factuality (objective knowledge); to understand oneself *in* what is said means to understand one’s own (existential) possibility (guided by what is said) (See Lotti 2003, 136).

2.2 Edification and appropriation

Those short remarks allow us to explain the entangled ideas of edification and existential appropriation in the *Upbuilding Discourses*. Therewith, we are deepening the discussion of the content and considering the existential aim of the Discourses.

The intention of the Discourses is to *build up* the reader from his/her ground of being, God, understood as the unconditional ground of all things. More precisely, the Discourses want to guide the reader to a self-practiced process of building up an existential actuality in which God is recognized as ground (see also Theunissen 1958, 91). Coming into such an existential state of being upbuilt means to be in a state of *uplifting* edification, a lived devotional relation to one's own life by accepting God as ground (see also Ringleben 1983, 13). From the systematical side it is important to see that the existential process of upbuilding constantly refers to a lived relation to God as ground, but this ground is conceptually not set by any human being. Therefore, the process of upbuilding refers not to a relation to God *a posteriori*, it refers *a priori* to the presupposition of God in every human being. Precisely this conceptual condition of edification has to be accepted in any investigation of the Discourses, because it shows the only condition under which you can talk about the existential possibility of edification: namely the existential acceptance of the dependence of any individual on God. However, if one has no sensibility for the literary and descriptive presentation of religiousness in the Discourses, one might probably look at the given conceptual construction as an authoritative presentation of edification by Kierkegaard, but even then the existential task and intention of the Discourses cannot be denied, namely that the reader has to discover the conceptual condition of edification by him/herself and embed it into their own experience. This aspect of self-practice thwarts any 'authoritative' situation of communication in the Discourses in the direction of a non-authoritative intention of existential appropriation.

The basic and crucial point of any existential appropriation is to recognize that personal existing is not solely a matter of knowledge.¹² Knowledge entails objectivity and, insofar, a distanced relation of the individual to the object of knowledge. In contrast, existence is action, lived experience, and the continuity of self-relation. The pseudonymous Johannes Climacus unites these aspects under the umbrella term 'subjectivity', i.e. being involved in self-engagement

¹² We can find that e.g. in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* when the pseudonym Johannes Climacus notes, 'But existing is something quite different from knowing' (SKS 7, 271 / KW 12.1, 297).

while living life in its full concreteness. The reader of Kierkegaard's texts has to understand this difference between (objective) knowledge and (subjective) existence. At the same time, the mediator of existing, Kierkegaard, has to make the reader understand what existence means; thus he stays in an inter-position of mediation. He has to bring the reader to a specific knowledge, but at the same time, it is necessary to distance the reader from keeping this knowledge as something objective.

To induce a process by which the reader sees the content of the presented text not as something merely objective but as something that points to his/her own self-relation, Kierkegaard uses different strategies. For example, the 'Kierkegaard' of the Discourses presents himself not only as 'without authority' but sometimes also as a reader of the Discourses who only wants to find out what it means to be religious.¹³ By that means, hierarchy is abolished, reader and 'author' are on an equal footing, ready to transform their own lives into a religious mode of living. The presentation of 'Kierkegaard' as a non-authoritative 'author' helps furthermore to fulfil another condition of appropriation. The reader has to reject an immediate and direct relation to the 'author' as well as the textual knowledge, because appropriation is not a mimicking imitation of *what* is said. This is clearly underlined in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. The 'author' should write 'without wanting to induce him [the reader] to go the same way [of presented knowledge], but just urging him to go his own way' (SKS 7, 251 / KW 12.1, 277). Accordingly, the reader's appropriation is always a process of freedom. At the same time, appropriation is mediated, guided by the one who writes.

Such systematic/existential tension is expressed by the Socratic 'midwifery' (maieutics), the guidance to one's own freedom. In other words, appropriation is based on an encouragement of the individual to discover one's own potentiality by taking a personal journey (of experience) to find, form, and recognize one's own individuality. Such a process is conditional upon *how* the reader positions himself to himself *through* the text. If the positioning is affirmative, the mechanism of Socratic maieutics brings the reader to the decisive point where he/she discovers the presented existential content as something that lies within him/herself as hidden knowledge. Therefore, appropriation can be seen as a rediscovering process of presupposed conditions which are meant to be actualized and transformed into a lived life-form. Regarding the *Upbuilding Discourses*, becoming religious means to become what one has been (religiousness is presupposed) *and* to be what one becomes (religiousness has to be actualized into

¹³ See for example the last page of *At a Graveside*, the third Discourse of the *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, SKS 5, 469 / KW 10, 102.

the future and remains only by such constant reactivation). Existential appropriation implies, by this intertwined relation of becoming and being, that the reader re-discovers his/her (potentiality of) religiousness through the presented text and transforms such re-cognition into a constant existential actuality.

The necessary condition for that is the reader's 'interest' in his/her self as grounded in religiousness.¹⁴ No appropriation can be successful if there is no 'passion' (to use the terminology of the pseudonymous Johannes Climacus) for religious existing. Only with the will and the openness to religiousness, can the reader be invited by and involved in the Discourse (to search him/herself).

Finally, when we talk about the *Upbuilding Discourses* we have to keep in mind that we deal with texts – or better, with situations of specific communication – which present literarily a sense of existential concreteness and transformation. Existential appropriation is a concrete process of self-relation while edification is the concrete realization of a self-related religiousness. Both are two sides of the same upbuilding process of existential transformation: to see one's own life in a different light that illuminates existence as the concreteness of *becoming new* in finding the ground in God, and to experience the immersion into that relation which brings the individual into a practice of self-surrender. (The discussion of 'Kierkegaard's' interpretation of Job, below, will demonstrate this thoroughly.) Beside this existential perspective, there is furthermore a structural similarity between appropriation and edification. In both processes the self depends on something exterior. While appropriation is based on a maieutic process of discovering one's own self (and religiousness) by depending on someone who offers the ideas and the help to do that, edification is characterized as a process of getting into a self-relation that is grounded in God. Such (overall) dependency of the self is important for the discussion on individualization.

3 Discourse on Job

In this section we will first examine how Job exemplifies edification and what it means to live religiousness authentically. In the next step we will slightly change the perspective in the direction of the existential aim and the performative presentation of the text.

Before we start the analysis we should mention that Job is not the only poetic figure who is symbolically taken by Kierkegaard to exemplify religiousness. The

¹⁴ Johannes Climacus calls 'interest' the *conditio sine qua non* for one's own religiousness (see SKS 7, 25 / KW 12.1, 16).

biblical characters of John or Anna are other examples.¹⁵ Furthermore, as we mentioned above (fn. 3), the Discourse on Job was published around two months after the small pseudonymous writings *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling*. Specifically the latter one is famous for using the story of Abraham and Isaac to show what it means to live faith as ‘double-movement’ (SKS 4, 131 / KW 6, 36), i.e. as an existential process of transforming one’s own perceptual and habitual involvement in the world by an unconditional relation to God. This is the content of *Repetition* too, as novel and as concept. Therein, Job becomes relevant.

The second half of *Repetition* contains letters between the pseudonymous ‘author’ Constantin Constantius and his ‘Young Friend’. Like the book of Job in the *Old Testament*, the second half of *Repetition* has a dialogical structure.¹⁶ The ‘Young Man’ talks to Constantin as a ‘Silent Confidante’ regarding the problem of having fallen in love with a young woman he does not want to marry anymore. Out of melancholy, guilt, contrition, and a religious self-understanding the ‘Young Man’ refers to Job not only as a poetic figure who insists on his right of justice against God (see esp. SKS 4, 75–8 / KW 6, 207–11) but also as a symbol of a plagued man who overcomes suffering by being a passionate believer.¹⁷

However, the secondary literature examines two presentations of Job in *Repetition*. The first one is the extrapolation of Job in the understanding of the ‘Young Man’ (see esp. Dietz 1993, 243–52¹⁸). In this regard, the main focus lies on Job as a concrete individual and ‘rebel’ who claims his own freedom against God. The second understanding of Job, as Dorothea Glöckner examines (1998, 83), sees him through the eyes of Constantin Constantius. Job there appears particularly as a devotional believer who represents an understanding of life in which the will for a just life does not guarantee a happy life without suffering. He becomes a symbol for human reality, that any control of life is humanly impossible. The difference between both presentations lies in the existential quality of Job’s relation to God. While the ‘Young Man’s’ Job insists on his own person since his religious passion is dedicated to himself as a concrete living person against

15 For John see *He must increase; I must decrease* (*Three Upbuilding Discourses 1844*); for Anna see *Patience in Expectancy* (*Two Upbuilding Discourses 1844*). On the aim of using these biblical figures, see Burgess 2000, 212–4; Grøn 2000, 200f.

16 For constructive remarks on the relation between the dialogical structure of a text and the existential meaning of it (referring the book on Job), see Deuser 2010, 75; also Colton 2003, 231 and 236f.

17 ‘Nowhere in the world has the passion of anguish found such expression’ (SKS 4, 72 / KW 6, 204). See also SKS 4, 77 / KW 6, 210.

18 For a critical discussion on Dietz, see Glöckner 1998, 80 (fn. 69).

and before God, Constantin's Job surrenders and hands over his person to God because his religious passion is dedicated to the eternal ground and condition of all being.

3.1 Edification: thankfulness and truthfulness

The interpretation of Job by 'Kierkegaard' in *The Lord Gave, and the Lord Took Away; Blessed Be the Name of the Lord* is very close to the understanding of Constantin Constantius. Job appears as a devotional believer with an unwavering relation to God, which simultaneously presupposes that as a fundamental part of Job's life *and* which becomes deeper by experiencing what it means to be oneself *before* God, i.e. to live life *grounded in* God. Job appears as both concrete individual and as 'prototype' (of edification).

By that, 'Kierkegaard' clarifies thoroughly that edification is no stable existential actuality, given and self-evident. Job repeats his faith by an experience of resolute awareness. Actualized faith means thereby to get into a state of 'still' (pure) mind based on personal experiences that shape and open up the horizon for accepting God as the eternal ground of being. The Discourse points out such kind of experience by the example of Job's thankfulness.

The aspect of thankfulness as an existential and religious experience and concept can be found in several writings of Kierkegaard (see Schulz 2014a, 176 (fn. 80)¹⁹). Specifically the first (under discussion) and the third Discourses of the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1843* need to be seen as ground-texts on thankfulness in Kierkegaard. However, after the introduction (SKS 5, 115–9 / KW 5, 109–14), 'Kierkegaard' starts the main section of the present Discourse with a short description of how Job came to say 'The Lord gave, and the Lord took away; blessed be the name of the Lord!' (SKS 5, 119f. / KW 5, 114f.). In that short paragraph, Job is already presented as someone who did not rebel against his fate (God) but who 'surrendered to sorrow' *and* confessed his faith by 'worship' (SKS 5, 120 / KW 5, 115). Insofar as Job does not question his faith while suffering, it might not surprise how 'Kierkegaard' continues on the textual level. He starts his interpretation of Job's word not with the second part, 'and the Lord took away', which might be useful if the experience of suffering wants to be underlined; instead, he takes Job's word as it was said, chronologically, and starts with the interpretation

¹⁹ Schulz does not mention the Discourse on Job. On thankfulness in Johannes Climacus, taking on Schulz' systematic examinations, see Engmann 2017, 371f. (fn. 1190).

of ‘The Lord gave’: an expression that underlines the fact of thankful receiving (‘from above’²⁰).

[F]irst of all he said, “The Lord gave.” The statement is brief, but in its brevity it effectually points out what it is supposed to point out, that Job’s soul was not squeezed into silent subjection to the sorrow, but that his heart first expanded in thankfulness, that the first thing the loss of everything did was to make him thankful to the Lord that he had given him all the blessing that he now took away from him (SKS 5, 121 / KW 5, 115f.)

Although Job goes through unimaginable suffering, losing his own children, he is presented as one who does not stop believing in God’s goodness. Thereafter, ‘Kierkegaard’ moves into Job’s mind and lists what Job remembers in his thankfulness: his wealth, the happiness about his children, his recognition by other people, his life lived in justice, etc. (SKS 5, 121f. / KW 5, 116). Therefore, ‘Kierkegaard’ mentions, ‘his thankfulness was not forgetful’ (SKS 5, 122 / KW 5, 116), and adds afterwards a fundamental condition for a right understanding of Job’s stance to God: ‘indeed, it was as if it were not the Lord who took it away but Job who gave it back to him’ (SKS 5, 122 / KW 5, 116f.).

Hereby, three points are supposed to become clear. Firstly, life is seen under the condition of givenness. This points not only to the old question of ontological contingency, of how man comes into this world,²¹ but also to the question of how the being of each person is dependent on something that cannot be controlled. Secondly, any valuation of actual life is earnest and true only if life is seen under the condition and in the light of the past, an issue that is, in historical perspective, famously presented in St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. It points to an understanding of existence as a process of constant becoming and self-narration. Life is not only seen as a process of unpredictable changing but of searching for one’s own place in such conditioned life. Thirdly, everything in life, even life itself, is borrowed, so to say. If someone gets something good, it does not mean that he/she can claim such good as something that was necessarily earned. In the light of the questions of origin and change

20 In the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1843*, the first Discourse on Job is followed by two Discourses, titled *Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above*. Especially the third Discourse connects thankfulness with the aspect of receiving (from God): SKS 5, 152–8 / KW 5, 151–8. On the systematic relation between these Discourses, see Colton 2003; Glöckner 1998, 88f.

21 Most impressive and very influential on the philosophy of existence in the 20th century is the ‘Letter from October 11th’ in *Repetition* where the ‘Young Man’ adopts Job’s perspective on the contingency of life and translates it into a personal expression: ‘Where am I? [...] What is the meaning of the world? Who tricked me into this whole thing and leaves me standing here? [...]’ (SKS 4, 68 / KW 6, 200).

(ontological contingency), it points to an understanding of life as a process shaped by non-self-evidence. Especially that is pointed out by Job's attitude to see his loss not as a taking-away but as a giving-back, a self-surrendered relation to life by living it freely as it happens and finding meaning by that. Therefore, thankfulness is not a sign of personal induration but of dealing with life with flexibility and adaptability. 'Kierkegaard' shows therewith, not just the pure fact of contingency as being important for any understanding and evaluation of life but also for the personal relation to life based on the intertwined parameters of the world, the particular person in this world, how the person understands himself in this world, and what grounds the world.

Now it is possible to understand Job's thankfulness systematically. *a)* Thankfulness is an expression of a conscious and confirmed dependency on a gifting power. Simultaneously, to be thankful means to react freely.²² In thankfulness a person proves his/her freedom of self-determined action. *b)* Thankfulness is a way of looking at life as an undivided unity, seeing it as a fragile process in the way it emerges and appears, but always permeated by a gravity that holds life together. In Job's case such gravity power is God. *c)* Thankfulness is a way of finding home in coming back to life itself. Although Job's suffering makes him aware of his exposure to life, it guides him to thankfulness, an embracement of life, and to a world-, self-, and ground-relation. Job is then not simply accepting his fate, he confirms it with his attitude: becoming aware of what he had and has, and what he was and is.

Job finds *himself before God* (in a life which always has been grounded in God²³). What characterizes Job's self-relation and relation to God? 'Kierkegaard' notes:

On the day of sorrow, when everything was lost, he first of all thanked God, who gave it, deceived neither God nor himself, and even though everything had been shaken and overthrown, he remained what he was from the beginning, "honest and upright [*redelig og oprigtig*] before God".
(SKS 5, 123 / KW 5, 118)

He did not conceal from himself that everything had been taken from him; therefore, the Lord, who had taken it away, remained in his upright soul. He did not evade the thought that it was lost; therefore his soul remained quiet until the Lord's explanation again came to him and found his mind, like good earth, well cultivated in patience.
(SKS 5, 123 / KW 5, 118f.)

²² On thankfulness and freedom, see Henrich 1999, e.g. 164; and Schulz 2014a, 173–5.

²³ 'Or had the Lord actually changed? Or did the Lord not remain truly the same, just as Job did?' (SKS 5, 126 / KW 5, 121f.).

The very moment everything was taken away from him, he knew it was the Lord who had taken it away, and therefore in his loss he remained on good terms with the Lord, in his loss maintained intimacy with the Lord; he saw the Lord, and therefore he did not see despair.

(SKS 5, 125 / KW 5, 121)

So the Lord did not take everything away, for he did not take praise away from him, and he did not take away peace in the heart, the bold confidence in faith from which it proceeded, but intimacy with the Lord was still his as before, perhaps more inward [*inderligere*] than before, for now there was nothing at all in any way capable of drawing his thoughts away from it.

(SKS 5, 126 / KW 5, 122)

According to these quotations, Job's relation to God is characterized by several existential conditions. Out of endurance, strong focus, and willingness ('patience'),²⁴ the lived relation to God leads beside thankfulness to trust ('intimacy')²⁵ and security ('peace in heart') experienced in intensity ('inward' [*inderlig*]). Given this existential perspective, God is fully recognized only if the mind is in 'stillness', pure, without doubt. On the one hand, 'Kierkegaard' hints at Job's devotion as a state of mind in which God appears as ground without attribution, as uncategorized wholeness and unity (just as life is seen in thankfulness). On the other hand, the pureness of mind shows an inner movement of emptying. A relation to God implies then actualized forms of transcendence, namely self-surrender and looking on the world as nothingness.²⁶

However, Job is a real person, suffering, thanking, trusting, being part of this world. He surrenders to God by staying in this world as a concrete individual who lives a devotional relation to God. In such concreteness are limits involved, e.g. the limit of holding fast and keeping God in mind, especially when there is suffering which can be explained out of natural reasons.²⁷ Therefore, the religious task is characterized as a constant confirmation and repetition of the relation to God: and Job 'remained' – as cited above – 'what he was from the beginning, "honest and upright before God"'.

The terms 'honest and upright' [dan. *redelig og oprigtig*] are two existential attributes we can find throughout the whole oeuvre of Kierkegaard (see Schulz 2014b, 434–9). Both characterize truthfulness, *the* existential condition for a successful

²⁴ On 'patience' and its conceptualization, see e.g. Engmann 2017, 523–51; Possen 2003.

²⁵ The aspect of trust is also underlined in Glöckner 1998, 86.

²⁶ 'Kierkegaard' underlines: 'But the one who sees God has overcome the world, and therefore Job in his devout words has overcome the world [...]' (SKS 5, 125 / KW 5, 121).

²⁷ See SKS 5, 123–5 / KW 5, 119f. 'Kierkegaard' mentions there coincidence, human violence, and natural forces as causal possibilities for Job's suffering. But he also shows that no explanation gives a full satisfying answer for Job's suffering. Every reason leads to new questions. Countering doubt by the unconditional, God, therein lies Job's rationality. See also Deuser 2010, 82.

Dasein. To be upright refers mainly to a lived practice of sincere self-transparency, while honesty refers mainly to lived integrity and probity (dan. *redelighed*). What kind of existential relations are systematically expressed by honesty and uprightness? While self-transparency and integrity imply a constant self-relation, probity involves a relation to someone else. Insofar as Job is acting ‘honest and upright’, ‘Kierkegaard’ makes clear that Job’s relation to God is an intertwined relation of his self- and God-relation. Only when he knows who he is can he live a true relation to God, and vice versa: only in a lived relation to God does Job know himself truly.

That points to the mentioned existential-religious dependency. The own self needs be understood as a gift of God, thus Job is relating himself to finiteness *and* eternity, looking in faith and devotion to God *and* himself. However, if God revokes human control, then the person also has no full power and control over what he/she is. Therefore, full self-transparency is impossible and Job’s religious self-surrender can be seen as a reaction to such understanding (of givenness and contingency). He hands himself over to God and in that light he recognizes that he cannot fully understand himself: thus he understands himself. Such wilful surrender characterizes Job’s thankful and truthful devotion as a form of authenticity, because his existential actuality appears as a wholehearted self-consistency in which he becomes a lived expression and articulation of his religious stance.

The inward (truthful) relation to himself and God has an impact on the form of Job’s life, which by itself has an impact on Job’s perception of his experiences. Therefore, it is important to mention that suffering (out of contingency) does not have to be compensated,²⁸ because it is seen as a condition of life that brings someone closer to him/herself and God. Of course, this does not imply that someone has to be thankful for his/her suffering. It is simply qualified as an implicit part of life that everybody has to deal with (adaptability). Furthermore, suffering is connoted as a (needed) measure of thankfulness. Only one who stays thankful in suffering is earnestly thankful. Here we can see a typical pattern in Kierkegaard’s thought: the coherence of personal attitude and stance is validated only in crisis. Crisis shows truthfulness. In Job’s case such uprightness opens up new perspectives on and positions to (i.e. also subjective attitudes and stances to) life and himself. That consists of: *a*) life is in every regard ambivalent and fundamentally non-self-evident; *b*) what God does is meaningful, even when it does not seem like this from a human perspective (the old question of theodicy emerges here, see Welz 2017); *c*) one cannot understand oneself thoroughly;

²⁸ Job is not overcoming suffering by thankfulness. That would imply to forgive God. But Job is presented without hubris. Some of the secondary literature claims such kind of compensation, see Colton 2003, 207 and 211; Glöckner 1998, 87; more generally: Schulz 2014a, 176.

d) one's actions show who one is. By implementing these insights into his life-view, therein lies Job's authenticity. Thankfulness as well as truthfulness are the most significant expressions for that.

By that, Job becomes an example for the human incapability of having access to a holistic, absolute, and eternal knowledge. At the same time, he also stands as an example for transforming this incapability into an existential striving and religious actuality in the form of self-surrender and an acceptance of one's own powerlessness. Therefore, he is one of *the* examples for edification in Kierkegaard's oeuvre, as long as edification means 'the annihilation in which the individual sets himself aside in order to find God [...]' (SKS 7, 510 / KW 12.1, 560). Facing the unconditional implies here, foremost, self-emptying and an acknowledged dependency and relationality of one's self. Hence, edification is not characterized by personal achievement and self-assertion but by confirmed passivity as the ground-mode of religiousness. Job fulfils and actualizes then the function of a role model of confession: not to achieve anything by one's own strength and to confirm therewith truly to be human (see also Glöckner 1998, 236).

Now we can finally draw a historical line to one pietistically influenced thinker who interprets Job in a manner close to Kierkegaard, Immanuel Kant.²⁹ Although Kant contextualizes Job in the strict sense of theodicy, his focus lies on Job's inward stance to God.³⁰ That includes not only affection but above all an upright positioning to his incapability of understanding God. Kant uses in this context precisely the same terms as 'Kierkegaard' does, '*Aufrichtigkeit*' and '*Redlichkeit*' (Kant 1923, 133 and 136f.; dan. *oprigtighed og redelighed*), which leads for Kant also to the subjective attitude of being '*wahrhaft*' (ibid., 135; 'truthful') with oneself. Furthermore, for Kant's and 'Kierkegaard's' Job devotion lies in the human incapability of understanding the proof of God's wisdom. Both philosophers underline that devotion is based on an active mind and not on pure emphatic naivety. God has to be seen clearly as the non-understandable ground of all being. While 'Kierkegaard's' Job finally mirrors such understanding of God existentially with a 'still mind' and self-surrender (pureness), Kant's Job holds on to a straight forwardly active mind in his relation to God. Job appears thereby as a figure who follows religiousness as '*guten Lebenswandel*' (ibid., 134; 'a good way of life') concerning morality as the practical condition of social action. (Such social dimension is only implied in 'Kierkegaard'.³¹)

²⁹ See Kant 1923, 131–8. On Kant's interpretation of Job, see Brachtendorf 2002, 80–3; Deuser 2010, 78; Dieringer 2009, 120; Ricken 2003, 213–5; Schilling 2009, 78–81.

³⁰ I use the expression 'inward' because Kant underlines the connection between faith and introspection; see Kant 1923, 135f.

³¹ '[I]f you are honest [*redelig*] with yourself and love people, then you cannot wish to avoid Job [...]' (SKS 5, 128 / KW 5, 123).

Simultaneously, Kant's Job becomes by his mind-restriction also an example for authenticity. Kant mentions, '*HIJOB spricht, wie er denkt, und wie ihm zumute ist [...]*' (ibid., 132; 'Job speaks what he thinks and how he feels'). Job serves, in his uprightness, as an example for one's own religious stance. Hence we can say Job is, not only for 'Kierkegaard' (at least in terms of thankfulness), but also for Kant, an example for proving human freedom (of action). Nevertheless, the particular focus on freedom is different. For 'Kierkegaard' the existential freedom lies in saying 'yes' to the dependency on God, while Kant sees the freedom in saying 'yes' to the epistemic incapability of understanding God.³²

3.2 Appropriation and language

We can see clearly that the Discourse presents religiousness as a concrete practice and exercise of a subjective relation to God. That points to the existential aim of 'Kierkegaard's' Job-interpretation, the matter of existential appropriation.

One's personal process of appropriation is on two levels, accompanied by actualized translation and transformation. On the one hand, the reader is supposed to transport the poetic reality constructed by 'Kierkegaard' into his/her own actual life; on the other hand, he/she is supposed to change from a non-God-related life into a devotional existence (and if the reader already actualizes devotion, then the Discourse offers a measure for proving one's inward intensity of devotion). By that, existential appropriation corresponds not only with an awareness of contingency but takes Job's word as the necessary ground for one's own religious actuality because, even when there is a peacefully lived life without extraordinary situations (SKS 5, 128 / KW 5, 124), it expresses an understanding of faith as inherent happiness in all possible (and inevitable) suffering (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 122). Job's word prepares one for life.

However, to appropriate Job's word includes 'above all [to] learn from Job to be upright [*oprigtig*]³³ with yourself [...]' (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 123). Thereby, 'Kierkegaard' intends appropriation as *the* existential process of reaching a new (religious) life-stance characterized by authenticity. Accordingly, we will now discuss the question *how* does 'Kierkegaard' guide the reader into a process of existential

³² Here we can see how the idea of enlightenment shines through Kant's presentation of Job. Job knows that he is determined by something exterior (God), which thwarts of course the idea of enlightened autonomy. However, within this framework he holds on to the courage of using his mind, the duty of an enlightened person. Therefore, Kant's Job presents more a proto-enlightened human being, on the way to and in the direction of modernity.

³³ Hong translates 'oprigtig' as 'honest'.

appropriation? Here we have to consider that language is, for Kierkegaard, a central subject of thought; and the Discourse on Job is one important example of his investigations.³⁴

The Discourse is, on the content level as well as on the performative level, an examination of *Job's word*. 'Kierkegaard' underlines several times that it is 'brief' and it became through the centuries a 'proverb', because of its particular significance. Although Job's word represents all the unimaginable situations when language cannot express suffering (see Shakespeare 2003, 102), 'Kierkegaard' does not present it simply as the first and last word of comfort (even though he mentions that: SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 122). 'Kierkegaard' characterizes Job's word as a formula which has to be interpreted, decoded, and translated into present time – with the aim to act upon it. Therefore, 'Kierkegaard' underlines, on the first page, Job's 'significance by no means consists in what he said but in what he did' (SKS 5, 115 / KW 5, 109). Hence, the task is for 'Kierkegaard' to guide the reader to action (faith) by guiding him/her through Job's word. The failure of the reader would be to hold on to the textual level since it is more important to see Job's example shining through his word. 'Kierkegaard' notes therefore, 'the statement itself is not the guide, and Job's significance consists not in his having said it but in his having acted upon it' (SKS 5, 115 / KW 5, 109). Thereafter, appropriation does not simply imply knowing Job's word objectively; the reader should rather understand him/herself *in* Job's word. By that, 'Kierkegaard' intends a de-intellectualization of Job's word to lure out the religious ground in the reader's soul. How does 'Kierkegaard' deal with language here and why is it helpful for the reader's appropriation?

The first step 'Kierkegaard' takes is to demonstrate how language depends on the *context*. Job's word would change its meaning if it was said by someone else, or in a different situation, or if Job did not exemplify the word by his own action (SKS 5, 116 / KW 5, 110). In the second step he demonstrates how understanding depends on *perception*. A child understands Job's word differently than a young man or an old man, simply because the age of a person is connected to his/her life-experience which gives the used and interpreted language different layers of meaning (SKS 5, 117f. / KW 5, 111f.). In the third step he demonstrates how meaning depends on *usage*.³⁵ 'Kierkegaard' does this by interpreting Job's word. He starts with the first part, 'The Lord gave', brings up the content of thankfulness, and then contrasts the meaning of it with opposites of thankfulness, namely unthankfulness, restlessness, craving, defiance,

³⁴ For subtle observations on Kierkegaard's use of language, regarding the *Upbuilding Discourses* in general, see Shakespeare 2003.

³⁵ On language and usage, see e.g. Pattison 2002, 141.

self-deceit etc. (SKS 5, 122f. / KW 5, 117f.). Such contrasting shapes the meaning of thankfulness by describing it negatively. Taking up the second part, ‘and the Lord took away’, ‘Kierkegaard’ demonstrates the translation of the word into present language and knowledge by giving the reader of modern times (meaningful) explanations of Job’s suffering, namely coincidence, human violence, natural forces etc. (SKS 5, 124f. / KW 5, 119f.). In such deconstruction of Job’s word he sees an intellectualization that holds back from faith (SKS 5, 125f. / KW 5, 120f.). Finally by taking up the third part, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord!’, ‘Kierkegaard’ connects the meaning of Job’s word with the reader’s life-context, as a word that is valuable for religious appropriation (SKS 5, 127f. / KW 5, 123f.).

We can see, ‘Kierkegaard’ starts with general observations on language and shades gradually into the task of existential appropriation. By that means, language itself becomes part of existential actuality. Language is then nothing abstract anymore, it is usage in concrete communication. ‘Kierkegaard’ then obscures the communication with overlapping meanings³⁶ (especially while interpreting Job’s proverb) by using a strategy of deconstruction. He empties the language of its common meaning that the reader would expect (see Colton 2003, 212). While the Discourse progresses, Job’s word becomes more and more blurred and re-connoted (without dis-embedding it from its meaning as biblical proverb³⁷). Equally, the language used opens up horizons. ‘Thankfulness’, for example, is taken out of its common usage and gets shaped by a religious context. The reader is thereby not only confronted with new meaning but with new perspectives on reality (see e.g. Pattison 2003, 88).

The strategy of distancing and re-building helps to shape the language as porous and to open it up to what lies beyond.³⁸ That means in the present case to

36 We can see that also in another aspect. Language is the connecting medium between speaker and addressee. Here, Job as well as ‘Kierkegaard’, and the reader too, can be interpreted as either speaker or addressee. Who speaks to whom then? Precisely this indistinctiveness opens up a space for overlapping perspectives and possibilities of meaning.

37 Of course, ‘Kierkegaard’ intends to keep the meaning of the proverb for the reader’s (religious) appropriation. That is also shown by ‘Kierkegaard’s’ re-traditionalization of biblical quotations at the beginning of almost every Discourse. ‘Kierkegaard’ takes over the tradition but modifies the culturally established meaning by re-interpretation in order to open up new perspectives of thinking.

38 Although David Kangas comes from a different perspective, he emphasizes a similar point regarding the second and third Discourse of the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1843*. While Kangas looks only briefly at the immanent relation between language and edification, he emphasizes that Kierkegaard’s use of ‘absolute figures’, which are neither metaphors nor concepts, ‘ruptures the immanent tendencies of language’ and opens up a space of ‘improper signification’.

see Job as a concrete human being. If the reader reaches a level of understanding that *concrete* experience is involved in Job's word – understanding 'Job's wretchedness, [...] how Job could say it' (SKS 5, 118 / KW 5, 112) – then the path is paved for existential appropriation. Such a process of transcending oneself in the concrete existential position of Job can be successful, if the reader gets strongly involved in the Discourse. 'Kierkegaard's' transformation of language is one important strategy for that. By re-connoting language, he has to deal with the fragile balance between talking meaningfully and being misunderstood; hence opening up the common meaning of the language irritates the reader, which helps simultaneously to engage the reader's attention.³⁹

However, 'Kierkegaard' can only pave the path for the reader's own engagement. Therewith, what 'Kierkegaard' notes at the end is important: 'the discourse, however, has not wanted to impose itself on anyone' (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 123). The reader needs to have interest and willingness to transform Job's poetic reality into self-actuality. The existential process of becoming oneself (appropriation) implies then to be open to what one is confronted with (Job's example) and to react upon it affirmatively. As long as that means starting a dialogue and vivid conversation with oneself, the reader of the Discourse shapes not only his/her self-understanding and life-view but reaches a new self-articulation.

Now we can see clearly how method and content are intertwined in the Discourse. The specific use of language mirrors and mediates appropriation as a process of re-connoting one's own life. 'Kierkegaard's' demonstration of how language *becomes new* anticipates appropriation and the immanent aim of new

Therewith, one's personal stance of edification represents a process that 'works [...] against language', i.e. the individual recognizes in his/her religiousness the existentiality of meaning that is intended by the Discourses, a meaning that has to be discovered since it lies beyond the significations of language. See Kangas 2000, 108–13, esp. 112f.

³⁹ 'Kierkegaard' uses further strategies to involve the reader, e.g. asking questions of the reader (SKS 5, 126 / KW 5, 121f.); talking directly to the reader as 'my listener' (e.g. SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 122); giving descriptive examples of concrete life-situations (SKS 5, 122f. and 127f. / KW 5, 117f. and 123f.; see e.g. Lotti 2003, 142–6); talking in suggestive phrases like 'But you agree with us that you can learn from Job [...]' (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 123); using Job's story and Job himself as a parable and (fictional) possibility of devotion (on the use and aim of parable in Kierkegaard, see Purkarthofer 2000, 153); using written language like spoken language and never the 'I' as instance of talk (see Pattison 2002, 147f.); using pictorial language, e.g. biblical metaphors ('Kierkegaard' uses for example the metaphor 'worm of craving', SKS 5, 122 / KW 5, 117. On pictorial language and metaphors in the Discourses, see e.g. Pattison 2002, 122–32; Purkarthofer 2000.), etc. All these techniques and strategies help to start a dialogue with the reader. The aim is to unmask existence in the light of Job's example and to mirror it back into the reader's 'life of action' (SKS 5, 119 / KW 5, 114).

self-articulation. Consequently, learning the new language (of the Discourse) initiates existential appropriation and thereby the existential possibility of learning faith.⁴⁰

4 Conclusion: religious individualization

Before we come up with a understanding of ‘religious individualization’ given by ‘Kierkegaard’s’ Discourse on Job, we will briefly summarize three important points.

Firstly, the human self is seen as fundamentally relational, embedded into communication, dependent on the external world and language. Especially the existential aim of (religious) self-appropriation shows the immanent tension of any self-actuality: being autonomous while depending on external mediation.

Secondly, one’s self-awareness is intertwined with the aspects of freedom and transformation. Reaching new subjective perspectives on and positions to oneself and life is the aim and the condition for truthful existing.

Thirdly, one’s self-relation and self-understanding is shaped by the experience of life’s impinging givenness: the contingency of life, and the dependency on unconditional conditions of life. Existential religiousness emphasizes such a life-view (in which the self is affected by life) since the religious individual looks at *and* beyond life’s emerging surface while it emphatically accepts one’s inescapable embeddedness into life as a meaningful enterprise that grounds in God.

What picture of individualization emerges now, if we consider Job as ‘Kierkegaard’s’ model for religiousness?

- a) Looking at the content of the Discourse on Job, the personal process of individualization lies in one’s confirmation/stabilization of one’s own religiousness by an enhanced focus on oneself correlating with an intense inward relation to God. Job’s ‘thankfulness’ demonstrates that thoroughly as a process of *becoming oneself before God*.
- b) Considering the existential aim of the text, individualization lies in the subjective process of re-thinking oneself, pointing furthermore to one’s

⁴⁰ Katrin Dickow underlines that too with her thesis that learning faith resembles the learning of a new language (Dickow 2009, 140–56). However, in opposition to language, faith cannot be learned with the helping hands of vocabulary books and grammatical rules. Faith does not depend on a specific grammar which can be used to move faster into a devotional religiousness. It is an experiential discovery of God as unconditional ground. Consequently, an individual who knows *what* faith is and how it is systematically constructed does not necessarily *have* faith. Any intellectual effort opens up only the possibility of having faith concretely.

re-positioning in the world. As long as that also aims towards a religious way of existing, the Discourse on Job mediates a spiritual beginning (see also Lotti 2003, 142).

Both aspects show that individualization is systematically embedded in an existential subjectivity, that identifies the awareness, acknowledgement, and concreteness of one's lived self-relation, and by that also the existential conditions for one's lived religiousness (see *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, part two, section two, esp. chapter two).

For the purpose of this article it is important to mention now that existential appropriation is not only the condition but also a concrete articulation of religious individualization, because it expresses the actuality of one's freedom to initiate an earnest self-discovery considering the possible religious foundation of one's own being. For that, Job is literarily functionalized as a role model giving an existential image as guiding orientation for the reader's mind (see also Harrits 2000, 130); thus the process of self-appropriation lies on the shoulders of each individual,⁴¹ 'my reader', as 'Kierkegaard' pronounces in every preface of the *Upbuilding Discourses*.⁴²

Individualization and appropriation both express a subjective process of emergence and translation. Considering that correlation we can mention further characteristics.

- c) In *Repetition*, the 'Young Man' says, 'If Job is a poetic character, if there never was any man who spoke this way, then I make his words my own and take upon myself the responsibility' (SKS 4, 73 / KW 6, 205). That expresses precisely the existential aim for every (wilful) reader (of the Discourse): to take over the non-delegable responsibility for oneself (including one's religiousness).
- d) In self-appropriation/individualization the individual reaches *concrete* self-awareness. Taking Job as an example, the important point is to achieve

⁴¹ In *Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus underlines how a religious (and ethical) role model opens up the possibility of existential engagement for the reader (SKS 7, 328f. / KW 12.1, 359f.). Climacus exemplifies that by using *Job* in his function as role model for existential appropriation of religiousness that gives the reader the possibility of concrete action which can be translated into self-actuality, i.e. Job offers actual self-possibilities. Hereby, Climacus is close to Kant's understanding of the relation between a religious role model and one who follows the (lived) example of the role model in the *Critique of Judgment*. For a more specific discussion on Climacus' explanation and its correlation to Kant, see Engmann 2017, 540f. (fn. 525).

⁴² Precisely this perspective on the first person singular is a necessary condition for any existential appropriation, namely the capability of grasping a given issue and accepting it as true or valid for one's own existence (see Schulz 2012, 71).

an awareness of being consciously present – in this time, at this place – and to handle with adaptability the given circumstances of life.

- e) Job also stands for devotional self-surrender. ‘Kierkegaard’ hints at understanding that as a process of self-emptying, of one’s renunciation of time and temporality (see esp. *SKS* 5, 122f. / *KW* 5, 117f.). However, self-surrender appears in the end as a confirmation of one’s own being without illusion,⁴³ i.e. as truthful self-awareness.
- f) Truthfulness includes the awareness of one’s exposure to life; religiously turned – one is nothing before God. Human existence means to live in the awareness of honest failure (Job’s ‘thankfulness’ confirms that). Accepting human insufficiency and passivity defines religious authenticity.
- g) Such authenticity implicates a specific form of self-transgression which stands not for devotional self-annihilation but for a critical movement of mind, recognizing one’s weakness and limits.⁴⁴ The particular religious point here is that the individual can reach a sublime state of being uplifted, understood as being-entrust-with-God. For such edifying acknowledgement of God, Job’s ‘thankfulness’ shows that he overcomes the distance between the one who gives/takes (God) and the one who thanks (himself); he transcends his separation from God inwardly.
- h) Most important is the acceptance of being dependent on the unconditional ground. That colours the idea of individualization fundamentally as non-self-assertion. Translating that dependency into self-actuality: therein lies the primary step to enter into a process of religious individualization. However, only religiousness confirms dependency emphatically. Out of that reciprocity, religious individualization appears as one’s freedom to become new by embracing one’s relativity (non-absoluteness).

⁴³ ‘[A]nd above all learn from Job to become upright [*oprigtig*] with yourself so that you do not deceive yourself with imagined power [*indbildt Kraft*] [...]’ (*SKS* 5, 127 / *KW* 5, 123).

⁴⁴ In this regard, it is interesting that ‘Kierkegaard’s’ Discourse on Job re-traditionalizes narrowly the biblical book on Job. In their subtext, both point out the problem of dealing with life and its conditions and that any question on life leads to contradictory answers and non-final justifications. On the biblical book, see Deuser 2010, 76.

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***Suifaction*: typological reflections on the evolution of the self**

The human person, whose definition serves as the touchstone according to which good must be distinguished from evil, is considered as sacred, in what one might call the ritual sense of the word (sc. in the thinking of Kant and Rousseau – AKP). It has something of that transcendental majesty which the churches of all times have given to their Gods. It is conceived as being invested with that mysterious property which creates an empty space around holy objects, which keeps them away from profane contacts and which draws them away from ordinary life. And it is exactly this feature which induces the respect of which it is the object. Whoever makes an attempt on a man's life, on a man's liberty, on a man's honour inspires us with a feeling of horror, in every way analogous to that which the believer experiences when he sees his idol profaned. Such a morality is therefore not simply a hygienic discipline or a wise principle of economy. It is a religion of which man is, at the same time, both believer and God. But this religion is individualistic, since it has man as its object, and since man is, by definition, an individual. Indeed there is no system whose individualism is more uncompromising. Nowhere are the rights of man affirmed more energetically, since the individual is here placed on the level of sacrosanct objects; nowhere is he more jealously protected from external encroachments, whatever their source.

(Lukes 1969, 21f; Durkheim 1898, 6)¹

How can one approach a notoriously tantalising and yet intellectually challenging topic revolving around historical processes of religious individualisation? The question is not only inextricably related to the issue of modernity but it has also in conjunction with this topic been the subject of intense discussion among contemporary thinkers like Foucault, Habermas, Sorabji and Taylor. I shall not enter this philosophical conversation although my examination does have more than a tangential relationship to it. My main concern lies in establishing a typology that will allow us to make some finer gradations in our talk about processes of individualisation in the history of culture, religion included.² In this way, I cast my nets wider

1 For the historical background of the reflections in relation to the Dreyfuss Affair, see Lukes 1969, 14–9, and 1972, 338–44. Following the editors' wish, all non-English texts are provided in translation. References to the texts in their original language are given as additional page numbers.

2 I do not think it makes sense to speak about religion as a separate sphere independent from culture until modernity. Surely one can speak about religion – from a third order perspective – in relation to pre-modern cultures but it is on the premise that the conflation between culture and religion is acknowledged (cf. Petersen 2017c; 2017d). Although it has taken considerable time to make this insight general in scholarship, it is a basic tenet of Weber and Durkheim, see Weber 1963, 546–54, and Durkheim 2007, 47542.

than the Erfurt project by examining historical processes of individualisation in general rather than confining the study to processes of religious individualisation only. I do this for two reasons. First, such an expansion is needed to answer the question of historical processes of religious individualisation specifically. Second, since throughout most of human evolution religion and culture have been overlapping entities there is the more reason to expand the analytical horizon. To some my taxonomical ruminations may sound like a dull and old-fashioned enterprise founded on the idea of reifying particular epochs and geographical areas as constituting important steppingstones on a long journey eventually culminating in Western modernity. Although I think of certain historical processes as archetypal and decisive for the subsequent developments, I do not assert typologies to mirror reality in any 1:1 relationship. Typologies are models that can be good to think with inasmuch as they provide us with a grid creating a plausible framework for understanding the world (here understood in Popper's wider trichotomous sense of worlds). If we refrain from operating with some basic taxonomical distinctions in relation to selfhood, we shall continuously be haunted by elusive categories and misunderstandings such as those found in the discussions pertaining to the emergence of the individual. The more so, since there is an obvious risk, as can also be seen from the scholarly literature on the subject, that all forms of selfhood come to be measured in relation to modern Western forms of individualisation which render them deficient in one way or the other.

Admittedly, my study has an ambitious longitudinal character, but to be able to speak about historical processes of individualisation we need to know what we are talking about. How is it possible to think about individualisation if there is no individual in the first place, or if we have not clarified the meaning of the adopted terms?³ And even more so, how can there be individualisation if there is no self? Some may arguably object that obviously there is a self (Searle 2001, 75). If that is the case, however, we should be able also to point to the emergence of this self, just as we should be able to delimit ourselves from periods and species for which we are not prepared to talk about it, let alone the individual.⁴ In other words,

³ Despite several excellent essays, Arweiler and Möller 2008 is symptomatic of the problems arising from a lack of typological and definitional considerations, when taking up the subject of self-understanding. Apart from Gill's essay (2008, 359–61), there is hardly anywhere in the book where the central concepts relating to self-understanding and individualisation are defined in relation to each other.

⁴ I want to develop the Durkheimian-Maussian argument of selfhood by taking into account not only what we today know about animals other than humans but also about possible differences with respect to self-awareness in the hominin lineage. In the Maussian understanding, self-awareness served as a default assumption for the examination (1938, 265).

typological reflections on the evolution of the self and different manifestations of selfhood are inevitable if we want to pursue the question of historical processes of individualisation, let alone religious individualisation.⁵

Second, I risk my neck by arguing that a decisive change in self-awareness and, thereby, self-understanding took place in some elite segments at the transition from urban forms to kosmos types of religion: that which Bellah designated the change from archaic to Axial age forms of religion.⁶ I assert that this ideological transformation driven by changed socio-material conditions in some distinct Eurasian cultures had a lasting effect on subsequent forms of individualisation, and that parallel changes can be documented in cultures outside this geographical area and time period, when comparable socio-material developments were at hand. Here I shall focus on one particularly prominent feature of kosmos religion, the element of *suifaction* as self-cultivation. I shall conclude by discussing two examples testifying to the change in *suifaction*, with respect to self-cultivation or training, that the kosmos religions gave rise to.

1 Some crucial problems

As implied by the term individual there never was and never will be a self who exemplifies an entire epoch or geographical area. Someone is always different from anyone, just as the particular one is different from everyone (Burridge 1979); but these differences aside there are patterns of meaning that the different selves belonging to different socio-cultural segments of society embody at different historical epochs and geographical areas. It is to these patterns that I turn my attention by focusing on processes of selfhood rather than understanding it as denoting a state or an acquisition (cf. Gordon 2015, 367). *Suifaction* is always a matter of flux rather than a possession one may obtain once and for all.

⁵ I agree with Mauss who asserted on the issue of individualisation that it is a subject belonging to social history. Thus Mauss in teasing apart the notion strove to examine it on the basis of laws, religions, habits, and social and intellectual structures (1938, 265). I agree with him that we should continue the work on notions of *suifaction* to obtain a better and more thorough understanding of the subject (1938, 281).

⁶ I now prefer to designate Axial age religions as *kosmos* forms of religion in order to detach the argument from its terminologically heavy reliance upon a Eurasian perspective and an idealist accentuation at the cost of socio-material preconditions for the distinctly cultural evolution. Due to constraints of space I shall have to exclude the important judicial and economic dimension of selfhood from the reflections. Obviously that will have to be taken into consideration in the future to achieve a more thorough and complete understanding.

Initially, however, I shall express a word of caution. As Martin has noted, there is an imminent risk that when searching for ideologically loaded phenomena such as questions relating to the emergence of the individual and individualism, one is likely to find them in those geographical areas and periods for which one has a preference (1994, 118f.). I do not argue that all we find is a matter of self-reflection only, but any attempt to search for historical processes of individualisation inevitably involves the question of the origin of an ideologically particularly moot phenomenon and hence should take the risk of presentism seriously (cf. de Certeau 1975, 40, 58).

In other words, searching for processes of individualisation, and the related issues of the emergence of the individual and individualism as a concomitant ideology requires methodological and theoretical rigour in order to avoid blunt self-reflection. Yet, it is analytically not only viable but also advantageous to operate with a continuum on which one may insert different caesurae enabling us to differentiate between diverse manifestations of selfhood, processes of individualisation and related ideologies pertaining to the understanding of the self with respect to the wider society, one's community and family. Other scholars have also emphasised the presentist ring related to the search for the emergence of the individual and, therefore also by necessity, processes of individualisation (cf. Pelling 1990, v). Personally, I do not think that presentism constitutes a problem *per se*, since it pertains to any historical study. As long as one succeeds in handling the problem in a cognisant and methodologically rigorous way, there is no reason to stumble at the presentist dimension. The more so, since it would be scholarly detrimental were we to dispose of raising some of the grander problems pertaining to cultural history. In fact, it is an important exercise insofar as it diminishes the risk of falling victim to prejudicial thinking by forcing us to tackle a patently thorny question. The enterprise becomes problematic only if the presentism is not counterweighted by a parallel acknowledgement of alterity. I do not have any hobby horses in calling things by different names as long as we can retain lucidity in the nomenclature adopted, and agree on what exactly we are in pursuit of in the worlds examined (cf. Petersen 2017c; 2017d). In saying this I do not expect that other members of the project will necessarily agree, let alone embrace, my taxonomical terminology,⁷ nor do I assert that it correlates with historical realities in any direct way. I present it as a model only, the virtue of which should be judged on its ability to instigate a more thorough and thick thinking

⁷ I agree with Gordon (2015), but contrary to him I think we need a typology to know what we are talking about.

on the issue.⁸ In other words, the merit of the typology lies in its ability to offer a model that is good to think with and prevents us from making blunt generalisations thwarting out the nuances between different epochs, geographical areas, and diverse socio-cultural segments, while simultaneously acknowledging the existence of certain patterns in cultural history. I do not think it is possible to come to any agreement on a fixed point in history which may be said to constitute the dawn of the individual and the emergence of individualism. There may be different ways to approach the subject and to conceptualise it, as different contributions written over the years as part of the Erfurt project vividly demonstrate. The merits of the diverse attempts should be assessed on their capacity to create a plausible overarching view projected onto history and relating to *suifaction*.

The key focus of the project is extremely valuable in this regard. By downgrading the quest for the origin of (religious) individualism and the emergence of the individual in favour of casting light on historical processes of religious individualisation, the endeavour allows for greater versatility and pluriformity. It opens up for a more comprehensive view that enables us to operate with different processes of *suifaction* and, therefore, to apply the perspective to a variety of historical eras and geographical areas. When, for instance, Burckhardt dated individualism to the Italian Renaissance, this dating made excellent sense in light of his overall argument (1985, 93).⁹ At the same time, however, it makes sense from another perspective to argue that Burckhardt was wrong if by individualism one understands the situation epitomised by Kant and Rousseau and elegantly described by Durkheim in my preamble text (cf. Makari 2015, 267–97, 397–424). Admittedly, Kant does not directly touch upon individualism in his famous definition of enlightenment. In the subsequent tradition, however, his understanding became closely connected with the birth of the individual and individualism, since the latter came to designate the being of the autonomous enlightened citizen. Based on this view, it hardly makes sense to speak about the individual and individualism prior to Enlightenment.¹⁰ In the *Beantwortung der Frage: Was Ist Aufklärung*, Kant asserts that enlightenment consists in:

[...] human's exodus from his self-imposed nonage (*aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit*). Nonage is the incapacity to use one's own understanding without another person's guidance. The nonage is self-imposed when its cause springs not from a lack of

⁸ For the distinct function of models in relation to method and theory, see Jensen 2009.

⁹ Seidentrop 2014, 334–48, argues against Burckhardt by dating individualism and, hence, modernity to early liberalism of the 16th and 17th century, while also emphasising this tradition's background in Christianity (cf. 51–110, 349–63).

¹⁰ The Enlightenment understanding also constitutes the point of departure for Dumont's reflections 1983, 20.

understanding but in indecisiveness and absence of courage to be guided by one's own understanding not led by another. "Sapere aude!" "Have courage to use your own understanding!" therefore, is the adage of Enlightenment.

(*Berlinische Monatschrift* 30. September 1784 – my translation)

If, conversely, one understands individualism as being intrinsically related to political autonomy it is difficult even to use the notion with respect to Enlightenment, since neither Kant's Prussia nor Rousseau's France, or for that matter any other European state of the age, subscribed to a form of political independence of the individual citizens that we would acknowledge as identical with political autonomy. At the same time, one has to add that if one were to define individualism along the lines of Kant's understanding of the enlightened self, even today only few people would qualify as, in fact, being individuals – which points to another general problem in reflections on the issue. Each time we insert a caesura on the continuum eventually leading to stronger forms of individualism, we have to acknowledge that the changes did obviously not happen from one day to the next, nor were they extended to all members of society. It took a long time before what originally emerged as an elite phenomenon disseminated to wider segments of the population. And even when we grant the special role of social and cultural entrepreneurs in paving the way for new forms of selfhood,¹¹ these entrepreneurs presumably also balkanised or oscillated between different representations of personhood embedded in different ideologies and ontologies.¹²

In my view, much of the critique voiced against an allegedly Western hegemonic self-eulogy of Western modernity as the breeding ground for the emergence of the individual with a concomitant ideology falters on the ground, when the modifications and nuances inherent in this view are taken into consideration. Based on such an understanding I also think it is presumptuous to deny that in the various Enlightenment movements there was a particularly strong emphasis placed on the concept of the individual. In fact, it makes sense to argue, along with Durkheim, Dumont, Taylor and a whole series of other notable thinkers, that in terms of intellectual and philosophical history, Enlightenment and, I would add, Romanticism in effect constituted the period during which the emergence of the individual understood as an autonomous being independent of all authorities other than one's own reasoning and choices came into being supported by a concomitant ideology. This view does not imply that there could be no sense of

11 For the role of social and cultural entrepreneurs in paving the way for transitions in intellectual history in particular in relation to the Axial age, see Abrutyn 2014.

12 For the idea of balkanisation as crucial for examinations of ancient cultures, see Veyne 1983, although he uses the term exclusively in relation to religious representations.

selfhood in preceding eras or that other non-Western cultures were void of representations of selfhood. What the argument amounts to is the fact that Enlightenment in conjunction with Romanticism, in terms of intellectual history and philosophy, set a new frame of reference for how the self could be envisaged and understood in relation to an unconditional instance. But surely nothing in evolution emerges *ex nihilo*. Any novelty is built on existing vestiges, since natural selection needs something to work with and ratchet onto. The same pertains to other selection mechanisms that we need to acknowledge if we want to give a plausible description of evolution relating to intentional agents such as Homo sapiens.¹³ This connects to both specifically biological and cultural evolution, as Bellah, with respect to the latter, emphasises in an epitome of his thinking: ‘Nothing is ever lost,’ that is, nothing decisive (2005, 72, 83; 2011).

So let us return to the evolutionary issue and clarify how the question may be posed: What does it take for selfhood to come into existence? There is ongoing and vibrant research in the behavioural sciences and primatology that argues for extending the notion of selfhood also to include animals other than humans. On the background of such insights the taxonomical considerations pertaining to selfhood do not become less crucial. What exactly do we mean when using the concept of self, and how do we make the epistemological transition from self to individualisation? I agree with Dumont that although the emergence of the individual surely represents a late Western phenomenon such a view does not take away the burden of examining the historical presuppositions which eventually led to the modern phenomena (see also Mauss 1938):

Thus when we speak of man as an individual, we designate two concepts at once: an object out there, and a value. Comparison obliges us to distinguish analytically these two aspects: one, the empirical subject of speech, thought, and will, the individual sample of mankind, as found in all societies; and, two, the independent, autonomous, and thus essentially nonsocial moral being, who carries out paramount values and is found primarily in our modern ideology of man and society. From that point of view, there emerge two kinds of societies. Where the individual is a paramount value, I speak of individualism. In the opposite case, where the paramount value lies in society as a whole, I speak of holism
(1986, 24; 1983, 34f.)¹⁴

Unlike Dumont and Taylor I am not particularly focused on what led to the modern Western notion of individuality and its undergirding ideology of individualism. I am more interested in different notions of selfhood and in how they evolved

¹³ For an elaboration of the various selection mechanisms at play in the hominin lineage, see Turner et al. 2018.

¹⁴ Cf. also *idem*, 1983, 21 and Taylor 1989, 111–42.

under particular circumstances. I do not think there was any unidirectional or irreversible movement from say antiquity to modernity stretching from Paul over Augustine and Luther to Kant and Kierkegaard. There were periods of increased individualisation in certain social segments, just as there have been eras of de-individualisation as well as continuous reciprocal processes of individualisation and de-individualisation. That said, however, I also assert that in hindsight one can point to important configurations in the thinking about and the instantiation of the self that eventually manifested themselves in modern Western ideologies about individualism, as exemplified in the lonely figure of Friedrich's famous 'Wanderer above the Mist' painting or the anguished self of Kierkegaard's philosophical-theological oeuvre painstakingly making its own existential choice by being suspended above 70,000 fathoms of water (cf. Petersen 2004).

In line with these considerations, my concluding examples are meant to demonstrate how one particularly strong notion of selfhood emerged at a crucial time in history on the Eurasian continent at the transition from complex urban forms of religion to early kosmos types of religion.¹⁵ Yet, it would be wrong to date the emergence of the individual to this epoch, just as it would be fallacious to use this terminology with respect to the pre-modern period,¹⁶ but certainly one can, in some segments of these past Eurasian societies, see a much stronger concept of the self that begins to take form in difference to urban forms of religion (Petersen 2013a): a transition that paved the way for a distinctly new type of religion that eventually became disseminated to much wider segments of the population. In this way, the examples demonstrate what may be gained by operating with a typology that, on the one hand, allows for terminological differences between different notions of selfhood diverging from each other by the degree of *suifaction*

15 In Bellah's terminology this transition is dubbed the movement from archaic to Axial age types of religion. I adhere to his general framework of evolutionary thinking about religion, but as noted in fn. 6, I have abandoned his terminology for two reasons. First, for comparative purposes it is important to make it less dependent upon the Eurasian development and to make the nomenclature more stringent in terms of consistent terminology. Second, it is crucial to lay emphasis on the socio-material presuppositions for any cultural development to take place. Hence, I divide the history of religion into the following stages: 1) gatherer-hunters' religion; semi-nomadic religion 2) early agricultural religion; complex agricultural religion; 3) early urban religion; complex urban religion; 4) early kosmos religion; complex kosmos religion; 5) early global religion; complex global religion. Often the forms of religion are overlapping, just as some of them have persisted unto the present although influenced by subsequent forms of religions.

16 See, for instance, Bonnet 2013, Graf 2013, and Woolf 2013. Whereas Bonnet rejects the term individualisation (49), Graf emphasises its limitations (132f.) for an appraisal of ancient religion, and Woolf underlines 'how there were, properly speaking, neither individuals nor religions in Roman Antiquity' (155).

involved, and, on the other hand, enables us to see other periods and geographical areas during which individualisation processes also came to the fore of attention.

2 A Durkheimian take on selfhood

As a point of departure, I find it hard to imagine a world inhabited by humans not capable of making a simple distinction between individual members and the group, but the same pertains to other apes. Evidently they are also capable of making differentiations between themselves, kin and other members of the group. And by the same reasoning, we should grant the same to our hominin predecessors. Self-recognition is found with many animals, but if that is so what exactly does it mean to speak about and conceptualise a self, and what are the differences between hominin self-recognition and that of other animals?

The difference between member and group is a key to understanding human culture and society in general. The self only attains reality by recognising how at one and the same time it constitutes a self by being different from the group and how its existence is contingent upon its group membership: a double movement that takes place between individual awareness and collective consciousness (Durkheim 2007, 344). Human beings are *homines duplices* suspended between culture and biology, group and self. We may push this Durkheimian understanding further by taking recent evolutionary insights into consideration.

When our hominin predecessors left the arboreal areas for the open grassland sometime around 2, 5 million years ago, they had to undergo drastic changes to survive in their new habitat. As we can see from our ape cousins in the pan lineage, from which we split apart some 6.5 million years ago and with which we share almost 99 percent of our genes, they are, as other apes, basically nepotistic, despotic and self-centred. Their form of social life consists in fission-fusion groups and involves at the most a number of peers around 100. The same pertains to the other apes such as orangutans and gorillas, from the lineages of which we are further apart. In calling apes despotic and egoistic I do not mean to castigate them. Had our predecessors stayed in the woodlands, we would have been the same. It is the niche that we came to inhabit which, in interchange with our genome, changed our nature. To survive on the savannah it was crucial to engage in different forms of co-operation at a far more stable scale compared to the momentary types of collaboration that we find among other apes. It was decisive to engage in alliances to protect oneself not only against predators but also to be able to sustain one's life by getting access to prey (Bickerton 2009, 123f.). During these millions of years, natural selection worked in such a way as to result

in a number of remarkable changes in hominin anatomy crucial for its survival in a new biotope. Bipedalism was decisive in order to be able to view over the grass and detect predators in due time. Important changes on the upper arm and shoulder paved the way for hominins' possibility of defending themselves against predators by standing at a safe distance and throwing stones at attacking animals, since the human shoulder came to work as a catapult (Turchin 2016, 95–110). Bipedalism also led to enlargement of the larynx and elongation of the vocal cords that in turn led to greater versatility in sounds produced and, thereby, provided physical presuppositions for the later development of language.

In several books, Turner argues that with the move to the savannah the hominin palette of emotions was also considerably developed with respect to the four primary emotions of fear, anger, sadness and happiness, found also among the other apes (see, for example, Turner and Maryanski 2008, Turner et al. 2018). The development of secondary emotions like shame and guilt was important for an ape that, given the drastic change in environment, had to survive by means of stable alliances for which it was not genetically disposed (Turner et al. 2018; Henrich 2016; Turchin 2016). In fact, guilt and shame are necessary prerequisites for an animal to set up a strong sense of morality whereby the self is able to reflect on its ability or failure to comply with the norms of the group. In Turner's view the emergence of religion should also be seen in this context. Ultimately it should be thought of as an evolutionary by-product resulting from the expansion of the hominin palette of emotions.¹⁷ Obviously religion constitutes an impure concept inasmuch as it is comprised of elements originating in different evolutionary contexts. We certainly find ritualised behaviour in a number of animals, but what we do not find among animals other than later hominins is symbolisation relating to religion.

Although religion originally constituted an evolutionary by-product relating to the previously mentioned expansion of the hominin palette of emotions, it came to have adaptive functions for group-bonding. Emotions are evanescent. The positive values pertaining to emotions for social cohesion are, given their ephemeral nature, difficult to maintain over time. At this point religion became crucial in providing the means for stabilising the group by bestowing upon it a more constant foundation for upholding positive emotions. By directing their emotions towards an emblem – symbolically and indexically signifying the fundamental values of the community – members of the group could maintain the positive emotions over time and hence strengthen the bonds uniting them into a coalition.

¹⁷ When talking about religion I use the term from a third order perspective. I can easily subscribe to Jensen's definition of religion as 'cognitive and semantic networks comprising ideas, behaviours and institutions in relation to counter-intuitive superhuman agents, objects and posits' (2014, 8).

In continuity of Durkheim, I think of religion as a storage battery in which the group – consisting of individual selves – invest positive emotions in the emblem on behalf of the collective and at the cost of the individuals (2007, 91, 337f., 342). But subsequent to the group gathering around the emblem and celebrating its fundamental values, the adherence and ongoing commitment to these ideals, indexically symbolised by the emblem, will inevitably fade away. Therefore, a new gathering or *re-presentation* of the cult is needed to reaffirm the significance of the emblem and the concomitant values:

Without symbols, moreover, social feelings could have only an unstable existence. Those feelings are very strong so long as men are assembled, mutually influencing one another, but when the gathering is over, they survive only in the form of memories that gradually dim and fade away if left to themselves. Since the group is no longer present and active, the individual temperaments quickly take over again. Wild passions that could unleash themselves in the midst of a crowd cool and die down once the crowd has dispersed, and individuals wonder with amazement how they could let themselves be carried so far out of character. But if the movements by which these feelings have been expressed eventually become inscribed on things that are durable, then they too become durable. These things keep bringing the feelings to individual minds and keep them perpetually aroused, just as would happen if the cause first called them forth was still acting. Thus, while emblematising (*l'emblématisation*) is necessary if society is to become conscious of itself, so is it no less indispensable in perpetuating that consciousness.

(Durkheim 1995, 232; 2007, 344f.)

The fundamental understanding of human beings as homines duplices whose existence is suspended between biology and culture puts religion into focus if humans are to establish and preserve culture and community (Durkheim 2007, 119f., cf. 353). Durkheim's perspicacious acknowledgement of the frailty of community and culture is an important counterweight to a long tradition of thinking in the humanities and social sciences about culture as an instrument of suppression. Far from understanding culture as a means to exert power, although certainly acknowledging this dimension as well, Durkheim emphasised the vulnerability of culture and society and pointed to religion as the means to establish and uphold community. By virtue of being as a storage battery into which the group invests its positive emotions, religion can, within a split second, also evolve into a nasty phenomenon if the community – dependent on its socio-material situation – instead invests negative emotions into the battery. Thus, the positive effects of religion may by the same token be turned 180 degrees around and develop into something repugnant, as history patently demonstrates. I underline this point in order not to be understood to argue for the positive effects of religion only. Similarly, I do not as indicated argue that religion appeared *ab ovo*.

Religion could ratchet onto ritualised behaviour found among numerous animals (for the ratchet effect, see Tomasello 1999; 2009; 2016). With the emergence of religion, however, the way was paved for the introduction of a reward and punishment system implemented within the group and imposed on its individual members to diminish the risks of free-riding, cheating and betrayal in the group (Haidt 2012, 285–318). Inasmuch as humans – similar to their ape cousins – do not have any strong or innate social proclivity to engage in group and community, their groupishness must be culturally inculcated upon them. Yet, it is astounding to see what has happened in terms of groupishness within less than 10,000 years from the transition from gatherer-hunter forms of living to early agricultural forms of life. We have exponentially enhanced our social living to the extent of modern megalopoleis like Seoul, with 25 million people, or the North-East American coast with almost 65 million people. How could such an increasingly drastic development occur, and what are the implications of this for the understanding of selfhood? An important driver in this evolution has been religion, since evolutionarily it has allowed self-centred despotic apes to become social (Turner et al. 2018). Contrary to bees and ants that are bio-programmed for their sociality and hence eusocial, the hominin lineage is ultrasocial (Turchin 2016, 14f.). It is by means of culture and religion that the ape can be tamed and turned into an ultra-social being, deliberately willing to give up some of its natural self-insistence.

3 Hominin vs. other animal forms of selfhood

The difference between humans and other animals does not lie in humans' possession of culture understood as socially transmitted learning. There is nothing innate about Japanese macaque monkeys washing sand from their potatoes before eating them. It is not something for which they have a special bio-programmer. They do it because they have learned it by imitating others in the group.¹⁸ Similarly, when chimpanzees succeed in obtaining food by using different tools for gaining access to termite mounds, they are capable of this by cultural capacity. There is, however, one crucial difference between hominin and hominid culture. The utensils used for getting access to termite mounds remain the same over time. They are never refined. But if one takes a look at the history of, for instance, the fork and knife during the past two centuries, it is obvious how they have

¹⁸ Imitation is one of the most important elements in dissemination of social learning, and it cannot be confined to human beings only, but it takes on special forms in the context of hominin evolution, see Laland 2017, 150–74.

continuously undergone refinement in terms of increasing complexity. This distinction is significant. Many animals possess culture, from corvids to apes, from capuchin monkeys to porpoises; but they do not have cumulative culture which is the hallmark of hominin evolution (Henrich 2016, 56f., 286–95; Laland 2017, 8–11, 183–6). As I have already said there is now abundant evidence that a number of animals, apart from having culture, also have a sense of selfhood – wherefore self-recognition cannot be confined to the hominin lineage only. Goodall argues with respect to chimpanzees that:

They are capable of intellectual performances that we once thought unique to ourselves, such as recognition of self, abstraction and generalization, cross modal transfer of information, and theory of mind. They have a sense of humor [...] Perhaps, after all, it is not so ridiculous to speculate as to whether chimpanzees might show precursors of religious behaviors. In fact, it seems quite possible that they do. (2005, 275)¹⁹

Others have argued along the same lines that something similar may be found with elephants, parrots, corvids and whales (de Waal 2016; Lents 2016). The premise for the argument has often been Darwin’s famous claim that: ‘Nevertheless the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind’ (1936, 494). Whatever this amounts to, it makes it even more important to have a clear terminology when we speak about selfhood, self-awareness and individualisation. It is at this point that I embark on my typological considerations.

Unlike Waal, Goodall, Lents and a great many other primatologists and natural scientists, I am sceptical towards thinking about natural selection in terms of a unidirectional movement. I endorse the gene-culture coevolution perspective as the most plausible way for thinking about evolution. Any species needs to be understood on the background of its distinct niche.²⁰ The hominin lineage is special by virtue of the role that culture has come to play in the gene-culture evolution relationship. Laland and Henrich among others in different ways argue that hominin evolution is characterised by cultural evolution gaining the upper hand in the gene-culture relationship in such a way that it eventually became the primary driver in the hominin evolution (Henrich 2016, 57; Laland 2017, 234, 318).²¹

19 For strongly ritualised behaviour among chimpanzees, see Kühl et al. 2016.

20 For niche construction theory and its impact for how we should understand evolution, see in particular Odling-Smee, Laland and Feldman 2003, Bickerton 2009 and Laland 2017.

21 Whereas Henrich dates this constellation to around two million years ago, Laland asserts that it is a relatively new situation occurring at the transition from the gatherer-hunters’ form

An important part of Laland's argument is the appearance of protolanguage and thus a provisional form of symbolic thinking already 1.7 million years ago (2017, 175–207, and in particular 205; cf. Bickerton 2003, 213–21). Most scholars date the emergence of symbolic competence to around 450,000 years ago, so it makes a huge difference that Laland and Bickerton locate it another 1.2 million years back in time at the transitional stage from Oldowan culture, which remained the same over almost a million years, to the emergence of Acheulian hand axes signifying an important refinement in tool making. Whether Bickerton is right that it was the need for power scavenging that triggered the emergence of protolanguage or, as in Laland's argument, it was the need for high fidelity teaching that prompted it needs not concern us here. The crucial point is the appearance of symbolic communication. This evolutionary leap had decisive influence on the level of self-awareness that we can plausibly impute to our distant predecessors (cf. Peirce 1932, 186).

There is a great variety of different forms of self-recognition among animals other than humans,²² but the hominin capacity for symbolic language and, thus, capacity for self-awareness cannot be underestimated in terms of making a decisive evolutionary difference. Apes that have self-recognition are by means of indexical communication confined to the here and now of sign transmission. Only species that have symbolic competence can transcend the *hic et nunc* of present communication, wherefore we also attribute to them alone the ability of conceptual thinking. The possession of concepts allows the hominin species to communicate about things that are not immediately present in their environment, whether spatial or temporal. As demonstrated by Rappaport, symbolic competence also involves a number of problems such as the risk of being exposed to lying – other animals can be very sly in deception, but they cannot lie since it presupposes symbolic communication (Rappaport 1999, 11–7, 415f.). My basic argument is that we may well attribute to a number of animals the ability to recognise themselves as different from other animals, kin and the remaining group, but it does not make sense to accord self-awareness to any other animal but the hominin lineage of the last 1.7 million years. It takes a concept of the self in distinction from not only other selves, but also the group, before we can speak about a genuine form of selfhood.

of culture to early agriculture around 10,000 BCE. Laland argues that the situation from around four to two million years ago to the appearance of early agriculture was characterised by equal determinacy in the gene-culture relationship.

22 If, for instance, one amputates an arm from an octopus the octopus will not eat the arm. Had the arm been one from another octopus it would have eaten it. The example may appear excessive, but it presupposes that a sense of self-recognition needs to be attributed to the octopus.

4 Typological reflections on the evolution of the self: from self-mirroring to individualism

Having argued for a first crucial distinction between self-recognition, found in a variety of animals, and self-awareness as distinct to the hominin lineage from around 1.7 million years ago, it makes sense to search for further leaps. We know that some animals are capable of recognising themselves in a mirror, hence self-mirroring, but that involves neither self-awareness nor *suifaction*. It takes a mindful species, self-conscious of its choices, to engage in stronger forms of self-recognition. Obviously this change did not happen all at once. On the contrary, it was a long evolutionary transition from protolanguage to a more developed form of language that occurred sometime during 200,000 to 100,000 BCE. The existence of cave paintings from the latter part of 100,000 BCE and the use of ochre and pearls already around 100,000 BCE demonstrates the spread of conceptual thinking with ramifications of *suifaction* and, thus, a stronger sense of self-awareness. When humans can be portrayed in hunting scenes and human ornamentation can be documented, this surely testifies to incipient processes of selfhood.

Similarly important changes in self-understanding occurred at the transition from gatherer-hunters' forms of culture to early forms of agriculture with the earliest types of semi/-permanent habitations. The sharing of land and a sense of belonging to one particular place will inevitably have had consequences for one's notion of selfhood in relation to other members of the group, just as inheritance of land through kinship strengthened one's sense of belonging to a smaller group within the community. Unfortunately we do not know much about this transition given the lack of written sources.

The next important change took place around 6000 years ago with the earliest forms of urban culture emerging in the Near Orient. The figure of the divine king and, from the invention of writing, textual instantiations of him points to a shift in understanding with respect to at least one prominent self. Although this figure was seen as different from the remaining group by his distinct relation to the divine, he was not understood as constituting an independent self. On the contrary, it was his double nature as divine and human that gave him a specific role or function. The urban forms of religion gave rise to new forms of individuation that called for an enhanced awareness of differences between society at large, one's local community, kin-group and self. The basic premise, however, of such religions is the maintenance of a proper balance between the divine and the human, a culturally imposed fundamental ontological differentiation that serves to keep the two spheres at a proper distance from each other. Crises occur in the

form of blessings withheld from humans (e.g. wine, fat oil, abundant harvest, numerous descendants), when the proper distance is not observed and the two realms approach each other too closely. At the vertical axis heaven and earth should be kept apart, just as the temple institution at the horizontal spatial axis functioned to retain proper distance between the realms.

In Israelite religion, for instance, the high priest once a year would enter the holy of holies to cleanse it from all the ontological impurity brought upon it by humans during the previous year with the aim in mind to have the deity return to his sacred abode.

I shall not dwell on this transition to complex urban culture, since in my view it did not lead to any major change in the understanding of selfhood: a fact that may be inferred from the ideology at stake. What Smith aptly dubbed as the locative type of religion characteristic of one particularly prominent strand of religion in the ancient Mediterranean religions is exactly this complex urban form of religion (cf. Smith 1990, 121f.). Smith failed, though, to see how it was the divine king only who was assigned a distinct role, in some of these forms of religion, to be incorporated into and, eventually, translocated to the divine world, and how all other humans were enjoined to remain at their proper place within the cosmic order. These religions were all concerned with putting man, and only secondarily woman, in their proper place and even more importantly safeguarding that they remained there. Such an ideology is not likely to have promoted a strengthening in *suifaction*. Therefore, I shall proceed to the grand changes that took place in elite segments in some Eurasian societies during the period from the sixth to the third century BCE. These transitions were contemporaneous with the complex urban type of religion, but they also pointed forward to a new form of religion that would increasingly become disseminated to wider segments of populations and show itself more adaptive to far larger communities, hence my term early kosmos forms of religion.²³ It is the emergence of this form of religion that has often been dubbed the Axial age transformation of religion (Bellah 2011a). I consider this transition – comparable to Smith’s category of utopian forms of religion – crucial also in terms of paving the way for an intensified understanding of the self and a concomitant ideology of selfhood. I have previously characterised this transition by 12 points that, to a greater or lesser extent dependent upon the particular culture in question, highlight some of the main changes with respect to the contemporaneous urban religion (Petersen 2017a; 2017b; Turner et al. 2018). Here I

²³ Norenzayan (2015) is also concerned with this change, but contrary to my argument he reverses the order of events. He asserts that ‘big gods’ were conducive to larger societies, whereas I argue that ‘big gods’ were a result of changed infrastructure, enhanced density in population, and a growth in urbanisation with concomitant increased labour division.

shall only highlight five points of special importance for a different concept of the self:

- (1) An increased form of self-reflexivity as a ‘thinking about thinking’ in these forms of religion is closely related to a foundational epistemology expressed in spatial categories, whereby differences between opposing views are projected onto a vertical axis and expressed as a contrast between the heavenly over and against the mundane perspective. This dualistic staging is similarly projected onto an axis of depth that implies a disparity between interiority and exteriority, soul and body (cf. Petersen 2015, 71–6, 89);
- (2) These forms of religion are distinguished from comprehensive urban religions by loosening the ontological differences between gods and humans. Therefore, they encourage adherents to imitate the godhead to such an extent that eventually the followers are thought to transcend the ontological difference between divine and human (cf. Petersen 2013b);
- (3) They place emphasis on the element of *askēsis*, understood in the basic Greek sense of training. By engaging in forms of self-exercises, the practitioners undergo different forms of privations relating to what they consider false values while striving to inculcate the principles of their new worldview by embodying them in a continuous form of self-cultivation (cf. Hadot 1995; 2001; Sloterdijk 2009; Petersen 2013b);
- (4) Early kosmos types of religion exemplify a shift in emphasis from the ritual observances of traditional religious sacrifices to various forms of inner attitudes as a prerequisite for proper cultic observance. This is sometimes called the displacement of ritual by moral stance. It is not traditional cult *per se* that is criticised. What is called for is a moral attitude reflecting the new worldview as a presupposition for observing rituals in the proper manner (cf. Petersen 2017a);
- (5) The emergence of this form of religion characteristically occurs in a situation of considerable social competition involving religious entrepreneurs’ dissociation from the ruling elite – whether political or religious or both – and defiance against traditional kinship structures and political power as well as a plea for greater equality and social justice (cf. Abrutyn 2014; 2015);

I do not argue that these five characteristics were all present in the same way in, for example, the Upanishad literature, early Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Platonic philosophy, and Deuteronomian theology; but they were permeating all these different kosmos forms of religion to greater or lesser extents. In pointing to the early kosmos religions as a crucial stepping stone for the later developments I do not argue for a unidirectional, irreversible progressive movement. Subsequent processes within the individual religions and cultures were characterised by both

greater embracement of urban types of religion and correspondingly in other strands detachment from them by enhanced emphasis on selfhood, but I assert that they could not avoid relating to what had preceded them in a determinative ideological way (Petersen 2018). We see this in a variety of religions in which there were periods with increased individualisation and de-individualisation, just as the two processes often went hand in hand in rivalries and contestations between different groups that within the individual cultures accentuated individualisation at the cost of de-individualisation or vice-versa. Such processes eventually gave rise to the modern Western individual (as well as all other cultures influenced by this tradition) and an undergirding ideology of individualism subsequent to Enlightenment and Romanticism.

5 Two examples of *suifaction* illustrating the shift from urban to kosmos forms of religion

To avoid being accused of mere theoretical speculation, I now turn to two historical cases to illuminate my point of the kosmos forms of religion as particularly relevant for the discussion of selfhood and processes of individualisation in cultural history. The first example comes from Deuteronomy and is representative of Deuteronomian theology.²⁴ It is particularly interesting because it represents an intermediary stage between an urban and a kosmos type of religion. We do not know its precise date of origin, but a presumable date sometime around the middle of the first millennium BCE is likely. The second example comes from a late stage in Stoicism, from Epictetus and Seneca, and serves to illustrate a more complex form of kosmos religion, but certainly one the contours of which may be seen in Deuteronomy, hence my choice of empirical material comes from two different religio-cultural contexts in terms of time and space.

Deuteronomian theology is not confined to the Book of Deuteronomy, and was determinative for the shaping of the mythic narrative depicting Israel's history until the Babylonian exile as found in Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. Similarly, it has exerted important influence on the shaping of what eventually became the Pentateuch, just as it had impact on other writings such as parts of the prophetic literature. I shall not delve into these issues, but will

²⁴ For the general historical discussion of Deuteronomy and Deuteronomian theology, see Otto 2007, 137–46, and Kratz 2013 and 2015, 53f., 115–20. I am indebted to Prof. Jensen for conversations on the Axial nature of Deuteronomy and deuteronomian religion as well as Jensen 2017.

focus on *suifaction* as it appears in the Book of Deuteronomy— regardless of its close connection to the Book of Joshua – and concentrate on the Book in its final redactional form dating sometime during the fourth to the early third century BCE (cf. Otto 2013, 211; Collins 2017, 39–41).

At the same time as Deuteronomy exemplifies the kosmos type of religion, it also testifies to a great many features characteristic of the urban form of religion. A good life consists in the blessings sent by YHWH to his people in the form of fat oil, good wine, crops, abundant offspring etc. Israel will continue to receive YHWH's blessings as long as it remembers its contractual lord and does not replace him with other gods/idols. Contrary to the priestly theology of notably Leviticus, the cult with the temple and the different regulations relating to it are not the prime focus of Deuteronomy. YHWH's name is present in the temple (14:23), but, contrary to the core idea of the priestly theology, YHWH is not understood himself to inhabit the temple. YHWH is in heaven (26:15). In fact, Otto has argued that the priestly theology may be seen as a counter-programme to the Deuteronomian religion (234). Israelites should visit the temple and partake in the cult by bringing sacrifices at the yearly pilgrim feasts;²⁵ but Deuteronomy is not particularly concerned with the temple and its cult. The focus lies on the land that Israel inherited from YHWH as its special property. In this way, Deuteronomy together with Deuteronomian theology bears witness to a classic urban form of religion founded on the principle of ethnicity. Israel constitutes an ethnic enclave in a world surrounded by foreign people and other gods – whether they be extra- or simply disloyal intra-kin people (cf. Collins 2017, 42) – and Israel will remain a divine reserve only by worshipping YHWH who has granted Israel its distinct piece of land.

Contrary to all these elements that inevitably connect Deuteronomian theology with an urban form of religion, there are features in Deuteronomy that point in another direction. Moses enjoins Israel to follow the statutes (*'l-hḡym*) and judgements (*w'l-hmšpṭym*) which he teaches them (4:1a). They shall observe them that they may live, enter and possess the land which YHWH has given them (4:1b). Therefore, they are also inculcated not to add to or take away from the commands (*mšūt*) given by YHWH (4:2). The statutes and judgements imposed on Israel by YHWH and Moses constitute their wisdom (*ḥkmtcm*) and understanding (*byntcm*) before all other people who will thereby come to acknowledge Israel as being in possession of these qualities (4:6). In fact, Israel is distinct and

²⁵ Presumably the cult of worship is located at Sichem and not Jerusalem, which is not even mentioned in the book. It is only due to the larger and later framework of Pentateuchal theology that Jerusalem comes to be identified with the place of cultic worship in Deut.

privileged when compared with all other nations by virtue of the fact that it has YHWH so near to it (4:7), and that it has been granted ‘such statutes (*hkm*) and righteous ordinances (*wmšp̄tym šdyqm*) as all this law (*htôrḥ hz’t*) which I set before you this day’ (4:8).

Demonstrably Torah is a polyvalent term, since by tradition it refers to the Pentateuch, sometimes the entire Tanak, as well as the full complex of rules and ordinances which YHWH according to the Pentateuch gave the Israelites at Mount Sinai/Horeb (cf. Cohen 1987, 182–5, and more generally Hayes 2015). Here, however, Torah is a common denotation for the authority attributed to various norms, regulations, ordinances, injunctions and prohibitions understood to originate in YHWH’s bestowal of the Law on Israel.

The text, however, does not only speak in the second person plural but occasionally makes leaps in its discourse to second person singular as, for example, in 4:9: ‘Only take heed to yourself (*hšmr*), and diligently keep yourself (*wšmr*), lest you forget (*tškḥ*) the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach (*whôd’tm*) them to your children and your grandchildren.’ Here Israel is not only addressed as a collective entity but every Israelite man is personally obliged to preserve the continuous remembrance of YHWH’s deeds in order to prevent them from falling into oblivion. We find the same transition in discourse in the important chapter 6, containing the *Shema*, in which every Israelite man is enjoined to have the words of YHWH in his heart (6:6). He shall teach them diligently to his children, and shall talk of them, when he sits in his house, when he walks on his way, when he lies down and when he rises up (6:7). He shall bind them as a sign (*l’ôṭ*) on his hand and they shall be as frontlets between his eyes (6:8), just as he shall write them upon his door-posts of his house and his gates (6:9). This unremitting emphasis placed on the Torah as a set of regulations to be continuously remembered involves an incessant training program for every Israelite man who is called to unceasingly think of YHWH and his deeds and to inculcate this remembrance in his household. Deuteronomy presents itself in this way as ‘the Book of the Law’ (*bsphr htôrḥ hzh*) containing YHWH’s commandments and statutes (*mšôtyw whqtyw*) (30:10a). Every Israelite man should turn to YHWH as his god with all his heart and soul (30:10b), and make sure that the word of God is in his mouth and in his heart so that he may perform it (30:14).

I do not argue that Deuteronomy and Deuteronomian theology represent a full-blown kosmos form of religion. It remains deeply enmeshed in the urban type of religion. What I do claim, though, is that this theology testifies to a process of increasing *suifaction* that would eventually let go of its dependence upon those features of religion belonging to the urban type. The more the emphasis is placed on the self and its need for self-cultivation in order to pay heed to the Torah of

YHWH, the less one needs the ethnic group (Israel) and the land (the territory) for the overall worldview. By Deuteronomy's strong emphasis on Israel's exclusive allegiance to YHWH and the role of the self unremittingly to instill within itself its specific obligation and faithfulness to YHWH, the self comes to the fore of religious attention. By virtue of such an understanding the religious community is increasingly transformed from an ethnic entity into a community of shared commitment to YHWH (cf. Gerstenberger 2002, 207–72; Crouch 2014, 109). Deuteronomy reflects a high degree of equality among YHWH-abiding Israelite males who form a 'theocratic' community on the basis of their commitment to YHWH. They are accountable to YHWH only and do not have any Davidic king interfering between them and YHWH (cf. Markl 2012, 301; Otto 2013, 226). In this way, the book represents a form of thinking that vacillates between processes of individualisation and de-individualisation. The former points forward towards more complex forms of kosmos religion which by exclusive focus on self-cultivation may eventually abandon its determinative dependence upon principles of ethnicity, the ontological difference between deity and man, and concomitant 'mundane' blessings sent by YHWH to Israel. The latter points backwards in time to the urban type of religion in contrast to the kosmos form. It accentuates those features which religions focused on self-cultivation, self-mastery and continuous self-training in the end cast off.

All differences aside, I think we may see Stoicism as one distinct manifestation of kosmos religion which – with all the necessary reservations in terms of dissimilarities between archaic Greek and Israelite religion – had abandoned such elements that gave Deuteronomian theology an ambivalent character, ultimately leaving the latter to oscillate between the urban and the kosmos types of religion.²⁶ In Stoicism the kosmos form of religion appears at full throttle, but here I confine myself to the element of *suifaction* and look upon it in terms of self-cultivation specifically as it appears in Epictetus and in Seneca's Letters. There are obvious differences between these two corpora of texts which I shall not dwell upon. It suffices to say that they are, *ceteris paribus*, training programs urged upon their respective intended addressees with the aim in mind to have them inculcate and follow a Stoic way of life.

Contrary to the urban type of religion, these texts have abandoned the idea of ethnicity as foundational for religious belonging, the notion of an ontological difference as fundamental for upholding the proper balance between the divine and the human world, and the understanding of 'worldly' blessings as the divine

²⁶ For ancient philosophy as representative of religion, from the third order perspective, see Petersen 2017a; 2017b.

boons *par excellence*. The philosopher does not belong to any particular ethnicity in this world, but is a *kosmopolitēs*, a man belonging to the entire universe (cf. Epictetus 1.9.2, 1.9.5, 2.10.3). As both Epictetus and Seneca make copiously clear, the philosopher in particular has kinship with God (cf. Seneca 18.12f., 91, 123.16; Epictetus 1.9.4–6, 1.9.25, 1.14), just as by his training he has learned to be unconcerned about worldly blessings such as, for instance, wealth and well-being. In fact, he should set himself free from all worries and unnecessary concerns by devoting himself to philosophy as constituting, in the words of Hadot, a way of life.

From their beginning, Seneca's Letters to Lucilius and Arrian's Discourses of Epictetus are meant to mould the intended addressees in such a way that they concern themselves with what lies within their abilities to do something about and leave all other things behind for the sake of this. By the use of reason they have been granted a faculty that if properly trained will allow them to exert mastery over their lives. The self-mastery brought about by continuous self-cultivation is the ultimate aim of these texts through which Arrian (rendering the speeches of Epictetus) and Seneca goad their addressees into pursuing a good mind (cf. Seneca 23.1, 37.1 *ad bonam mentem*). Surely one cannot avoid the contingencies and necessities of life, but through the philosophical way of life one can learn to conquer them (cf. Seneca 37.3). In an epistle concerned with Lucilius' promise and oath to become a good man (*vir bonus*, 37.1), Seneca spells out how philosophy provides him with a way (*et hanc tibi viam dabit philosophia*) that will make him sound (*salvus*), unconcerned (*securus*), happy (*beatus*), and, most importantly, free (*liber*) (37.3). Only by way of philosophy can this goal be reached, since it enables one to put all things under the control of reason (*ratio*) and, thereby, have folly (*stultitia*) and the most cruel passions (*affectus multi savissimi*) subdued (37.4).

The endurance and dispassionate mind that can be obtained through philosophy is also a major concern of Epictetus. To avoid falling victim to external impressions (*phantasiai*) the philosopher has, through the faculty of reason, been enabled to handle them in the right way (*chrēsis orthē*, 1.1.7, cf. 1.1.12). By the proper use of judgement on these external impressions such as, for instance, death, the philosopher through reason is capable of applying the powers of choice and refusal, desire and aversion, whereby he can come to master them (cf. 2.18.24f., 3.8.1–5).

The idea of training or *askēsis* permeates all of Seneca's and Epictetus' texts. The philosopher needs to engage in continuous training which will enable him to remain within the philosophical world as a way of life. In chapter 12 of the third book of Arrian's Discourses of Epictetus, he takes up the issue of training specifically. Philosophers should not engage in training in things that are against nature

(*dia tōn para phusin*) or paradoxical (*paradoxōn*), since they cannot do anything about this. Rather they should train in order to obtain the faculty of acting unhindered with respect to choice and aversion (*orexei kai ekklisei akōlutōs anastrephesthai*, 3.12.4). Thereby they will neither fail to get what they desire (*mēte oregonenon apotungkhanein*), nor fall into what they would avoid (*mēt ekklinonta peripiptein*):

For since it is impossible without great and constant training (*aneu megalēs kai sunechous askēseōs*) to secure that our desire fail not to attain, and our aversion fall not into what it would avoid, be assured that, if you allow training to turn outwards, towards the things that are not in the realm of the moral purpose, you will have neither your desire successful in attaining what it would, nor your aversion successful in avoiding what it would.

(3.12.5 – LCL translation by Oldfather)

Similar to other representatives of kosmos forms of religion like Siddhartha Gautama, Confucius and Socrates, the Stoic philosopher in Epictetus' understanding should make his self entirely independent of culture by spending his time on self-cultivation. This will enable him to make progress in desire and aversion and thereby obtain autonomy of mind.

In several studies, Gill has made the point that the Stoic tranquility and autonomy of mind is conspicuously different from the modern post-Cartesian and Kantian one. I agree. Gill insists on the difference between what he terms subjective(-individualist) and objective(-participant) selves, where the latter designates the ancient view and the former the modern Western one (2006, 328–44; 2008, 359–61). There is nothing in the Stoic view, or any other ancient perspective on selfhood for that matter, that suggests anything close to the modern detached autonomous subject. The Stoic philosopher and other ancient person can only obtain what he aspires to by having been granted that faculty by the gods or God. The self is always involved in a relationship to superhuman powers. That said, however, we see in the examples provided a transition towards a far greater emphasis placed on the self and the need for this self to engage in a deliberate process of training self-cultivation. Once again, however, I stress that this did not imply the emergence of the individual, but it constituted the beginning of a long journey lasting at least 1700 years by which *suifaction* increasingly came to be understood in terms of self-cultivation, and by which these processes of self-cultivating individualisation became increasingly prolific in emphasis on the self at stake (cf. Sloterdijk 2009).

6 Conclusion

Admittedly, the argument put forward is convoluted, so I allow myself to summarise the main points of the typology developed. I assert that: 1) a sense of

selfhood, that is self-recognition, is found in several animals in addition to the hominin species, but this sense, *ceteris paribus*, is confined to the *hic et nunc* of animal communication; 2) genuine self-awareness, therefore, is neither found among other animals nor in the hominin lineage prior to the emergence of protolanguage, at the earliest around 1.7 million years ago with the appearance of Acheulian culture, and this change constituted a precondition for engaging in conceptual thinking about being a ‘self’ that was not confined to the here and now of discourse; 3) a stronger form of *suifaction* emerged with *Homo sapiens* with a fully developed language and capacity for ornamentation, painting and, thereby, external memory storage around 100,000 BCE; 4) there were leaps towards stronger self-understanding and, thereby, processes of individualisation at the transitions from hunter-gatherer culture to early agriculture and, similarly, from complex agricultural culture to early urban culture; 5) the emergence of early forms of kosmos religion and the transition from complex urban religion to this type of culture was decisive for the subsequent development in terms of intellectual history; 6) the further intensification in dominant forms of thinking about *suifaction* all had the change from urban to kosmos or the transition from archaic to Axial age religion as an ideological presupposition; 7) and, finally, that the very strong forms of individualisation and individualism that we see in connection with Enlightenment and Romanticism be thought of as a further escalation in *suifaction* rather than something categorically novel.

An important point of these typological ruminations has been to argue how historical changes in selfhood, self-awareness, and *suifaction* are best understood as degrees of intensification resulting from transitions in the distinct niche of the species in focus. Chimpanzees, for example, are not in need of any extensive self-recognition or any self-awareness for that matter, since they inhabit an environment in which there are no evolutionary gains related to complex language and, thus, *suifaction*. This is different from the hominin lineage that ever since its appearance in the open grasslands has been in decisive need of engaging in alliances and co-operations in order to survive. To succeed with that, language, self-awareness, *suifaction* and individualisation became incrementally crucial. What was once needed in Uruk in terms of *suifaction* in the third millennium BCE, did not suffice in fifth century Athens. But the degree of *suifaction* needed for coping with living in fifth century Athens would not help much in present day New York. These are the differences in terms of gradations of selfhood between different socio-cultural environments that the typology suggested is meant to highlight.

Finally, two historical examples illustrate my point that something decisive took place in terms of *suifaction* at the shift from urban forms to kosmos types of religion. At first, it was a transition found in some elite Eurasian cultures only,

but eventually the idea of self-cultivation became disseminated to greater segments of populations. The example from Deuteronomy testifies to a form of thinking that oscillates between an urban form of religion and a kosmos one. There are features that strongly unite it with the former, whereas there are others that point forward in what was to evolve at a more full scale in the history of religions. My final example from Stoicism represents self-cultivation at full measure. Life is understood as a continuous ideological training-program for the sage, which enables him to detach himself from the influence of harmful external impressions and, thereby, cures him from the malaise pertaining to this world. The stoic sage, though, was no individual in the modern sense. His whole world is directed towards God as his helmsman. Nevertheless, the emphasis placed on self-cultivation marks a transition as regards the extent to which humans are called to engage in processes of *suifaction*. The understanding of *suifaction* in subsequent forms of religion all had to respond to this very prominent change in thinking, whether negatively or positively. The modern individual and the concomitant ideology of individualism may be understood as a particularly strong version of *suifaction*, by which the self is now all on its own – or as Wilhelm Müller would have it: ‘Lustig in die Welt hinein. Gegen Wind und Wetter! Will kein Gott auf Erden sein. Sind wir selber Götter!’ (‘Happy through the world along. Facing wind and weather! If there’s no God upon earth, then we ourselves must be gods!’ – translation Celia Sgroi) (Schubert Winterreise).

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Julie Casteigt, Matthias Engmann, Elisabeth Gräb-Schmitt,
Dietmar Mieth, Anders Klostergaard Petersen, Magnus Schlette

Afterword: relationships between selfhood and transcendence

The contributions to this section present manifold and diverse examples indicative of a form of religion which we may characterise by its inextricable connection between selfhood and transcendence. However, religion is not necessarily dependent upon establishing a relationship between religious agents and transcendence, whether in scripture or praxis, nor does it inevitably imply that these agents need to be qualified as selves in a distinct manner. In short, neither selfhood nor transcendence is a necessary component of religion. Therefore, cultural objectifications of religion, which give evidence to the interrelation of selfhood and transcendence, embody a structurally specific type of religion which evolved at a particular time presupposing a certain complexity with respect to social formation. *Anders Klostergaard Petersen* refers to this fact by naming this particular type of religion as cosmos religion. It is a common conviction all authors of this section share that bringing selfhood and transcendence into a relationship has the structural potential of unfolding a dynamic of religious transformation that changes our understanding of selfhood as well as transcendence.

It is standard opinion in philosophy that selves are entities under a description. Unlike apples and pears, selves may not be spatially located and denoted, but very much consist in individuals' various linguistic and practical ways of relating to their own states of mind and affairs, whether present, past or anticipated. Whereas the capability of self-relation is an anthropological constant, the cultural significance of concepts of selfhood depends on the historically variable importance that is socially acknowledged and attributed to these kinds of self-relation. The most basic common denominator of the studies in this section consists in the fact that the mediation of the individual's self-relation through its relation to transcendence is indicative of a decisive authorisation of selfhood. Selves that relate to their own states of mind and affairs via their relationship to a transcendent and unconditioned power are endowed with a gravity of utmost importance. The contribution of the articles to the overall topic of religious individualisation consists in the exploration of the importance and seriousness that individuals – whether single, selected or all individuals – acquire for themselves as well as in studying the acceptance of this importance by their fellows and the social collective in which they are embedded and take part.

The sense of ‘a hidden and more fundamental level of existence’ calls for ‘beyonding’ the immanent – as Kenneth Burke (1966) has coined it – in the direction of a concept of transcendence ‘with a capital T’ (Dalferth 2012). It involves the concept of a power as reflected in its quality of transcending all symbolic means of appropriately addressing it. Whereas Anders Petersen’s contribution elaborates on the cultural and social presuppositions under which this sort of transcendence could historically emerge, the subsequent contributions reflect on various symbolic instantiations of it. Although there is good reason to claim a genealogical lineage, which leads from Eckhart’s mystical thought via Tauler into the mystical strands of pietism and their philosophical sublimation in Kant, Schleiermacher, and Kierkegaard, the essays of this section have not focused on this very lineage, but rather pinpointed how different texts which belong to diverse historical contexts nevertheless vary within the same overall structural pattern: their relevance for the plausibility of an overarching concept of religious individualisation has not been located in their contribution to the aforesaid lineage but in unfolding a variety of symbolic representations of the intrinsic relationship between selfhood and transcendence. Whereas a lineage is always historically singular, the typological focus on common structures allows for the integration of a much larger range of religious sources. The texts therefore invite research on homologous instantiations of a dynamic between selfhood and transcendence in other cultural settings than the ones we have investigated.

Anders Klostergaard Petersen points out that it was ‘the Axial age transformation of religion’, as it was originally coined by Karl Jaspers in his monograph *The Origin and Goal of History* and only recently picked up by Robert Bellah (2011; Bellah/Joas 2012), which fostered a dynamic relationship between self and transcendence that eventually brought about such emphatic conceptualisations of selfhood as were much later on unfolded in European enlightenment and romanticism. He articulates the insight into the dependence of selfhood on the individual’s socially mediated interpretation and authorisation of his or her own states of mind and affairs in orientation toward an almighty instance of transcendence by suggesting we understand the result of such interpretation and authorisation as *suiification*. Thereby, he alludes to a dynamic of increasing importance that individuals are socially allowed and expected to bring to their distinctness from the other, and particularly from the social context in which they are nevertheless embedded. According to Petersen, the Stoic tradition of philosophy as a particular life-form demonstrates how a dynamic between self and transcendence, as it had been established in axial age transformations of urban into cosmos religions – that is religions characterised by the intrinsic interrelation between selfhood and transcendence – ‘provided a transition towards a far greater emphasis placed on the self and the need for this self to engage in a deliberate process of training self-cultivation’.

Suification as self-cultivation, prompted by establishing a transcendence-mediated self-relation, may also be taken as a common characteristic defining concepts of selfhood as they have been promoted through the philosophical thinking of Meister Eckhart, Immanuel Kant and Søren Kierkegaard. In these thinkers we find different models of representing the intricate way in which individuals relate to their own states of mind and affairs, in particular in the context in which self-relation is understood as mediated by its relationship to a transcendent and unconditioned power. Moreover, self-cultivation is a proper term characterising this double relationship of the self with respect to itself and the transcendent because it stresses the transformative power expected to qualify the individual's encounter with the almighty. If individuals understand themselves in the context of meanings imbued with the authority of a transcendent power, they are expected to be fundamentally changed through this and to embody the effects of this encounter into their whole way of being.

This explains the importance of an attitude of passivity in the double relationship of the self to itself and to the transcendent instance, an attitude which nonetheless does not contradict the aspiration for self-cultivation: self-cultivation needs to be realised in a mode of being that expresses receptivity and responsiveness to the activity of the transcendent power. This is the reason for a basic conceptual familiarity between Eckhart's concept of *Gelassenheit*, as it is presented in *Dietmar Mieth's* contribution, and the idea of becoming oneself through self-surrender that is at the centre of *Matthias Engmann's* reconstruction of Kierkegaard's thought. Both are embedded in respective strategies of *suification* as self-cultivation, to use Petersen's phrase.

Mieth paraphrases Eckhart's concept of *Gelassenheit* as referring to 'the fundamental stance of self-distancing and surrender'. The believer shall let himself be found by God instead of searching for him. God's turning to us, according to Eckhart, takes place within us, and therefore has to be understood in terms of particular psychological states of passivity and receptiveness that suggest religious qualification. These states have to be learned, although they are subject to practice. It is this dialectic of self-cultivation through passivity that is also central to Kierkegaard's thought. Matthias Engmann emphasises the fact that for Kierkegaard the reader of his prose has to be introduced into a 'process of becoming oneself before God'. This takes the form of a particular praxis of self-surrender to the unconditional ground of one's own being: 'Most important is the acceptance of being dependent on the unconditional ground. That colours the idea of individualisation fundamentally as non-self-assertion'. The distinctiveness of Kierkegaard's thought consists in the fact that for the Danish philosopher this insight into the dialectic of self-cultivation cannot be propositionally communicated. His thought proves to be an elaborated reflection on the symbolic restraints of

thematising the interrelation of selfhood and transcendence within the framework of modern existential philosophy.

One might think that the dialectic of passivity and self-cultivation does not apply to Kant's *Denkungsart*. But it is Matthias Engmann again, who points to structural affinities in Kant's and Kierkegaard's thought by comparing their respective interpretations of Job. The Job of both philosophers accepts God as 'the non-understandable ground of all being', a ground that in the philosophy of Kant is being subjected to a rationalist transformation which takes God to be the symbolic representation of the unconditioned validity of reason. *Magnus Schlette's* contribution shows how this rationalist representation of the unconditional derives from a protestant tradition of inward-oriented religiosity rooted in pietist thought. And he points out that Kant elaborates a specifically rationalist version of the aforesaid passivity towards the transcendent power: it is particularly and with utmost intensity in experiences of the sublime that we as individuals are seized by the internal force of our self-awareness as moral beings, a self-awareness that transcends the confines of the individual and lifts him/her into the realm of mankind. Kant's aesthetic of the sublime displays a transcendentalised version of the dynamic of selfhood and transcendence.

In her contribution, *Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt* also focuses on the Kantian emphasis placed on the self in relationship to an unconditional entity. Gräß-Schmidt takes the discussion of Kant further by concentrating on Schleiermacher's attempt to anchor religion in a transcendent instance with a counterpart in human consciousness. By linking the transcendent unconditional entity to human consciousness, she sees Schleiermacher as paying remedy for a problem in Kant's philosophy that the transcendent can be accessed only indirectly in terms of experience and communication. Gräß-Schmidt argues that Schleiermacher's thinking needs to be seen in close connection to Kant's philosophy. In its focus on individual consciousness in relation to the transcendent, we see a new instantiation of the selfhood-transcendence relationship, in which the absolute 'emerges as a dimension guiding knowledge and action in its effect in precisely this feeling or in immediate self-consciousness'. In this way, the unconditional returns as something that cannot be reduced to a postulate as in Kant's philosophy, but, in fact, has an experiential grounding in human consciousness. Thereby, the accent in Kant's thinking of the transcendental is relocated to the feeling of religious experience – something that would prove vital for subsequent romanticism.

With *Julie Casteigt's* article we move in a slightly different direction, or rather we return to some of the typological questions pertaining to *suifaction* and posed in Petersen's contribution. Subsequent to the studies on incipient modernity, we here return to the distant past. If individualisation, understood in the sense of an independent and autonomous 'self' detached from any transcendent and

unconditional power, is a modern phenomenon only, how should we understand and describe earlier forms of behaviour and thinking in which the 'self' also comes to figure prominently? We already looked at forms of religion, such as the cosmos or Axial age type, in which the self takes a more prominent place in comparison to archaic or urban forms of religion. Casteigt also touches upon this question by suggesting that we may find glimpses of religious individualisation also in pre-modern Europe. In a detailed study, she discusses Albert the Great's *Super Iohannem* and shows how Albert is inspired by Greek-Arabic cosmology and how this cosmology enables him to highlight certain selves as being and acting in accordance with divine grace. In his view of selfhood, Albert differs from the preceding patristic tradition in understanding the exceptional witness of God as, indeed, constituting a very prolific self. In Casteigt's understanding, this 'self' constitutes an individual who receives his or her whole being from God. They are distinct in their selfhood inasmuch as they have been disconnected from their singularity as distinct persons existing at a certain time and space.

Thus, we come full circle as regards the argument of this section's chapters: how to designate and understand incipient and increasing degrees of selfhood suspended between a transcendent power and distinct sense of selfhood. We do not provide one definite answer, but we all call for greater awareness in terms of language, conceptualisation, models, and theory when posing the question of individualisation in general and religious individualisation in particular throughout human history.

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Section 1.2: The social lives of religious individualisation

Andrés Quero-Sánchez

‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house!’ (Gen. 12:1): Schelling’s Bohemian redefinition of idealism

1 Introduction: Schelling’s ‘analyticity-principle’

‘A is A’. – This is surely the fundamental thesis underlying Schelling’s Philosophy of Identity,¹ which is not merely – at least not only – a *theoretical* statement but rather one with an eminently *practical* meaning, primarily concerning *practical* life. This is the thesis that I would like to explore in what follows (see also Quero-Sánchez 2019c, Chap. 2). It is surely not easy to determine what Schelling is telling us by such a statement (‘A is A’). I will try to explain it by analysing a crucial passage in the so-called *Würzburg Lectures*, from 1804, in which Schelling himself explains this sentence in terms of the ‘Analyticity-thesis’, according to which only analytical or identical statements – that is to say: statements of the form ‘A is A’ – tell us how the world *really* is. Let me quote the crucial passage in this context:

In the case of common [or vulgar] knowledge (*Im gemeinen Wissen*) we find – for instance with Kant – the following opposition: *either* my knowledge pertains to the objective, *real* world – it is then not true in an absolute manner, but it is only a synthetic knowledge – *or* my knowledge is true in an absolute manner, but it then does not pertain to the objective world, having only a [merely] subjective meaning, because in this case I am not experiencing anything about the world itself but only about my own thought. If knowledge pertains to reality, it is then not an absolute knowledge; and if knowledge is absolute, it then does not pertain to reality. This is the way the common [or vulgar] logic (*die gemeine Logik*) – which is the point of view of Kant and his entire philosophy – argues, looking for reality only through a [merely] conditional, synthetic knowledge. But this sort of knowledge really is rather – considered from the higher point of view of *true* philosophy – a knowledge without any reality at all. (Schelling 1860, 150,3–14)

¹ See, for example, Schelling 1860, 145, 25–7: ‘The fundamental law of reason as well as of any knowledge (provided that it is rational knowledge) is the Law of Identity, i.e. the sentence “A = A”’. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated (see the Bibliography below, 239–41).

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Schelling is here describing – and criticising – Kant’s position, according to which analytic statements do not tell us what the world is like. The statement, for example: ‘A whole is bigger than each of its halves’, tells us nothing about how the world *really* is, since it is true no matter what is *actually* or *factually* the case. By contrast, a synthetic statement of the form ‘A is B’, for example: ‘That swan there is white’, or its generalisation: ‘All swans are white’, describes what is *actually* or *factually* the case. According to Kant’s ‘common logic’, if we want to know what the world is actually like, we have to look at it: we must sustain our knowledge upon experience, that is to say: we always need to look for some kind of ‘empirical mediation’ supporting our ‘knowledge’. This is the position – the ‘vulgar’ position, as he calls it – which Schelling is inverting in the passage that I have just quoted. Of course, as the reader has already probably noticed, by stating that only analytical or identical statements of the form ‘A is A’ tell us how the world *really* is, Schelling cannot be using the terms ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ in the same way as Kant did. Now, what is an analytic statement, what is a synthetic one according to Schelling? Moreover: to what extent can one say that an analytical statement describes what *really* is?

My favourite example in this context is of a judge (*J*) who has to decide about the innocence or guilt of some accused person; let’s call him ‘Peter Smith’: Is Peter Smith innocent or guilty of killing his neighbour? Assuming now that both Mr. Smith did actually kill his neighbour and *J* knows it, *J* can act – at least – in two different ways: *Either* he declares Mr. Smith guilty of killing his neighbour – just because he has killed his neighbour – *or* he declares him innocent, maybe because there is *a certain* political power pressing him to do so, or because Mr. Smith belongs to *his own* political party, to *his own* circle of friends or perhaps to *his own* family, or maybe because *he* has been bribed. In the latter case, there is, as Schelling himself would express it, some ‘mediation’ acting as a fundament or a ground for a statement of the form ‘A is B’; a fundament namely for the following statement (uttered under the assumption that both Peter Smith did actually kill his neighbour and *J* knows it): ‘Mr. Smith is innocent (of killing his neighbour)’, actually meaning: ‘This *guilty* man here (A) is an *innocent* man (B)’ (‘A is [not A but] B’). By contrast, in the former case, there is no such a ‘mediation’ but *J*, by stating that ‘Mr. Smith is guilty (of killing his neighbour)’, is expressing an ‘unmediated’ knowledge (see Quero-Sánchez 2014, 212–9), i.e. a knowledge letting things be as they themselves – or by themselves – are: ‘This *guilty* man here (A) is a *guilty* man (A)’ (‘A is A’). An ‘identical or unmediated knowledge’ is thus practical *on its own*, whereas a ‘non-identical knowledge’ always includes some kind of ‘mediation’ functioning as a particular motivation for a certain kind of practical behaviour in some particular context.

Now, let me raise the question that I posed before again: to what extent can one say that an analytical statement describes what *really* is? I think it is not difficult to answer this question by using the example I have just given you: By (under the assumption that both Peter Smith did actually kill his neighbour and *J* knows it) saying: 'Mr. Smith is guilty (of killing his neighbour)', meaning thereby: 'This *guilty* man here (A) is a *guilty* man (A)' ('A is A'), *J* is undoubtedly describing the world as it *really* is; and by contrast, in saying: 'Mr. Smith is innocent' ('A is B'), meaning thereby: 'This *guilty* man here (A) is an *innocent* man (B)' ('A is [not A but] B'), he is not doing so. Schelling's Philosophy of Identity is thus establishing some kind of (particularly but surely not only *moral*) 'integrity' as the fundamental criterion of both 'being (*really*)' and 'knowing what is (*really*) the case'.

Schelling is telling us at the same time that we have to avoid experience in order to know how things – maybe not *factually* or *actually* but nevertheless – *really* are. By showing us how things *factually* are, experience is preventing us from knowing what they *really* are. Of course, we also have to understand the word 'experience' here in the sense which is characteristic of (particularly German) Idealism. The underlying tacit premise here is that the world, as it *normally* appears – that is, as it *factually* is, or as it merely 'exists' – is not *real* (at least not *really*). But what does this mean? What is the *normal* case that experience is – maybe 'daily' – confirming? Well, one would say that experience 'daily' shows a world dominated by any kind of 'mediation' establishing any form of inequality.² Experience shows us the dominion of the 'Inequality-Principle'. Everything needs some 'mediation' for it to 'be', that is, for it to 'keep existing' or, if we are talking of living beings, to 'survive'. *Generally* speaking – and, as is well known, experience loves speaking *generally* – things keep existing or just 'are (there)' because (or in virtue) of some kind of 'mediation'. Experience shows us, again and again, lots of things disappearing because they are lacking any kind of 'mediation'. This is the way things 'are'. *C'est la vie*. Or, in German: *Das Leben ist ungerecht*. Acting in virtue of some kind of 'mediation' – for example, having been bribed – *J*'s statement declaring Mr. Smith innocent would (under the assumption that both Peter Smith did actually kill his neighbour, and *J* knows it) be a 'particular' or just 'empirical' judgement, that is: a judgment empirically mediated by some kind of particularity: a concrete or particular instantiation of the 'Inequality-Principle' as the principle dominating the world as it *factually* – but not *really* – is. By contrast, by declaring Mr. Smith guilty, *J* is not grounding his judgement upon any empirically mediated experience but upon an empirically non-mediated or 'intellectual intuition'

² For the use of the expression 'daily' in this context see below, p. 228.

(*intellektuelle Anschauung*).³ Concisely: Neither ‘existence’ nor ‘particularity’ play a role in Schelling’s definition of those things which *really* are,⁴ although both – namely ‘existence’ and ‘particularity’ – are crucial, of course, for *factual* existing, *empirically* knowable things. In Schelling’s Philosophy of Identity, the Absolute or God – who is nothing else but the Absolute itself (Schelling 1860, 148,19f.) – lacks as such particular existence. What *really* is, is as such – that is, considered as something that *really* is – not an empirically knowable thing existing in a particular way.

2 Schelling’s ‘analyticity-principle’ as mystical *Entbildung*

We surely have to see this concept of ‘Analyticity’ constituting Schelling’s Philosophy of Identity as a (at least to a certain extent) ‘mystical’ one. No mystic has ever, as far as I can see, used this term, though some use similar terms for expressing the ‘Analyticity-thesis’. In this context, the concept of *entbildung* is particularly relevant, meaning a process in which any *bilde*, that is, any ‘representation’ telling us what things *factually* – *generally*, i.e. *in the common or vulgar way* – are like, ceases to be in force. *Bilder*, that is to say: ‘images’ or mere ‘representations’, are (merely) telling us how reality usually or in the normal case – *factually* or *actually* – ‘works’, namely by showing us a whole of particular things needing some kind of ‘mediation’ to ensure their survival or viability. Meister Eckhart (d. 1328) actually identifies both concepts, ‘mediation’ and ‘image’, in his *German Sermon 70*: ‘I can only see God if I do so without image and without any mediation (*âne bilde*

³ See Schelling 1860, 151,16–21: ‘God or the Absolute is the only unmediated object of knowledge, all other objects can only be known in a mediated way. The opposition between Dogmatism and true philosophy can adequately be expressed as follows: the former anywhere merely admits a mediated knowledge of the Absolute, whereas the latter admits a thoroughly unmediated knowledge [of it].’ See *ibid.*, 153,23–8: ‘The characteristic form of knowing the Absolute is thus [...] a *contemplative* one. Any unmediated knowledge is = intuition (*Anschauung*), and also any form of contemplation is as such intuition. Since we are now speaking of the knowing of reason, we have to call such an intuition an “intuition of reason” or, as it is usually called, an “*intellectual intuition*”’.

⁴ See *ibid.*, 502,20f.: ‘Everything which exists is necessarily something individual’; *ibid.*, 156,28–33: ‘[...] the aspect establishing a difference [...] does not constitute the essence or true *esse* but rather the *non-esse* or the non-being of things. Such an aspect [i.e. the one establishing a difference] does not characterise things considered as *being* things (since considered as *being* things, things are just *one*) but just things considered as *non-being* things.’

und âne allez mittel)' (Meister Eckhart 1973–1976 [repr. 1999], 194,11f.). This is the reason why you can only see God or the Absolute by being – paradoxically enough – blind, as Eckhart himself points out in his *German Sermon 72* by interpreting John 1:5 ('The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it'): 'What does this "darkness" mean? It means first that man should not be dependent nor hanging upon anything; he should be blind, without knowing anything of any creature. As I have sometimes already said: You should be blind if you want to perceive God' (ibid., 250,5–8). And in his *German Sermon 70* Meister Eckhart states in a similar way: 'I have sometimes quoted Saint Augustine saying: "As Saint Paul did not see (*dô sant Paulus niht ensach*), he then saw God". I would now like to invert these words in a pointed way, and so I say: "As he saw nothing (*dô er sach niht*), he then saw God (*dô sach er got*)"' (ibid., 189,3–190,1). This is nothing but the crucial thesis constituting Schelling's Philosophy of Identity as I have explained it above: we must avoid experience in order to know in an unmediated way or by means of 'intellectual intuition' how things – maybe not *factually* or *actually* but nevertheless – *really* are (Quero-Sánchez 2016, 149–54). Actually, Schelling has read some German sermons of Meister Eckhart, which some passages in his *Erlangen Lectures Initia philosophiae universae* and in the different extant versions of the *Weltalter*, are clearly presupposing (Quero-Sánchez 2018, 132–61). These are works composed by Schelling after having arrived in Munich in 1806, particularly after September 1810. In a recent paper, I have argued that Schelling, precisely at this time, also by the end of 1810 or the beginning of 1811, became acquainted with the Basle Tauler-print of 1521 (particularly the reproduction of a year later), which, as is well known, contains more than 60 Sermons by Eckhart, who is there mentioned by name, among them some sermons which are important for Schelling: *Sermon 52* (the so-called *Speech on Poverty*) as well as the *Sermons 2, 3, 69, 71* and *114* (Quero-Sánchez 2018, 173–7; for a more comprehensive discussion see also Quero-Sánchez 2019e). Surely crucial to the development of Schelling's Philosophy of Identity, was Spenser's translation of Tauler's sermons, which Schelling had demonstrably known, probably at a very early stage of his career, in the Tübinger Stift, or perhaps even earlier. This translation contains not only an edition of the Pseudo-Taulerian *Book of Spiritual Poverty*, which Schelling highly valued (Quero-Sánchez 2015), but also some important German sermons by Eckhart, here erroneously presented as Taulerian works: *Sermons 1, 68, 69, 70, 101, 102, 103, 114, etc.* (Quero-Sánchez 2018, 131, 176; for a more comprehensive discussion see also Quero-Sánchez 2019e). It is important to emphasise, however, that I am not thereby claiming that Schelling's philosophy is based upon some sort of irrationalistic ground, but rather that mysticism – at least if one understands it in the way Schelling did (and I think this is actually the right way to understand it) – itself presents a rational structure, especially a particular conception of reason, which, strictly speaking, cannot be called

‘a particular’ one, since ‘absolute reason’ as a revitalisation of what I would like to call ‘mystical reason’ is presupposing the neutralisation of ‘particularity’ *as such*.

3 Schelling’s ‘analyticity-principle’ as Platonic ‘logification’ of existence

The ‘mystical’ position which characterises Schelling’s Philosophy of Identity was already present in his early papers on Plato, which he composed at the Tübinger Stift, particularly – but not only – in his Commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus* from 1794 (see Quero-Sánchez 2019c, including further bibliographical references). As scholars have long since noticed, Schelling is very often using Kantian terminology for his explanation of Plato here (Kriings 1994). Now, the metaphysical position that he is expressing with Kantian terminology is *not* a Kantian one, but he is rather defending the ‘mystical’ theses which will years later emerge with his Philosophy of Identity, particularly the ‘Analyticity-Principle’. Especially important in this context is a note which Schelling wrote at the beginning of the commentary. He describes here, as he explicitly says, ‘what you can daily see’, that is, the world as it – normally, factually or generally – *appears*. We daily see, Schelling says, that what is accepted to be true is ‘often’ not the result of ‘conviction arising from true arguments but it is dependent upon [a certain] political supremacy, which, after having privileged a certain opinion, forces the dissenting voice to keep silent or at least to speak so low that it cannot really be heard’ (Schelling 2016a, 152,14–7). What you daily see is, as Schelling further writes, ‘the triumphing scoffing of privileged teachers at dissidents, who have no other power on their side but the power of truth (or at least the power of the conviction [arising from argument])’ (ibid., 152,18–21). The ‘power of truth’: that is the power of reason or the power of ‘Analyticity’ stating ‘A is A’ – just because A is A (and precisely not B). This is, of course, not the common (or vulgar) way that you can – daily – see, since daily experience merely shows us different instances of ‘Syntheticity’ (‘A is [not A but] B’), depending upon some political supremacy as a certain empirical ‘mediation’ which functions here as the empirical ‘reason’ establishing a relation between A and B that does not exist *by* or *in itself*. Not an empirically mediated experience but only an unmediated intellectual intuition shows us how things are ‘in themselves’.

Also, Schelling’s differentiation between ‘physical’ and ‘logical’ existence, which he develops as one of the central theses of the commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, is to be understood in the light of the ‘Analyticity-Principle’. We have to distinguish, Schelling says, physical existence, as the characteristic way

in which 'particulars' – factually – are, that is to say: the world that 'you can daily see', from logical or pure existence, as the characteristic way in which things – maybe not *factually* but nevertheless – *really* are (ibid., 168,12–30). A thing existing in a merely physical sense is something which is not dependent upon its own concept but which has been brought into a 'particular' form of existence by some 'mediating' merely empirical cause – say: by means of some sort of 'political supremacy' destroying Analyticity as it is defined by the pure concept or (Platonic) Idea alone. Because of its dependence upon such a 'mediation', the thing needs a temporal beginning for 'being (-merely-there)'; and it will be gone when its mediation ceases to support it: for it is not *by itself*. Such a merely 'mediated' being is nothing by itself but just something 'being-merely-there' *in virtue* (= because of the virtue) of something else. Because of its being-dependent-upon-some-mediation, a thing is a (merely) temporal thing. By contrast, a thing existing in a logical sense has never begun to be and will never be gone: it is eternal, having nothing to do with temporality at all. Because of its 'unmediated' being, its being *by itself*, such a thing happens or exists 'immediately', that is to say: in a timeless way. 'Eternity' ('being *immediately*') therefore means nothing but 'absoluteness' ('being *unmediated*'). Of course, such an *eternal* being can also *appear in a certain time*, but it is nevertheless 'timeless', i.e. something fully independent of time as from any kind of 'mediation': it exists – it is-there – in virtue of its own being which is as such – as being by itself – fully 'indifferent' with regard to particular, empirically determined existence as such.

According to Schelling – and I think that here he is interpreting Plato's *Timaeus* in the right way – Plato establishes a relationship between time and the (physical) existence of a concrete or particular reality, that is, of a 'ground' or 'substratum' (*hupokeimenon*, *subiectum* or *suppositum*) as the 'requirement' or 'condition' characterising the world as it 'is (merely) there'. Let me quote the crucial passage in this context: According to Plato, Schelling writes, 'Temporal succession begins together with the beginning of a ground [or "substratum"]; [...] [therefore] we can say that [according to Plato's *Timaeus*] there was no time at all before there was a world or a ground [or 'substratum'] whatsoever' (ibid., 170,3–7; see Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d5–e3).

'Temporality' means for Schelling therefore nothing but 'conditionality': it is the sort of (physical) existence characterising those things which are in a merely *hypothetical* way, that is, not in virtue of their own concept as of their own power, but just because of the 'mediation' of some sort of external power. By contrast, those things which *really* 'are' have nothing to do with time – nothing at all: they are lacking any 'ground', any 'substratum', any 'requirement' or any 'condition' (any *hupokeimenon*, *subiectum* or *suppositum*). What *really* 'is', that is, what exists not in a merely physical but in a logical sense, is 'ground-less' and it has

thereby nothing to do with any kind of temporal succession. Logical existence is thus nothing but ‘groundless’ existence, that is, existence lacking both particularity and (physical, empirically knowable) existence *as such*.

4 Jacobi’s attack

As is well known, the later development of Schelling’s philosophy, particularly from 1809 onwards, can, and maybe should, be seen as an attempt to philosophically recover the value of particular or physical existence, which in the context of the Philosophy of Identity was, as I have said, a very problematic one. He is now trying to present a conception of God or the Absolute – or generally speaking: of anything which *really* is – as including particular, not merely logical existence (see Schelling 2017, 106,11–4). Clearly, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi played a role, maybe *the* crucial one, in such a development by Schelling (see Ciancio 1975, and Weischedel 1969, on the relationship between Jacobi and Schelling). In his treatise *Description of the System of My Philosophy*, that is to say, in 1801, we already find some passages in which Schelling is reacting to some passages by Jacobi, particularly to his *Letters on Spinoza*, from 1785 (with a second edition in 1789). Schelling paraphrases here some passages by Jacobi concerning the concept of ‘immediacy’,⁵ but presenting a characteristic understanding of this concept, which is clearly influenced by mysticism, particularly by the aforementioned *Book of Spiritual Poverty* (Quero-Sánchez 2014, 212–9; 2015, 257–62). When Schelling came to Munich, in 1806, he came to know Jacobi in person, who was at that time the President of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, of which Schelling had even become a member himself. Jacobi wrote, as is well known, a treatise entitled *On Divine Things and Their Revelation*, primarily directed against Schelling’s Philosophy of Identity, but, of course, forgetting to mention him by name. Schelling reacted against this writing in a very belligerent manner, with a work of 1812, entitled *Schelling’s Monument to Mr. Jacobi’s Writing on Divine Things* (see Jaeschke 1999). We find in the work by Jacobi, mentioned above, a passage that best expresses the kind of critique to which Schelling was reacting in his philosophical development from 1809 onwards. Of course, he is not just reacting to *this* passage, but his later philosophy can be best understood as a reaction to a critique, such as the one Jacobi is expressing here. We have to keep in mind that Jacobi’s attack appears in 1811 (Jacobi signed his Prologue [*Nothwendiger Vorber-*

⁵ Schelling had also quoted Jacobi in his treatise *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie*, of 1795 (Ciancio 1975, 3).

cht] on the 5th of October 1811), although he had been working on it since the end of 1807. We also need to keep in mind that Schelling's first wife, Caroline, has died in September 1809. Jacobi first asks:

Is it possible that any knowledge, virtue or beauty appear to us without presenting any particular form at all? [...]. Would such a concept in us be something capable of making us a living being which were, in addition, capable of living in relationship with some other living beings? (Jacobi 2000, 51, 8–14)

And Jacobi adds to this:

Maybe these considerations are still not near enough for an understanding. Let me raise, to get closer to you and more sternly [to bring these considerations near to you], the following question (*Ich frage, um näher zu treten und eindringlicher zu werden*): is it possible to conceive a person having a friend and maintaining that he loves his *concept* [i.e. *the concept of the friend*] but not the particular person with a singular name; because the particular person with the singular name is not the person *really*, but precisely the aspect which, because it contains some imperfections in itself, is damaging this person? If it were possible to find someone thinking this way, he would have to see with indifference – the more indifferent the more truly – how his friend is brought unto his grave. Because he would still retain the concept and would yet be able to think of another possible friend presenting even better qualities than the defunct one, yet without any defect at all, which would be as such immortal!

But this is not the way we, common people, think. We love in a friendship the particular person with a singular name: this person himself, in the particular way he is.

(*ibid.*, 51,15–28)

Now, what kind of problem could anyone have with such an – as Jacobi calls it – ‘individual, *positive* friendship’? Jacobi himself explains this in the continuation of the passage just quoted:

Surely, it is possible to criticise this form of [...] friendship from a rigorous point of view, in a similar way as you can criticise [...] a particular political constitution from the point of view of [pure] virtue and [pure] freedom. You will hear the following objection: Do we not have to say that by you defining friendship as a relation between individualities you are adulterating the real thing by mixing it with particularity; you are adulterating what is unconditional by mixing it with conditionality? Are you not essentially corrupting these things? Is not by such a friendship the [mere] opinion defiantly prevailing over the understanding, not the biased judgement over the healthy and unbiased one, not reputation over reason, not love over justice [or righteousness]? (*ibid.*, 52,6–21)

I think, this is actually the position characterising Schelling's Philosophy of Identity. Now, Mr. President was unwilling to give up his system *grounding* upon an ‘incomprehensible’ friendship-structure. Let me quote his response to the questions he himself had just raised:

All this could be true, and yet it would not make false the fact that only such a positive friendship, which is related to individuals and is therefore an exclusive one, that is, one which is biased – if you will: blind and superstitious –, in a nutshell: such an *incomprehensible* friendship [...], has ever been seen – all along and wherever men have been talking about friendship – as authentic and true friendship. (ibid., 52,28–34)

Schelling's attempt to philosophically recover the value of particular existence – 'Schelling's "Delogification" of Idealism' – will now be quite different from Jacobi's defence of such an 'incomprehensible' friendship-structure. He undoubtedly took the fundamental basis for his new position from Boehme,⁶ as I will try to show in what follows.

5 Schelling's Boehmian 'delogification' of idealism

Probably, Schelling came to know Boehme's positions in the summer, or the autumn, of 1799, in house of August Wilhelm Schlegel. It was Ludwig Tieck who brought to Jena the interest for Boehme's writings, which he had previously 'rediscovered' in Berlin. Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis and Fichte were also present at these 'philosophical-theological' conversations in Schlegel's house (Plitt 1869 [repr. 2003], 245–7). Hegel also came into contact with Boehme's writings in Jena, after having arrived there in 1801 (Magee 2013, 224–7). However, there are some passages in a previous work by Schelling, namely in his *Survey of the Most Recent Philosophical Literature* (November 1796–July 1798) which seem to suggest a previous lecture on Boehme by Schelling (Schelling 1988, 121,25–34, 122,11–4). I am not going to discuss this question of when exactly Schelling first encountered Boehme's positions in my paper, but just demonstrate the extent to which Boehme's thought was crucial for Schelling's attempt to philosophically recover the value of particular existence.

Scholars have often noticed and discussed how important Boehme was for the development of Schelling's thought from 1809 onwards. He is actually present in the works composed by Schelling at this time, particularly in the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* and the *Stuttgart Private Lectures*, the *Erlangen Lectures*, as well as in the different extant versions of the *Weltalter*. In fact, most of the aspects in Schelling's Philosophy at this time which one could relate to

⁶ Not only Boehme, but also Philipp Matthäus Hahn, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger and Franz von Baader were crucial in this context (see Quero-Sánchez 2019a; 2019b; 2019d).

Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler and the Pseudo-Taulerian *Book of Spiritual Poverty* (see Quero-Sánchez 2018, 132–61), can also be found in Boehme, particularly – but not only – the concept of ‘equanimity’ (*Gelassenheit*) (see Quero-Sánchez 2020).⁷ Surely, Boehme himself had read the mentioned authors. This is demonstrably the case with regard to ‘several of Boehme’s closest followers’ (Penman 2013, 66–71), for example Benedikt Hinckelmann (d. 1642), at whose Dresden home Boehme stayed for a while in 1624. An inventory of Hinckelmann’s collected manuscripts is extant, containing some entries on Johannes Tauler (see Anonymous 1692, 259, 260, 264, and 274). The same is the case with Abraham von Franckenberg (1593–1652).⁸ In addition, both Boehme and his circle of friends were very familiar with the works of Valentin Weigel who, for his part, often quotes from Meister Eckhart.⁹

I do not think that Schelling took his Analyticity-Principle from Boehme; nevertheless, we also find it in Boehme’s works, here expressed by means of the concept of ‘meekness’ (*Sanftmut*; or, as the adjective, ‘meek’, in German: *sanft*). It is surely not by chance that Schelling himself uses this Boehmian concept in his *Stuttgart Private Lectures* from 1810, by speaking of a ‘meek unity’ (*eine sanfte Einheit*) (Schelling 2017, 144,4–6). The eternal, original and uncorrupted nature is ‘meek’ insofar as it does not know any kind of violence or externally determining compulsion. This is the case, to return to my example in section 1 of this paper, with *J* disregarding any attempt of some political power pressing him to act in a

7 As is well known, Boehme wrote a short treatise with this title (*De æquanimitate oder Von der wahrer Gelassenheit [Of True Resignation or Dying to Self]*), which he included in his printed book *Christosophia oder Der Weg zu Christus (The Way to Christ, Görlitz: Johann Rambau, 1624)* (see Böhme 1957a). Some Eckhartian motifs that we find in Schelling – I particularly have in mind Schelling’s distinction between ‘God’ and ‘that what God is’ – are surely to be traced back to a direct reading of Eckhart’s *Speech on Poverty*.

8 See Bruckner 1988, A 2 (p. 4), A 40 (p. 33), D 36 (p. 100) and D 25 (b) (= Johannes Tauler, *Predigten* [Leipzig: Conradus Kachelofen, 1498] [this print contains, as is well known, some German Sermons by Eckhart: Steer 101–104]) (p. 98). Von Franckenberg also possessed the Pseudo-Taulerian *Book of Spiritual Poverty* (in the edition by Daniel Sudermann [Frankfurt a.M.: Lucas Jennis, 1621] (*ibid.*, D 37 [p. 101])).

9 See Pektaş 2006, 195–206, particularly 195: ‘il s’agit du seul auteur auquel Böhme renvoie sinon expressément: Valentin Weigel’; *ibid.*, 196: ‘Il s’agit du petit traité, très symboliquement intitulé: *Von Armut des Geistes oder wahrer Gelassenheit*, composé en 1570, dont le troisième et le cinquième chapitre ne sont qu’un patchwork composé des Sermons allemands 12 et 52 [of Meister Eckhart], choix qui n’est pas seulement dû à une préférence marquée de Weigel, mais renvoie aussi à la source dont celui-ci dépend, ainsi identifiée: [...] l’édition bâloise de 1522 les contient.’ Interestingly, the inventory of Hinckelmann’s collected manuscripts contains the mentioned work by Weigel (see Anonymous 1692, 264: ‘Anonym. aus Tauleri Schriften gefertigte zwey Tractat. [1] Von der Bekehrung des Menschen. [2] Von Armuth des Geistes anno 1570’; *ibid.*, 265: ‘Val. Weigel. von der Bekehrung der Menschen. [2] Von Armuth des Geistes anno 1570 geschrieben’).

certain or precisely *particular* way. The meek unity of nature concerns therefore things being by themselves, or in virtue of their own power or inner force. There was in those original times, Boehme says, nothing but an eternal ‘Being without a Why’ or a ‘why-less Being’: a dominion (!) of ‘true righteousness’ as the characteristic (but not *particular*!) way of God (see Boehme 1958, 874,2–4 [English by J. Sparrow, in Boehme 1772, 497,12]). Eckhart of Hochheim had masterfully expressed such a fundamental philosophical position in his Latin *Commentary on John’s Gospel* (a work which Schelling admittedly did not know): *suave est quod sua vi nos trahit*, that is, ‘meek’ (or ‘gentle’) (*suave*) is what attracts us just ‘in virtue of its own power’ (*sua-vi*) (Meister Eckhart 1936–1994, 287,11f.).

Such an original, uncorrupted nature is, as Boehme again and again points out, the one related to the concept of God as a ‘merciful God’, according to *Deuteronomy*, 4:31 (‘For the Lord your God is a merciful God’). Now, we also read in *Exodus* 20:5 that God is ‘a jealous God’, which Boehme normally refers to by using the adjectives ‘angry’ (*zornig*), ‘wrathful’ (*grimmig*) and ‘zealous’ (*eifrig*): your God is thus, so it seems, also an angry, a wrathful and a zealous God. To Boehme’s concept of divinity belongs therefore not only ‘meekness’ but also ‘anger’, or ‘wrath’, that is, *der Zorn* or *die Grimmigkeit*. God’s ‘wrath’ characterises or ‘forms’ the world as it merely *seems to be*, that is, the world merely *existing* under the dominion of the Principle of Particularity or Inequality, which is really nothing but a creation of man existing in a merely particular, corrupted or corrupt way. Being originated by man’s corruption, God’s ‘wrath’ ‘forms’ the world as you can ‘daily’ see it; the world, for instance in which, what is accepted to be true is ‘not the result of conviction arising from true arguments but dependent upon a certain political supremacy’ (see above, p. 228f.). Schelling is surely presupposing such a Boehmian conception of God’s wrathfulness when he, in his *Stuttgart Private Lectures*, speaks both of a ‘dreadful’ and an ‘awful reality’: *eine schreckliche Realität; eine furchtbare Realität* (Schelling 2017, 100,24–102,2). A degenerated or corrupt world is actually, I would say, a ‘dreadful’, an ‘awful reality’. The following passage in Schelling’s *Erlangen Lectures Initia philosophiae universae* is also to be taken into consideration in this context:

Even all the oldest doctrines agree in this point: that everything that now appears as being captured (or “biased” [*befangen*]) by particular existence has before sunken down (or “degenerated” [*herabgesunken*]) from an original freedom in this dreadful world of particular existence. It is natural to see this in connection with an immemorial culpability, through which the eternal freedom sunk into such a state of particular being.

(Schelling 1969, 69,5–9)

There are some similar passages in the different extant versions of Schelling’s *Weltalter* (Schelling 1946 [repr. 1979], 14,15–15,8). Of course, God’s wrath is not what

God is in himself – for He is essentially meekness or love – but what *man himself* brings into existence through *his* corruption, that is, because of *his own decision* for particularity or inequality. Now, to what extent has such a Boehmian position anything to do with Schelling's attempt to philosophically 'recover' the value of particular existence? The crucial point here is that Boehme considers the fighting or struggle of men – and, generally speaking, of nature as a whole – against the dominion of particular or 'mediated' existence, against degenerated being, or against such a dreadful, corrupt reality as the necessary *condition* for absolute Being to become a *particular living or really existent being*. That is to say: Absolute being, which is as such or by definition *unconditional* ('unmediated'), needs – paradoxically enough – a *condition* (a 'mediation') for it to become a *particular living or really existent being*. This is a position we find almost everywhere in Boehme's works, who points out – again and again – that wrathful reality is as fundamental for *life* as for *particular existence*. Let me quote just a passage: if everything were 'in a sweet Meekness [...] where would be the Mobility, Kingdom, Power, and Glory? Therefore, we have often said, Anger is the Root of Life' (Boehme 1960, 451,28–31 [English by J. Sparrow, in Boehme 1764, 274,37–9]; see also *ibid.*, 9,24f. [English in Boehme 1764, 19f.]; *ibid.*, 364,1–3 [English in Boehme 1764, 224,24–6]; Boehme 1957, 80,22–5 [English in Boehme 1781, 50,37–40]). Of course, Boehme is here thinking of his own experience with the world of strict orthodoxy as he found it represented by Gregor Richter, the Lutheran Pastor in Görlitz, his chief antagonist. We find in Schelling's *Stuttgart Private Lectures* a similar statement: 'Life', he says, 'necessarily presupposes opposition ["contrast", "contradiction", "antithesis", "antagonism", "conflict" (*Gegensatz*)]' (*Ohne Gegensatz kein Leben*) (Schelling 2017, 98,32). A year before, Schelling had written something similar in his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*: 'for, where there is no struggle [or "no fighting"], there is no life' (*denn wo nicht Kampf ist, da ist nicht Leben*) (Schelling 1860, 400,3–6 [English by J. Love and J. Schmidt, in Schelling 2006, 63]). Precisely in this context, Boehme defines a concept of 'Revelation' or 'Manifestation' (*Offenbarung*) that Schelling will incorporate as one of the central aspects of his late philosophy:

For the Eternal Nature has produced nothing in its Desire, except a Likeness out of itself; and if there were not an everlasting Mixing, there would be an eternal Peace in Nature, but so Nature would not be revealed and made manifest, in the Combat it becomes manifest; so that each Thing elevates itself, and would get out of the Combat into the still Rest, and so it runs to and fro, and thereby only awakens and stirs up the Combat.

(Boehme 1957, 9,14–21 [English by J. Ellistone, in Boehme 1781, 12,27–32])¹⁰

¹⁰ See Schelling 1860, 373,15–374,2 (English by J. Love and J. Schmidt, in Schelling 2006, 41): 'Since it is undeniably real, at least as general opposite, there can indeed be no doubt from the outset that it was necessary for the revelation of God; exactly this results from what has been

The Absolute is not something being *really* in a merely *abstract* way, but by its particular fighting against a particular instantiation of particularity, as against a particular form of corruption, a thing *becomes* a particular *really* existent or living thing. This is how God, or the Absolute, is revealed and made manifest: ‘in the combat’. A condition, that is to say, a ground or fundament (*hupokeimenon*), is therefore required for something to be a particular, *really* existent or living – revealed or manifested – thing. This is Schelling’s ‘Bohemian’ correction of his original idealistic position in order to avoid a typically realistic critique as the one we have found in Jacobi. The condition ‘is merely the ground of existence’ (*das Wesen, sofern es bloß Grund von Existenz ist*), which we have to distinguish from the *really* existent or living thing itself (*das Wesen, sofern es existiert*) (Schelling 1860, 357,17–20 [English in Schelling 2006, 27]). However, Schelling is thereby not giving up his original idealistic position: not at all. Why? Because the ‘ground’ as the condition is here needed just as something *to be negated or denied*. The particular *really* existent or living Absolute as the negated or denied ‘ground’: this is the Absolute as ‘non-ground’ or as ‘abyss’ (*Ungrund*), which is actually the characteristic Bohemian expression which Schelling uses at the end of his *Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (ibid., 406,15–22 [English in Schelling 2006, 68]). One could best express this position by quoting Hegel: its negation – namely the negation or denying of particular existence as such – is its being, that is, the (not merely *real* but *really*) particular existence or life of the Absolute: ‘the Non-Being of the finite is the Being of the Absolute’ (Hegel 1978, 290,7f.). You could therefore with Hegel state: ‘Being’ and ‘Non-Being’, that is ‘Nothing’, ‘are the same’ (see ibid., 44,20–56,2). By denying its *merely given* particular existence a thing – particularly, though not only, a man – is *performing* what is *really* its (his/her) particular existence: it (he/she) is *really* existing and not merely being-there as such and such particular, merely physically existent as well as empirically knowable ‘thing’. To return again to my example from section 1, any particular judge, for example *J*, is both denying his *merely given* particular existence and precisely thereby *performing* his *true* particular existence by (under the assumption that both Peter Smith did actually kill his neighbour and *J* knows it) uttering the following (analytical or identical) sentence: ‘Mr. Smith is guilty (of killing his neighbour).’ This becomes especially clear *in the certainly extreme case*

previously said as well. For, if God as spirit in the inseverable unity of both principles, and this same unity is only real in the spirit of man, then, if the principles were just as indissoluble in him as in God, man would not be distinguishable from God at all; he would disappear in God, and there would be no revelation and mobility of love. For every essence can only reveal itself in its opposite, love only in hate, unity in conflict. Were there no severing of principles, unity could not prove its omnipotence; were there no discord, love could not become real.’

that Plato masterfully discusses in his *Euthyphro*, namely if (in a *similar* situation) Mr. Smith were the father of *J*, with the neighbour being a hired workman of Mr. Smith, who – I mean: this workman – had probably murdered a slave of Mr. Smith (Quero-Sánchez 2015a, 43–5; see Plato, *Euthyphro*, 4A–E).

Both Meister Eckhart and Boehme had constantly insisted on this requirement of denying any merely *given* particular existence *as such* in order to perform – precisely thereby and paradoxically – that which *really* constitutes the particular existence of any particular man (and, generally speaking, of any particular being): the *true* particular existence of any particular man. And both had done this by quoting some biblical passages which are actually crucial in this context: *Matthew 23:9* ('And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven'); *ibid. 10:35* ('For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'); *Ephesians 5:31* ('Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'). After having quoted these three verses in his *Latin Sermon no. 29*, Meister Eckhart states: 'Hence, the Holy Scripture always calls on you to leave this world, to leave yourself, to forget your own house as well as the house of your own family, to leave your own country and your own relatedness' (Meister Eckhart 1936–1994, 270,11–5; see also *id.*, *Latin Sermon 25*, *ibid.*, 242,1–9; 1936–1994, 284,5–285,2; see on this Quero-Sánchez 2004, 118–23). For his part, Boehme continually points out that 'Man is not at Home, in the elementary Kingdom of this World. For Christ said: "My Kingdom is not of this World." And to his Apostles he said: "I have called you out from this World"; also: "Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"' (Boehme 1960, 237,44–238,4 [English by J. Sparrow, in Boehme 1764, 146,35–8]). Boehme particularly quotes in this context Paul's *Epistle to the Philippians 3:20* ('Our citizenship' – or, as the *King James Version* says, 'our conversation' – 'is in heaven') and *John 18:36* ('My kingdom is not of this world') (see, for instance, Boehme ²1996, 376,12–23 [English by J. Sparrow, in Boehme 1772, 219,23–30]; Boehme 1966, 98,33–41 [English by J. Rolleston Earle, in Boehme 1930, 155,19–32]). His favourite passage is, however, *Genesis 12:1*, when God says to Abraham: 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house' (see, for instance, Boehme ²1996, 364,1–18 [English by J. Sparrow, in Boehme 1772, 212,35–44]). For 'kindred', the Vulgate version of the Bible says *cognatio*; the Septuagint, *suggeneia*. Both expressions trace back to the word we find in the Hebrew Bible: *molædæt*, which actually means 'kindred' or 'kindredship'; but also 'affiliation', 'relationship', 'relatedness'. The German ecumenical Bible translation, the so-called *Einheitsübersetzung*, uses here rightly the word *Verwandschaft*. Boehme quotes the passage, of

course, according to Luther's translation, which is here very interesting: 'Gehe von deiner Freundschaft', that is, 'Go from your friendship'.¹¹

No; Schelling had not seen with indifference how Caroline was brought unto her grave in September 1809 – surely not. Idealistic philosophy is not to be seen as an inhuman one, as Jacobi seemed to be presupposing by his critique of Schelling in 1811. But any *decent* idealist would surely want people to forget their own *given* particular existence, that is to say: any kind of friendship *molædæst*, in the *public* sphere, refusing or perhaps precisely opposing any form of 'friendship' which were presented by anyone as if it were a sort of indispensable 'ground' for rightly functioning politics. 'Yes, Mr. President', Schelling could have said to Jacobi – and I think this is precisely what he actually said with the later development of his philosophical Idealism – 'with your appeal to *positive, exclusive* and *incomprehensible* friendship you are actually adulterating the political constitution', in as much as 'by such a friendship [mere] opinion were actually defiantly prevailing over the understanding, the biased judgement over the healthy and unbiased one as well as reputation over reason, and – precisely – friendship over justice or righteousness'. We all probably know that such an idealistic 'indifference' with regard to any kind of 'friendship' is a really *dangerous* thing. Jacob Boehme surely knew it. The idealist philosopher – if you like: the Boehmian, as the one whose 'conversation is in heaven' – 'can only live', as he explicitly says in his *Aurora*, 'in the greatest peril in this world' (*lebed in grosser geferligkeit in diser weld*) (Boehme 1963, 112, 4–7 [English by A. Weeks, in Boehme 2013, 335, 2–6]).¹² So what? As he himself points out in his *Mysterium magnum* (and there are two similar passages in Eckhart's German Sermons): 'if thou [namely God who is nothing but righteousness or justice itself] bringest me into *Hell*, I will go along' (*Führest du mich in die Hölle, so will ich auch mit*).¹³

11 The word *Freundschaft* ('friendship') also means in the Middle Ages and even today in some German dialects *Verwandschaft* ('kindred'), also *Blutsverwandschaft* ('blood-relationship'). See the German Dictionary (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the 3rd acception of the *vox Freundschaft*: *verwandschaft, blutsfreundschaft, geschlecht* (I thank Freimut Löser for this reference).

12 See also *ibid.*, 279,39–280,2 [English in Boehme 2013, 741,28–31]; Boehme 1958, 735,2–14 [English by J. Sparrow, in Boehme 1772, 420,12–9]

13 See Boehme 1958, 735,15–23 (English by J. Sparrow, in Boehme 1772, 420,20–5): 'For he says very inwardly to God, Lord, wilt thou have me in Prison and in Misery, that I shall sit in Darkness, then I will willingly dwell there; if thou bringest me into Hell, I will go along, for thou art my Heaven; if I have by thee, I enquire not after Heaven and Earth, and if Body and Soul should fail, yet thou art my Comfort; let me be where I will, yet I am in thee, and thou in me; I have fully enough when I have thee, use me for what thou wilt.' See Meister Eckhart, *German Sermon 47*, in *id.* 1971 (repr. 1988), 401,3–5; *id.*, *German Sermon 112*, in Sturlese, Löser 2008, 120,23–5.

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Rubina Raja

Dining with the gods and the others: the banqueting tickets from Palmyra as expressions of religious individualisation

1 Small objects and expressions of religious individualisation: the conundrum of archaeological evidence

Much research on religion in the Roman world has focused on the collective and ritualised collectivity as defining traits; in the last decade, however, a new focus on experiences and the individual's role in religion has also emerged (Raja, Rüpke 2015, for a collection of articles taking such an approach; see also Rüpke 2016). These new ways of approaching ancient religion are part of a broader trend which insists that, in order to fully understand religious individualisation and propose a helpful framework for its contextualisation, we need to abandon our academic comfort zone and include aspects that lie beyond the often Western-centric (Eurocentric) way of understanding religion and religious individuality (e.g. Fuchs 2015).

While many disciplines working with material from the ancient Mediterranean world have tackled religion and individuals (or the lack of visible individuals!) through historical (written) and epigraphic sources and have used archaeological evidence as an illustration of this, grasping the individual and the process of individualisation is something that remains a challenge in archaeological research. Archaeological evidence often testifies to the 'end products' of processes, and evidence from the religious realm often only gives insight into processes that underline the collectivity of religion and its associated aspects, such as the architecture of sanctuaries, for example (Raja 2015d). However, over the

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past years, members of the ‘Lived Ancient Religion’ project, among others, have tackled such material, including also archaeological perspectives (Albrecht et al. 2018, also for further references), in order to bring to the forefront fruitful ways of engaging with material culture and the individual.

The present article attempts to determine the dynamics, and seemingly inherent tensions, between religious individualisation and standardised religious practices (Sartre, Sartre-Fauriat 2016, for general literature on Palmyra). The article tries to capture and lay open moments of individualisation in which seemingly strictly standardised religious practices are being loosened through an emerging or more clearly visible behavioural pattern. It does so by addressing the so-called banqueting tesseræ of Palmyra – one of the most important groups – which give us insight into the structure of religious life in Palmyra in the first three centuries CE (Raja 2015c; Raja 2016a, for recent research undertaken on the banqueting tesseræ as well as further references).

The discussion will focus on how these tesseræ might have been introduced at a certain point in the development of religious life in Palmyra as well as which type of individuality they express. The article will examine whether specific religious experiences and communicative efforts were related to the tesseræ and how these objects framed (or reframed) the religious banquet – a common ritual in ancient Mediterranean religions. Furthermore, the constellations and situations that might have given rise or put a stop to individualisation will be identified in order to approach a typology of individualisation, based on the Palmyrene material.

Since the tesseræ are mainly important because of their detailed iconography, in particular the visual language will be addressed as a means of understanding the above-mentioned aspects. Such an examination has the potential of yielding information about the dynamics between individualisation and institutionalisation; in other words, these tiny objects give insight into the processes of individual and group formations and dynamics and shed light on the trajectory of religious life from individual processes to institutionalisation and, thus, standardisation. However, these processes should be distinguished from pre-existing non-individualistic standardised and conformist practices. Thus they form their own processes of standardisation of the individualising practices themselves.

2 The banqueting tesseræ of Palmyra

Ancient Tadmor, also known as Palmyra, flourished in the first three centuries CE (Sartre, Sartre-Fauriat 2016), in particular due to the trade relations of the city in which the city’s elite played an active role (Seland 2014a; 2014b; 2015). Palmyra

experienced continued growth until the Roman emperor Aurelian sacked Palmyra in 273 CE, after the uprising against the Romans, headed by the Palmyrene queen Zenobia (Hartmann 2001; Kropp, Raja 2016, for a collection of recent articles on the city). The city is today most known for the numerous well-preserved ruins dating to the first three centuries CE (Kaizer 2002, for the religious life of Palmyra; Raja 2015a, for the portraits and further literature; Gawlikowski 1973, for the architecture; Henning 2013, on the tower tombs; Smith 2013, for further literature on Palmyra's art, architecture and, in particular, history). However, apart from monumental remains, Palmyra is also home to a large corpus of so-called banqueting tesserae stemming from the city. The banqueting tesserae, of which there are several thousands and more than 1,100 distinct series, were catalogued in the 1950s (Ingholt, Seyrig, Starcky 1955, for the most extensive compilation of the tesserae; Dunant 1959, for further examples; Seyrig 1940, for an earlier publication on the tesserae and their relation to the ritual banquets in Palmyra). However, much has been learned about them since and, without a doubt, they represent the richest available source for understanding aspects of the religious life of Palmyra through their varied iconography and the inscriptions that many of them also carry.

While Palmyra is considered the only truly bilingual city of the Near East, with bilingualism being highly prevalent in the public sphere (Smith 2013, 16–21, for sources about the bilingualism of Palmyrene society; see also Yon 2012), the funerary and religious spheres in Palmyra were, nevertheless, highly monolingual. In these realms, the language remained the local Palmyrene Aramaic dialect. Another trait that made Palmyra unique is the fact that Palmyrene society merged local traditions with new ideas and imperial trends, as evidenced by archaeological and epigraphic sources (Raja 2015a, for a discussion of the ways in which Palmyrene funerary portraiture reflects local and imperial traditions). In this paper, examples of Palmyrene banqueting tesserae are considered in order to outline their role as central expressions and markers of situations and processes of individualisation within the religious sphere in Palmyrene society (Raja 2015a; 2015b, for recent discussions of other aspects of the banqueting tesserae). These tiny objects carried great importance in certain situations. They were *media* with a specific function. They served as entrance tickets to religious banquets, and after they had served this function, they seem to have lost their importance and were often left in the banqueting halls.

The interplay between highly individualised objects and the organisation of religious life in Palmyra stands at the centre of this contribution (for the most comprehensive treatment of religious life in Palmyra to date, see Kaizer 2002). Priests in Palmyra were the ones who commissioned the banqueting tesserae. This can be concluded from the iconography on the tesserae in which Palmyrene priests are depicted, usually reclining on a banqueting couch, most often

alone but sometimes together with another priest, in what can be interpreted as banqueting scenarios. Sometimes, these priests are accompanied by inscriptions giving us their names and priestly titles. The Palmyrene priests can be recognised by their priestly clothes and, not least, their significant Palmyrene priestly hat, a cylindrical hat with a flat top – a shape that was unique for priestly dress in the Near East in the Roman period (Raja 2017a; 2018).

While reclining Palmyrene priests are the most common motif on one side of the tesserae, the other side of the banqueting tickets display a wide-ranging iconographic repertoire, within which some overarching groups can be distinguished; common motifs include busts of Palmyrene priests as well as representations of various deities and symbols for these. Votive and offering scenes – showing libations or incense offerings at altars – and banqueting settings are also depicted. A wide range of symbols, more or less well understood, including numerous interpreted as astral, are equally prominent within the tesserae iconographic repertoire. Furthermore, architectural elements are displayed, including, for example, temple fronts, parts of buildings and architectural frameworks, which may indicate that the banquets were set inside of buildings. Inscriptions are found on a large number of the tesserae; these may give the name of the person or group offering the banquet, names of deities, the date of the event or the measures of the food and drink given to each person. A large number of the depictions stem from signet seals, which would have belonged to certain individuals. It seems that the one who commissioned a series of tesserae often would have had his signet seal imprinted on one side, thereby making them even more recognisable as belonging to a particular individual. The signet seals often carry Roman motifs such as Greco-Roman deities, portraits of Roman-style men, as well as astrological symbols. These stand in contrast to the moulded motifs, which more often than not are made in a distinctively Palmyrene style. The highly diverse and varied iconographic language of the tesserae underlines that a high level of choice must have been involved every time a series of tesserae was produced. The tesserae motifs display a large range of iconographic elements, which were combined in numerous ways. Furthermore, they show how carefully the motifs were imprinted upon the tesserae. All these factors underline a process of individualisation, being signs of individual choice and expression clearly marked in the visual language: a process, however, which took place within a defined category of material, namely the tessera shape. No other kind of entrance tickets have been found in Palmyra.

The original name of the so-called banqueting tesserae is not known. They are not mentioned in any sources from Palmyra which speak about the religious life. However, since more than 1,100 different types exist, the tesserae must have played a central role in the religious life of Palmyra during the Roman period (Ingholt, Seyrig, Starcky 1955, for the corpus). The quite small tesserae, which were produced in

series, measured between a few centimetres by another few up to approximately 5 by 5 centimetres (Al-As'ad, Briquel-Chatonnet, Yon 2005; Ingholt, Seyrig, Starcky 1955). For the largest part, they were produced in very finely levigated clay from which almost all impurities had been removed. This would have allowed for the visual elements to be imprinted more clearly in the wet clay. Some series were also produced in materials such as bronze, iron, lead and glass; however, these are rare and seem to have been exceptions (Hvidberg-Hansen, Ploug 1993, 23, for an introduction to the tesserae in general. They incorrectly state that these banquets were held in honour of dead priests; there are no indications, however, that this was the case (see also Gnoli 2016, for a recapitulation of the evidence speaking against such an interpretation)).

For each series of tesserae made in clay, two moulds with different reliefs were produced. These moulds seem to have been used only once, namely for the production of one single series of tesserae. By way of the moulds, a high relief could be produced on each side of the clay. A clay lump was placed between the two moulds, and the exact thickness of the tesserae would depend on how hard the moulds were pressed together. It is not known in what quantities the individual series were produced, but one find indicates that it could have been more than 100 (the only assumed complete series is published by Al-As'ad, Briquel-Chatonnet, Yon 2005, comprising 125 identical tesserae). However, each tessera was made carefully, and this shows that considerable attention was paid to making the tesserae within each series look as uniform as possible, perhaps in order to avoid falsifications.

A few tesserae are datable by their inscriptions, which give the date of the banquet (Ingholt, Seyrig, Starcky 1955, 22, no. 158, for a dated example; Hvidberg-Hansen, Ploug 1993, 189, I.N. 3206, for a tessera dated to 460 of the Palmyrene era, which equals 118/119 CE). The tesserae all seem to stem from the period between the late first century CE and the late third century CE, which is the period from which most of the archaeological evidence from Palmyra stems. However, purely stylistic datings of the tesserae are difficult to achieve, since the small objects make it hard to trace the typological development on more than a very broad scale. Apart from displaying a varied iconographic language, the tesserae also come in a wide variety of shapes. As such, the shape must likewise have been a parameter which was up for choice when commissioning a tesserae series.

The iconography of the tesserae was highly varied and detailed. In particular, when considering the size of the tesserae, it is striking how much attention was paid to iconographic details such as inscriptions, which were found on many of the tesserae. This fact in itself indicates that these objects carried a meaning that was conveyed explicitly and deliberately through the visual language. However, the importance of the object seems to have been lost after the event (the banquet), since the tesserae were largely left behind in the banqueting hall, from where they made their way into the drainage systems. This is one clear indication that the individualisation

expression was confined to before the event, namely during the process of motif selection for the tesserae, and to the event itself, namely the entrance at the banquet (and potentially the moment when one received such a banqueting ticket).

The find spots of many of the tesserae, in and around the banqueting hall in the Sanctuary of Bel in Palmyra (Ingholt, Seyrig, Starcky 1955, III–V; see also Gawlikowski 2015, for a new contribution on Bel of Palmyra and for further bibliography), are indicators of their use and also of what seems to be a temporary use. Large numbers of tesserae were found in the drainage of the banqueting hall, which shows that the tesserae were not taken away after the event, and that guests left them there after having gained entrance. Thus, the tesserae had a very punctual function, so to say. They simply functioned as entrance tickets to religious banquets, which were hosted by Palmyrene priests – both as individuals and as groups; this is clear from the inscriptions, which often state names of priests or groups of priests and the deity to whom they dedicated the banquet (Ingholt, Seyrig, Starcky 1955, 91, for a number of these).

Furthermore, these tesserae could include a number of symbols, other inscriptions and iconographical elements (Kaizer, Raja 2019, for a symbol of the divine). On the one hand, they were highly individualised, and on the other hand, they were non-individualised and fitted into a category based on set parameters: material, iconographic language and inscriptions. In other words, these tesserae were, on the one hand, expressions of the choices of the individual Palmyrene priests, of whom there were many (Raja 2018, for a recent contribution on the visual representations of priests in Palmyra), and on the other hand, they were expressions of the organisation of religious life in Palmyra overall. Therefore, they represent a unique group of material through which the interplay between individualisation processes and institutional standards can be examined.

3 The religious contexts of the banqueting tesserae: processes of individualisation within a structured religious universe

In earlier contributions, I have discussed the ways in which the tesserae and the priestly iconography from Palmyra offer insight into the structure of Palmyrene religious life, which seems to have been heavily based on the involvement of elite male Palmyrene citizens who acted as priests (Raja 2017a; 2017b; for the tesserae, Raja 2016b). Through new studies of a comprehensive corpus of Palmyrene funerary sculpture, including the numerous depictions of Palmyrene priests, it is now possible

to revisit the tesserae in the light of new knowledge about the structure of Palmyrene priesthoods and compare this with evidence from the tesserae (Raja 2017c).

Priestly representations make up approximately twenty-five per cent of all male funerary representations, which is a high and significant number. Furthermore, in the sarcophagi banqueting scenes, priests are often depicted together – fathers, uncles and sons – indicating that Palmyrene priesthoods were held within families and bestowed upon sons and nephews by more senior male family members (Raja 2016a, 130f., for the various categories of priestly representations; Raja 2016a, 142, for the argument that priesthoods were held within families). It has been argued elsewhere that there is reason to believe that Palmyrene priesthoods were passed on within families from fathers to sons, and that a father, most likely with the consent of the priesthood group, could also bestow priesthoods on several sons while still alive (Raja 2016a; 2017c). So, while being a status symbol which clearly indicated and underlined a certain position in society, Palmyrene priesthoods were also kept within families or extended families, likely for centuries. In this way, priesthoods were an important part of structuring Palmyrene society, both within and across the tribes or extended families that made up the basis of Palmyra's social and religious structure. Priesthood also became a way of maintaining order and continuity within Palmyrene religious life. In some ways, this would have allowed for little variation and choice in Palmyrene religious life, which seems to have been structured through continuity and traditions. However, the banqueting tesserae offered one way of individualising religious life and leaving an individual mark on religious ritual, since the individual priest could choose what he wanted to depict on these items when and if he hosted a religious banquet at some point during his time as a priest.

While the tesserae on the one hand tell us about the structure of religious life at Palmyra, and that religious banquets were part of ritual life, they also tell us that these banquets were reserved for certain people. The tesserae functioned as entrance cards to religious banquets, and this must have meant that there were people who were not invited to these events. We do not have any knowledge of how the tesserae were distributed or to whom. We also do not know whether further invitees, apart from those who held tickets and, therefore, most likely sat in the banqueting halls, could have sat in the porticoes of the sanctuaries, for example (Raja 2016b, 347–51, for the evidence for banqueting halls in Palmyra). Although such distribution practices remain unknown to us, the tesserae clearly indicate that a selection process was in place, and that a certain structure must have overarched the distribution patterns. The tesserae are therefore evidence for a certain practice, which was performed at Palmyra for centuries within the framework of Palmyrene religious life, and the only insight into the individualisation of such practice is what we gain from the iconography of the tesserae. Their visual language is the only indicator of the individual choices of the commissioners

(Palmyrene priests). This leads to questions about the range of choices that were available and the limits that applied to such practices of individualisation.

While a set number of parameters come into play in tesserae imagery, including priestly iconography, symbols, deities and inscriptions, these could be mixed in a variety of ways, which allowed for the creation of unique series. It seems, indeed, to have been a wish or perhaps even a requirement that tesserae series differed from each other, which again opens the question of the degree to which the tesserae allowed for processes of individualisation to take place. However, since such a high degree of variety was involved, choice and, therefore, preference must have been in play. While the priestly iconography was static and did not differ across centuries, the other visual elements were highly diverse and could be mixed in numerous ways. One important aspect is the mix of iconographic styles encountered in the tesserae's visual language. While the moulded elements were depicted in a significantly Palmyrene, local iconographic tradition, the signet seal impressions often show Greco-Roman motifs, indicating that these signet seals might have been imported to Palmyra from other places (Raja 2016b, 353–61, for some examples). These signet seals also connect the tesserae with one specific individual, the commissioner of the tesserae series: one of the Palmyrene priests. It is interesting to note that, in the Palmyrene funerary sculpture, the Palmyrene priests and men often wear signet rings, showing that these items were indeed used in Palmyra.

Since the tesserae are most commonly found in the Palmyrene sanctuaries, and first and foremost the Sanctuary of Bel, it seems that they were only introduced with or after the monumentalisation of the Palmyrene sanctuaries. Through this monumentalisation, the structure of Palmyrene religious life would have been crystallised quite clearly to society, since religious architecture would have created a physical presence and setting for ritual practice. Thus, the individuality that was expressed through the tesserae's iconographic language was dependent on the overall structure of religious life and its cycles, and therefore, there were limits to the scope of its development. However, the tesserae did relate to the specific religious communal experience of the ritual banquet, but did so with an emphasis on the commissioning individual as the benefactor and central individual and the reason for the existence of that specific religious banquet (not of religious banquets *per se*). In other words, the tesserae reframed the religious banquet to be an event that, apart from the religious celebration, was also clearly a celebration (even if not officially) of the sponsor of the banquet. This certainly ties well into the euergetic framework of Roman civic and religious communities. However, it also takes this framework one step further, since the tesserae so firmly place the individual, at least visually, on the same level as the deity/ies who were celebrated at the banquets. The god (receiver) and the donor (giver), so to say, became two sides of the same coin – in this case, the same tesserae. The Palmyrene priests

become individualised through the visual repertoire on the tesserae, or at least claim a highly individualised position, by situating themselves on the same level as the local and non-local deities depicted on the tesserae. Other visual material, such as procession reliefs and votive scenes, stemming from the religious sphere in Palmyra, does not represent communication with deities and priests on the same lines. Therefore, in fact, the tesserae give us the strongest evidence for the importance and status of priests in Palmyra and constitute a unique group of material to gain further insights into the dynamics of individualisation processes.

4 Conclusion

The banqueting tesserae from Palmyra constitute the largest group of archaeological evidence from the city and give insight into the structure of religious life in Palmyra and the processes of individualisation within the religious sphere of the city. The Palmyrene banqueting tesserae seem to have been introduced after or along with the monumentalisation of the Palmyrene sanctuaries. They were connected to a certain practice, namely the ritual banquet, which took place in a controlled setting and to which only certain individuals were invited. The tesserae offered the sponsor of the banquet, one of several Palmyrene priests, a physical space to represent aspects which may be interpreted as parts of an individualisation process. This process was, however, limited by the material and by the fact that the religious banquets seem to have been exclusive events to which only a certain number of people were invited. Nonetheless, the Palmyrene banqueting tesserae remain an under-explored resource for understanding processes of individualisation within that which seems like a highly structured religious life with an emphasis on non-individualised values and on conformist practices. Palmyrene religious life seems to have operated within both extended local family structures, as indicated by the funerary evidence, and within the structures of adapted versions of association inspired by the Greco-Roman world, as the tesserae indicate, and at the same time, it was adapted to the overall structure of the Roman Empire. The tesserae give unique insight into attempts at individualisation within the scope of a highly structured religious framework based on an organisation run by Palmyrene priests, who all were members of the Palmyrene elite.

This contribution has examined and discussed how the Palmyrene banqueting tesserae were most likely introduced at a certain point in the development of the religious life of Palmyra, and how they express a certain type of individuality that emerged out of the physical structuring of Palmyrene religious life, which also limited individuality. It has also been shown how Palmyrene priests were situating themselves, visually at least, on the same level as the deities depicted on

the tesserae. The importance of holding a Palmyrene priesthood was underlined through the use of the visual language repertoire and each priest was singled out of the group of Palmyrene priests through the individual depiction on the tesserae. Furthermore, this paper has addressed the specific religious experiences and communicative efforts that were related to the tesserae; it has been shown how these objects contributed to reframing the religious banquet – which was a common ritual in ancient Mediterranean religions, but which took on a specific character in Palmyra – by placing the donor of the banquet on the same item as the deity who was celebrated at the event. Finally, the structure of Palmyrene religious life has been outlined, and it has been shown that the religious banquet limited the degrees of individualisation. In other words, the type of individualisation visible within the framework of the Palmyrene material was both facilitated and constrained by the material, namely the tesserae themselves.

Appendix

List of Illustrations



Fig. 1: Tessera (I.N. 3198) obverse in two registers. The upper register represents the god Sams/Malakbel between two busts of priests. The lower register shows a central signet seal with bust flanked by two Medusa busts. The tessera measures 3 cm in length, 2.7 cm in height and is 0.7 cm thick. (photo: Rubina Raja, courtesy of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen)



Fig. 2: Tessera (I.N. 3198) reverse depicting reclining Palmyrene priest. The inscription in Palmyrene Aramaic reads: '[Moqi]mu Zebid[a] Hai[ran]', which was the name of the priest. Measurements: same as above. (photo: Rubina Raja, courtesy of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen)

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Martin Fuchs

Self-affirmation, self-transcendence and the relationality of selves: the social embedment of individualisation in *bhakti*

Bhakti stands out by providing possibilities of religious individualisation not only for a select few, but, in principle, for everyone. The phenomenon of *bhakti* provides avenues and openings, of which women and marginalised people could also avail themselves. At the same time, *bhakti* individualisation is an inherently relational affair.

Bhakti can be characterised as an experience of self-affirmation, ‘(self-)transcendence’ and connectedness, connectedness at one and the same time with the Ultimate Divine and with other humans. In a nutshell, and running the danger of over-generalisation, *bhakti* can be understood as representing a devotional as well as participatory approach to the Divine (Pechilis 2012¹). Its individualising potential lies in both the recognition of one’s individual particularity and dignity and the possibility of finding one’s own way of self-expression. Particularly characteristic for *bhakti* is the emphasis laid on the relational aspects of human experience, manifested in (imageries of) continual interactions with the Divine, or the Divine’s representative, and with other *bhaktas* (i.e. ‘devotees’). To the extent that these inner social dynamics open up alternative experiential spaces, the articulations of *bhaktas* from among the socially excluded or disadvantaged provide a special window on these dynamics and will help better understand the dialectics of social (non-)recognition.

Bhakti marks an extremely broad field, with regard to its social, historical and geographical as well as experiential and spiritual scope. Talking of *bhakti* relates to a multifarious ensemble of attitudes, practices, experiences and articulations, the emphases differing from case to case. ‘*Bhakti*’ does not represent ‘a’ religion, or ‘a’ denomination, but stands for traditions and structures of modalities of practice and articulation as found within various, not always clearly demarcated (and demarcable) religious contexts known under the labels of ‘Hinduism’ and ‘Sikhism’, but also ‘Buddhism’ and ‘Jainism’, and arguably similarly

¹ See also below.

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within various Sufi contexts.² One can characterise *bhakti* as one strand, or path – *mārga* – beside, and interacting with, other spiritual and ritual strands and paths, to which *bhakti* relates and with which *bhakti* practitioners interact (Fuchs 2018). *Bhakti* has a reported existence of around two thousand years.³ The other strands include those that put ritual into the centre (*karma*), as also the path of knowledge (*jñāna*), the path of world-renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*-hood, *vairāgya*), and the tantric path of normative reversal, especially in the *nāth* form – aside from the large field of folk and tribal religiosities in India. Various schools of *bhakti* fostered (sometimes close) linkages with specific philosophical schools.⁴ At the same time, strings of *bhakti* also stand, or stood, in close exchange with phenomenologically comparable experiential modes of different heritage, especially Nath and, as indicated, Sufi (*Šūfi*) practices.

The article, taking overall a comparative perspective, will try to do justice to the major forms of *bhakti*. It addresses the (sociological) question of institutionalisation of *bhakti* modes of individualisation in reference to *bhakti*'s inner social dynamics. It reads these as expressions of alternative *Weltbeziehungen*, i.e. relationships with, in and to the world. We can understand these relationships and the inner dynamics of *bhakti* only when we look closely into individual cases.⁵ On the other hand, it is of equal relevance to get a clear understanding of *bhakti* as a phenomenon, or better, a family of phenomena, at large and as one key to the historical dynamics of the evolving Indian civilisation.

What I discuss is what I consider the phenomenological core of *bhakti*. Obviously, as indicated, *bhakti* phenomena cannot in every case be strictly demarcated from other religious forms and strands. But they can be pinned down or earmarked. This then also allows identifying individual or private *bhakti* practices even while these presuppose inter-subjective communal practices.

2 Regarding Jainism, see John Cort 2002. A particularly interesting case of, at the same time affirmative and critical, Jain engagement with *bhakti* is that of Banarsidas (1586–1643) discussed in this publication, Part 3, by Rahul Parson. Hans Harder (2011) points to the *bhakti* elements in texts recited by Majjbandari Sufis in the Chittagong region of Bangla Desh. Anne Murphy (this publication, Section 1.2) describes religious spaces in the case of Punjab shared by Sufi and Nath Yogi as well as *bhakti* ideas, practices and traditions.

3 Some scholars push the first appearances of *bhakti* ideas and practices even further back in time, pointing out traces in the *Upaniṣads* (*Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara*) or, still earlier, in the *Yajurveda* (Prentiss 1999, 18; Pechilis 2011).

4 These involve *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, *Bhedābheda* and *Dvaitādvaita* in the case of *Vaiṣṇavite* forms of *bhakti*, and arguments with, and adaptations of, *Advaita Vedānta* in the case of *Śaivite* forms (including Shaiva Siddhanta).

5 Cf. especially Fuchs (ed.) forthcoming (a).

And a last preliminary remark: *Bhakti* is not just a phenomenon of the past. The sources of *bhakti* have not dried up. New *bhakti* sects kept emerging well into the 19th and 20th centuries.⁶ In our days, *bhakti* also provides a core ingredient to many of the contemporary global or cosmopolitan ‘Guru’ movements, providing a source of egalitarian and even ecumenical impulses (Lucia 2014; cf. Fuchs forthcoming (b)).

1 Prefix: recognising *bhakti*: a history of scholarly interpretations

The difficulties in categorising *bhakti* are reflected in the history of its study and reception. Outside India, but also in certain circles within India, *bhakti* was long regarded as non-classical. Most of *bhakti* literature – predominantly poems and songs – was composed in the so-called ‘vernaculars’, i.e. the (historically) actually spoken languages, and only partially in the language of prestige, higher knowledge and ritual – in short the language of refinement or ‘high culture’, i.e. Sanskrit. Moreover, a comparatively large number of *bhakti* poets hailed from non-elite backgrounds, and thus were not deemed ‘knowledgeable’, and they addressed the wider ‘non-educated’ public. The poem-songs were and are frequently performed in the company of people from various walks of life, including lower castes as well as women.

During the 19th into the 20th century prominent western scholars showed a disregard, if not strong disdain, of *bhakti* and expressed this with strong words. Max Weber’s (1978 [1921]) statements about *bhakti* had a highly pejorative overtone. He specifically excluded from this judgement only the *Bhagavadgītā*, which for him represented the position of intellectuals. This disdain was so strong in his case that it superseded Weber’s own contrary insights into the emancipatory moments and universalistic potential of *bhakti*. Louis Dumont (1980 [1960]) too saw *bhakti* as an incongruous element in the context of his so well-structured concept of the Indian value system and normative order – an ideal type of hierarchy –, and this exactly because *bhakti* allows for salvation for everybody and *from within*

⁶ Including, as a more orthodox sect, ISKCON, popularly known as ‘Hare Krishna movement’, founded in 1966 in New York. Other more recent and prominent collective forms of *bhakti* comprise Mahimā (Alekh) Dharma, founded in the 1860s, and the teachings of its best-known preceptor Bhima Bhoi (c. 1850–1895), and the Rādhāsoāmi Satsaṅg, also founded in the 1860s, with its two major branches.

social life.⁷ On the other hand, in the later part of the 19th century many Christian, especially Protestant missionaries started making a volte-face (Oddie 2006), and began to see *bhakti* in a new light, as a step towards monotheism. They highlighted the notion of divine grace, which they considered to be comparable to grace in Christian reformation contexts. The missionaries of course did so in an attempt of tapping Hinduism for a Christian conversion project. This was accompanied by the speculations of some Indologists who too saw parallels between certain, particularly *Vaiṣṇava* and *Sikh*, forms of *bhakti* and Christianity. Starting with George Grierson (1851–1941), who spoke of the ‘Bhagavata reformation of the Middle Ages’, and the establishment of the ‘Sikhism as reformation’ trope in the 19th century, this extended to the point of identifying Krishna with Christ in the case of Albrecht Weber and others, including claims of a Christian origin of Krishna and even of the notion of divine grace (Max Weber 1978, 22f; Dalmia 1997, 391f.).⁸

In India at the same time, *bhakti* poetry received a new kind of attention in the context of projects of self-ascertainment – in German: *Selbstvergewisserung* – and self-assertion vis-à-vis colonialism. Still vivid traditions, many regional variants of *bhakti* received fresh validation in the context of 19th/20th century proto-national regional (linguistic) and trans-regional movements of cultural affirmation. Mahadeo Govind Ranade (1842–1901) drew parallels between *bhakti* ‘reforms’ and the Protestant Reformation in Europe (Hawley 2015, 29). Bharatendu Harishchandra of Benares (1850–1885) aimed beyond the regional context and posited *Vaiṣṇava bhakti* as ‘the original and all pervasive religious mode of the country’, India’s true and eternal, or *sanātana dharma* (Dalmia 1997, 374, 390). The modern Indian revaluation of *bhakti* in the 1930s went so far as to make *bhakti* a cornerstone of a full-fledged nationalist agenda, in the shape of the veneration of the home country – *deś bhakti*. Devotion to the nation was regarded as the endpoint of *bhakti*’s evolution and fulfilment of its mission. According to this narrative, *bhakti* was seen as the completion of a movement that, starting with the Āḷvārs (or Āzhvārs; Vaiṣṇavites) and Nāyanārs (Śaivites) in the Southeast of India, in Tamil Nadu, in the 5th century CE, progressed northwards via Karnataka and Maharashtra in the West of the subcontinent, and, while branching off into Andhra and Gujarat, finally (in the 15th to 17th centuries) reached the

7 For a critique of Weber’s and Dumont’s treatments of *bhakti* see Fuchs 1988, 2016, 2017b and 2018. The English translation of Weber’s study on Indian society and religions (Weber 1958) is unfortunately highly unreliable.

8 Grierson termed *Vaiṣṇava bhakti* ‘the greatest religious revolution that India has ever seen’ (Grierson 1910, quoted in Hawley 2015, 34; also Dalmia 1997, 401ff.; specifically critical Krishna Sharma 1987). Regarding the establishment of the ‘Sikhism as reformation’ trope see Ballantyne 2006, ch. 2 and p. 165.

North, the Hindi- (and earlier Hindavi/Braj-)speaking area regarded as the hub of modern India (Hazari Prasad Dvivedi), together with the Punjab, Kashmir, the Northeast, Bengal and Assam (Hawley 2015, ch. 1 and 2).⁹ In its wake scholars started re-discovering the emancipatory, egalitarian and even rebellious dimensions of certain strands of *bhakti*, especially, but not only, from the side of women and low-caste poets. Talk was of *bhakti* as movement(s) of protest, representing subaltern voices and expressing sometimes radical social critique (Ramanujan 1973; Omvedt 2003; 2008; 2012; Zelliott, Mokashi-Punekar (eds.) 2005; Bhagavan, Feldhaus (eds.) 2008; and others). In opposition to this, some leading Marxist historians, like D. D. Kosambi (1962, 31f.), R. S. Sharma (1974) and Ranajit Guha (1983, 18; 1989, 257ff.), considered *bhakti* a social ideology of feudalism, signifying passivity and subordination.¹⁰

What thus seemed dominant for a long time was the attempt to avail oneself of *bhakti* for various external, including ideological and political, purposes, driven by agendas that themselves did not necessarily do full justice to the specific milieu and the ambience of *bhakti*. Or, alternatively, as was the case with Weber and Dumont, to discredit *bhakti* since it did not fit into agendas of comparison of civilisations and world-religions, and thus keep Indian religions, and India more generally, in a pre-configured niche of stalled development and failed rationalisation. Interestingly however, there is one earlier narrative, a kind of second-order self-objectification of *bhakti*, which seems to support some of these constructions. A 17th century Sanskrit text, the *Bhāgavata Māhātmya*, provides an allegorical narrative of *bhakti* and its voyage across the Indian subcontinent. Depicted as a goddess, born in the South, traveling through the length and breadth of India, Bhakti finally reached the Yamuna and Vrindavan as an old woman and in a state of exhaustion, but there, at the centre of Krishna *bhakti*, she felt revived and turned into a young woman again.¹¹ This parable of *bhakti* furthermore includes a reference to Jñāna and Vairāgya, the two other religious paths of knowledge and renunciation, which are depicted as Bhakti's sons, who travelled with her and became even weaker than Bhakti herself, and it was *she* who had to nurse them back to life. Knowledge and renunciation are being made into dependents of *bhakti*! We thus find a clear sense of the significance of *bhakti*

⁹ The first vigorous critique of the idea of a monolithic *bhakti* movement came from Krishna Sharma (1987).

¹⁰ For a critique of the Marxist historians see K. Sharma 1987, 29ff. However, Kosambi (1962, 33f.), immediately after calling *bhakti* 'the basic need in feudal ideology', underlines the critique of casteism, starting in the 12th and 13th centuries respectively, by both the *Mahānubhāva* and the *Vārkaṛī bhakti* movements.

¹¹ See the summary of this narrative in Hawley 2015, 62ff.

and a clear awareness of the sub-continental linkages and movements back in the 17th century, however without attending to any nationalist or socialist or other externally driven agenda. At the time of its composition the *Māhātmya* was rather meant to sing the greatness of the *Bhagavata Purāṇa*, the most revered Vaiṣṇava text, and thus of Krishna and his *bhakti*. John Hawley speculates that this might have been connected with an attempt at reasserting Brahmin control over *Bhagavata Purāṇa* performances that had proliferated in northern India since the 16th century.¹²

What then 'is' *bhakti*? One aspect that the socio-analytical attempts at framing *bhakti* from the outside share is that they tend to point to *the normative and attitudinal dimensions* of *bhakti*, and in this sense they contain kernels of truth. For me though this confirms that *bhakti* requires a different approach, an approach that explores the *bhakti* phenomena from within their own frames of reference, that focuses on the articulations of *bhakti*, on the life-worlds of *bhaktas*, and on the forces driving its practitioners.

In recent years, starting slowly in the 1980s and 1990s, scholars in the fields of Religious Study, History and Anthropology have begun exploring *bhakti* afresh, trying out new approaches. Many of these new approaches have been informed by a focus on social praxis and cultural practices, have pursued interpretive strategies that shed the limitations of old-style philology, and focus on the positionalities of social actors and on modes of performance. Moreover, many place themselves in the context of a kind of critical theory, taken in a wide sense of the term. Taken together, I think one could see this as a kind of anthropological and phenomenological turn of *bhakti* studies.

Perhaps it was no coincidence that this process of re-focusing occurred at a point in time at which the approach to the study of religion was put under scrutiny more generally. In my view this includes as major aspects: challenging the dichotomy of religion and secularisation; turning away from a textualist understanding of religion and from the search for a dogmatic core; and replacing this with a focus on lived religion and actual religious practices. It further involves extreme care regarding the applicability of the very concept of religion, as a comparative and thus overarching term, especially with respect to its applicability to non-Abrahamic forms; a preference for terms more open, but also more vague, like religiosity, even spirituality; critique also of the notion of religions as collective containers; and the exploration of widely neglected historical processes of religious individualisation.

¹² Cf. John Hawley (2015, 68–74). In addition, he deliberates about the cross-subcontinental linkages among Brahmin *Vaiṣṇava bhaktas*.

Bhakti, I would add from my side, actually strongly resonates with certain modes of sociological thinking that are afloat today: namely the primacy of relationality, intersubjectivity and social interaction; mirroring oneself in the other; the ability to anticipate the actions of the other, which happens reciprocally and thus constitutes sociality; situationally grounded reflexivity; the inclusion of patience and emotion in the concept of social action; and one could even include a normative dimension, as in the case of John Dewey and Bhimrao Ambedkar, specifically the centrality of free and open communication connected with mobility and based on respect (G. H. Mead 1934; Dewey 1987; 2002; Ambedkar 1989; cf. Joas 1996, esp. ch. 3.3; Pettenkofer 2010, ch. 7; 2017; Fuchs 2019). Talking of *bhakti* resonating with sociological thought is not meant to put *bhakti* into a box and classify it again from an outside position. On the contrary, what I have in mind is a concept of the social that explores the dynamics of situations and constellations from within these settings, with the perspectives and practices of the actors involved in view. What makes *bhakti* so interesting is that it is self-generating, self-propelling and self-organised. At the same time, it is *bhakti* that helps develop new sociological concepts.

2 Introduction: a reconstructive phenomenology of individualisation in *bhakti* and its institutionalisation (an overview)

Bhakti, as found across Indian regions and languages, denotes before all else an attitude of participatory devotion. This is included in the very root of the word ‘bhakti’ – the Sanskrit *bhaj*, ‘to share, partake, participate, belong to’ – and it is being continuously repeated in all writings on *bhakti* (where some, largely the older ones, emphasise devotion, and others, often more recent ones, participation (in God)).¹³ Immediately foregrounded by this meaning is the relational attitude and the aspect of praxis. The emphasis is on the direct, and actively sought relationship to, and desired potential or actual experience of, the Divine or the Ultimate Reality, on the practices involved, and on the interactions with fellow *bhaktas* and what one could call participatory congregations.

¹³ Recently it was Karen Pechilis especially (Prentiss 1999; Pechilis 2011; 2012) who put strong emphasis on the participatory dimension.

Bhakti, obviously, concerns liberation or salvation: liberation or salvation from the world as given or from the circumstances in which one finds oneself. More particularly, and this is specifically important in the Indian context, *bhakti* stands for the universal ‘right’ to, and potentiality for, salvation. Alongside this in certain cases, however, *bhakti* also stands for the wish to radically reconfigure the world. *Bhakti* is practiced while being based within the social world, in clear difference to those who seek to renounce society.¹⁴ Those pursuing a *bhakti* line of action, the *bhaktas*, attempt to build a relationship to God or to the Divine, or try to experience (the presence of) the Divine. How they do this can oscillate between two forms, by aiming for union with God or by trying to experience the Divine within oneself. This involves activity from both sides, activity of the *bhaktas* as well as the imagined activity of the Divine, or else the preparedness of *bhaktas* for the experience of the Divine, and it is embedded in a social context shared with others who all share the desire for a participatory relationship with the Divine.

The difficulty and challenge is to provide an overview of *bhakti* without becoming schematic and generalising. It is important that we retain a clear sense of the diversity and malleability and the constantly evolving character of the phenomena assembled under the label ‘bhakti’, while at the same time keeping the ability to draw conclusions of general meaning and with broad relevance.

2.1 Personages of exemplary *bhaktas*

Of central significance are the many figures of exemplary *bhaktas* – be they poet-saints, group leaders, or *gurus*. These give inspiration, create imaginary worlds, suggest a way, represent the Divine to the followers, offer specific interpretations or teachings, and have often been inventors of new practices and new conceptualisations. Devotees want others to learn from them and follow their examples, and in this sense *bhakti* stands for a ‘proselytising’ trend in Hinduism’s history. Still, the emphasis throughout is on each individual’s own efforts. The spiritual leaders, like the other *bhaktas*, can only assist or give (soteriological and moral) advice. This may include testing the sincerity of worshippers, as God himself might also do. A few more outspoken poet-saints include addressing and demurring the oppressive living conditions of the poorer sections of people. In some more rigidly organised *sampradāyas* (roughly, but somewhat misleadingly translatable as ‘sects’) lead figures may act as gatekeepers (to that particular

¹⁴ Cf. Monika Thiel-Horstmann (1989) for a slightly different emphasis.

brand of *bhakti*). The leaders of such *sampradāyas* simultaneously introduce stricter rules and try to control the (moral) conduct of their followers, from whom they may at the same time expect certain contributions and duties. It is the connection with these lead figures, poet-saints and *gurus*, incidentally, that Weber reviled in particular: He denigrated their veneration as ‘anthropolatry’, as worship of humans (Weber 1978, 351, 359, 369, comp. 159, 187; 1958, 319, 325, 335, comp. 156, 179).

We must however distinguish between different forms and aspects of *guru*-ship: To start with, there is the *guru* as individual spiritual guide or person of knowledge, with whom one interacts directly, face-to-face. Then there is the *guru* as part of a *paramparā*, i.e. as one in a row or series of *gurus* succeeding each other as teachers and disciples, following on and representing the original *guru* or the *satguru*. A *satguru* represents the highest authority in this world. In some cases this may verge on considering the *satguru* as the manifestation of the Supreme Being in human form.¹⁵ But, phenomenologically speaking, there is another, and most intriguing, dimension of *guru*-ship, the *guru* as a name.

It is this last manifestation of *guru*-ship that warrants special attention.¹⁶ This concerns especially those lead figures whom we call poet-saints, and refers to the time after their death. On the one hand, it is a process of memorialisation that keeps them alive. In a way, it is the community in this case that participates in conceiving the individual personality of the lead figure. The community, which actually exists only when people congregate, takes the name and the writings of a poet-saint, i.e. the poems and songs connected to his or her name, as reference and shared identity. What this usually means is that the singers of such a ‘community’ keep on composing poems not just in the style and genre used by the *guru*, but also under the name of the originating figure – a special form of pseudonymous writing. The *guru* lives on in and as memory, communally redacted (Sangari forthcoming). This form of institutionalised continuity is found in particular in the *sant*¹⁷ traditions in the North and, partly, Maharashtra, but also in the cases

15 Cases would include Vallabhacharya (1479–1531), Swaminarayan (1781–1830), but in the eyes of many also for example Kabir (c. 1440–1518), and many others.

16 See especially Sangari forthcoming.

17 As a classic on the *sants* see Schomer and McLeod (eds., 1987), including Charlotte Vaudeville’s articles. ‘Derived from Sanskrit *sat* (“truth”, “reality”)’ the root meaning of the term *sant* is “one who knows the truth” or “one who has experienced Ultimate Reality” (Schomer 1987, 2). By extension the term can refer to those who seriously seek enlightenment. The designation *sant* has been given to the poet-saints of two distinct *bhakti* traditions, the non-sectarian *Vaiṣṇava* poet-saints of Maharashtra of the 13th to 18th century, devotees of the god Vitthala or Vithoba, and the North Indian poet-saints from the 15th century onwards representing a largely *nirguṇa* conception of the Supreme Being, i.e. the Divine without qualities. Regarding *nirguṇa* see also below.

of Mirabai, the most famous Northern Indian female poet-saint (c. 1498–1546), and Surdas (c. 1478/1483–1561/1584), both *bhaktas* of Krishna, as well as others.¹⁸

2.2 Articulations of *bhakti*

At its core, *bhakti* is communication: symbolic, but before all else practical, communication. The prime mode of articulation of *bhakti* is oral – addressing other *bhaktas*, or all contemporaries around, and addressing God, and even ‘one’s own heart’ (Cutler 1987, 25). Vocal expression, however, cannot be separated from bodily and performative expressions, especially music and dance, communally shared (Novetzke 2008, ch. 2; Pechilis 2012, ch. 5). The significance of performative modes, however, differs widely. Recitation, narration, explanation, singing, dance, dramatisation, procession, worship, ritual and the role of visual elements, at people’s residential places or at important religious centres (like temples and *gurudwārās*), are combined in different ways in different *bhakti* traditions. To this should be added the role of figurative and other physical representations, as well as objectifications of memories of the past, in form of *mūrtis* (images or statues in *saguna bhakti*; see below) and sacred sites (sometimes extended sacred landscapes), or material symbols of *gurus*, as well as other material objects and practices (Murphy 2012, 30 et passim, especially with respect to the Sikh tradition). In their regular transactions, especially the northern *sant* traditions tend to focus on textual expression and chanting.

The common modes of verbal expression, across all forms of *bhakti*, are poems and songs, especially poems sung and performed. While states of suffering (from God’s absence) and longing (for the experience of the Divine/Ulimate) can be very individualised, it is the *sharing* of feelings, expectations and experiences with others – ‘publicly’, as Christian Novetzke calls it (Novetzke 2008) – in the form of *satsaṅgs* (‘gathering together for the truth’), and *kīrtans* (a kind of call-and-response style performance, but with wide regional variations), that stands out. Many of these modes of expression are still practised today.

One finds a wide range of regional poetic genres, some invented just for *bhakti* purposes.¹⁹ The languages employed are the local or regional languages

¹⁸ For Mirabai and Kabir, see especially Sangari 1990 and Hawley 2005. Hawley also includes Surdas.

¹⁹ These include *abhaṅg* and *ovī* (both in Marathi), *vacana* (in Kannada), *pada/sabda*, *sākhī/dohā* (in Hindi), *kīrtan* (from Sanskrit; a call-and-response style song, ubiquitously used, but regionally varying), *bhārūd* (in Marathi; allegorical drama-poems) etc.

spoken at the time of composition by ‘ordinary’ people. And these are still more or less understood today. Sanskrit is used in specific cases and in second-order reflections and elaborations. *Bhakti* poems and songs call on God, as they address people, both other *bhaktas* as well as those not (yet) committed; but the poems are not didactic. They employ a wide diversity of modalities – they often express emotions, especially emotions of longing and love for God, or they can display arguments (even bitter complaint) with God, or with other *bhaktas*.²⁰ The poems and songs play with numerous images and metaphors, and *saguna* texts (see below) especially allude to Puranic Hindu mythologies. They express the availability of these feelings and experiences for everyone. Especially the texts of the *sant* poets often assert humanitarian values and ideas regarding human dignity, sometimes attacking core social as well as religious norms. They pronounce critique of the established ‘external’ religion, particularly of empty ritualism, reliance on scripture, the conceit of religious functionaries, and, directly or indirectly, of exclusionary and hierarchical attitudes and socio-ritualistic ostracism (exemplary: Kabir, c. 1440–1518, whose criticism is directed both at Brahmanical religion and institutionalised Islam).

Others, especially women *bhaktas*, express their love of God by rejecting and infringing the social norms that bind them, reversing common rules of modesty (e.g. Mahadeviyakka, 12th century; Lalla Ded, 14th century). Throughout there are references to other religious practices and other religious strands, practices and traditions expressing other religious attitudes which *bhaktas* oppose. But poems might also seize on concepts and metaphors extracted from other strands, including ritual practices, *tantra* (Naths), or traditions of renunciation. And they pick up aesthetic principles and philosophical concepts generally available. Many poems are highly inventive, and some deliberately turn the ordinary world upside-down, employing particularly enigmatic language and taking imaginary licence, as in the case of Kabir’s *ulaṭbāmsī* language (Hess, Singh 1983), or in the case of Karaikkal Ammaiyar, a devotee of Shiva (c. 550 CE), who at her own behest transformed from a beautiful woman into a demoness, identified with the ghouls inhabiting the cremation grounds, and whose poems consciously make use of tantric imageries (Chakravarty 1989; for both cf. Fuchs 2017a).

20 Concerning the love for God, *bhakti* traditions envisioned love variously and in analogy to sentiments in relationships between humans, in the form of servant-master, parental, friendship or erotic relationships, shifting between more peaceful or more ecstatic understandings of the relationship. Cf. e.g. Malinar 2015, 404f.

Examples of *bhakti*, and stories of exemplary *bhaktas*, have been collated in various (regional) collections of biographies or hagiographies²¹ (like the *Periya Purāṇam*, the 12th century account of the lives of the 63 Nāyanārs; Anantadas' late 16th century hagiographies of (*sant*) *bhaktas*; and Nabhadās' early 17th century *Bhaktamāla* with Priyadas' 1712 commentary, the *Bhaktirasabodhinī*), or in the form of narrations of major episodes in a (*sat*-)guru's life as well as those of his followers (like the 13th century *Līlācaritra* of the Mahanubhavas, or the 17th century *Chaurāsi Vaiṣṇavan kī Vārtā* of the Vallabhacharyas). In addition there are literary-metaphysical and mythological-legendary texts extolling *bhakti*, some of which have generated a chain of commentary literature, as well as philosophical-metaphysical treatises. The most famous text of the first category is the *Bhagavata Purāṇa* (8th–10th century), especially its tenth book on Krishna and his *līlā*, his (erotic) play with his followers; the most famous of the second category is the *Bhagavadgītā* (c. 2nd century BCE). Both were composed in Sanskrit, but especially the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* has many versions in other languages. The *Gītā* was first made accessible for non-elite and non-Sanskrit speakers through Jnandev's late 13th century pioneering and highly praised Marathi commentary known as *Jñāneśvarī* (Novetzke forthcoming). The *Gītā* provides the first systematic exposition of *bhakti*; however the *Gītā* is not exhausted by its *bhakti* elements. It seems noteworthy though that the *Gītā* itself is constructed as conversation: conversation between God and *bhakta*, Krishna and Arjuna.

2.3 Conceptualisations of the divine and of human-divine relationships

How *bhaktas* conceive of, and address, the Divine (or the Ultimate Reality) differs, but the different modalities fall within a certain spectrum of direct accessibility and experience. Important throughout is to take into account the difference between experience, and more generally 'religious sensibility' (Vaudeville 1987a, 38), and the doctrinal or metaphysical level. It is standard practice to distinguish between *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* conceptions of the Divine: the conception of the Supreme Being with or without qualities. Seemingly excluding each other, they can be taken as standing for two levels of enlightenment when seen from a doctrinal angle. Looked at from the angle of experiential sensibilities, and taking the ways dimensions of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* find expression in poems and songs, they can appear as co-present in the renderings given by even authorial figures,

²¹ See Pechilis' critique of this term in Pechilis forthcoming.

each modal change exhibiting a shift in expressing the experience of the Divine. Or they can be seen as a way to express the tension as well as shift between presence (actuality) and absence (beyond-ness) of the Divine (Murphy 2012, 29).²² In a *saguna* perspective one conceives of God analogously to how one conceives of another person, and this means, however close one gets to him or her, there always remains a final difference (*viraha*), which affirms God's beyond-ness. The Divine as presented in songs and poems with a penchant for *saguna* is predominantly referenced as a form of Shiva or as a Vaiṣṇavite deity, i.e. as a form of Krishna or Ram. In addition, there is *bhakti* of Devi or Kali or other manifestations of the female principle (McDaniel 2004).

In *nirguna bhakti* the Divine is conceived as formless, non-personal, ineffable, all-pervading reality, as something 'which can only be spoken of in negative terms' (Vaudeville 1987a, 26). Still, and this aligns *nirguna* with *saguna bhakti*, the goal is union with, rather than merging into the formless God (ibid., 27). *Viraha* taken from this angle refers to the unfulfilled desire to experience the Divine, or to the utter momentariness of such experience. Whereas *saguna* practices represent God by both 'individual' name and form (*nāma-rūpa*), from the angle of *nirguna* the Divine is addressed in abstract terms, by the non-specific word *nāma* ('name'), by the generic *Rāma*, or some other appellations. Uttering the generic name, or concentrating on the name, however, is seen as of utmost importance in *nirguna* contexts. Both strands 'hold the conviction that God is infinitely merciful and that he will, whenever he chooses, remove the veil of darkness [...] and grant the bliss of eternal union with himself' (ibid., 38).²³

It is thus that many poems and songs relate to experiences – *anubhava* and *anubhāva* ('the' experience²⁴) –, trying to put into words what cannot be caught in words.

²² Sikh *gurus* ultimately undermine the distinction between the two positions or strands (Anne Murphy, personal communication). Other cases in which the distinction is not consistently working concern the North-Indian poet-saints Kabir (fragments of *saguna* devotion in Kabir's *nirguna* conceptualisation of God), Mirabai (fragments of a *nirguna* idea of God in Mirabai's basically *saguna* devotion; for both see Sangari 1990, 1472, 1543f.) and even Surdas (Hawley 2005, 14f., 73, 305–17), as well as the historically earlier Western Indian poet-saint Namdev (ibid., 75). Few scholars would today hold to the quite rigid distinction between the two modalities for which a scholar like K. Sharma (1987) stands.

²³ In Vaudeville's view the opposition between *saguna* and *nirguna* is one largely on the 'doctrinal or metaphysical plane, but on that plane only'. She claims that '[i]n their religious sensibility as well as in their ethical views Sants [who stand for a *nirguna* approach] and Vaiṣṇavas [who stand for *saguna*] remain very close to each other' (Vaudeville 1987a, 39).

²⁴ Ramanujan 1973, 13. – Regarding *anubhava* among Jains, compare Rahul Parson in this publication, in particular regarding the views of Banarasidas (1586–1643) and his 'occasionally competitive' relationship with *bhakti*.

But practising participatory devotion is also intended to trigger new experiences. Its performance is itself experiential. Moreover, the participatory dimension extends to the other *bhaktas* with whom one shares ‘spiritual’ interests or a community built around these shared interests. At the same time, and against this very background, with this communality as resource, *bhakti* can also be practised individually.

2.4 Institutionalisation of *bhakti*

Bhaktas create their own congregational forms, forms of ‘voluntary affiliation’ (Sangari forthcoming). This needs special mention with respect to doubts, voiced by scholars of comparative religion, that Indic religions ever managed to develop something like community life and forms of brotherliness among lay followers.²⁵ While congregational assemblies can become formally institutionalised, it seems especially pertinent that many congregational gatherings remain informal and self-organised. These congregations may supersede and destabilise, but importantly, do not cancel out the ‘primal’ communities people socially belong or are assigned to; these in particular include caste. Again, one should not generalise. Congregational forms range from simply addressing others and addressing God through communal singing of *bhajans* in non-formal assemblages, to various forms of *satsaṅgs*, to participation at performances, and to pilgrimages – the most famous being the annual group pilgrimages of the *Vārkarīs* in Maharashtra, which involve joint travel, ideally by walking, over an extended stretch of time, inclusive of regular collective singing, and often joint evening meals. Some *sant bhaktas*, like Kabir, on the other hand actively opposed pilgrimage. There also are temple festivals, especially prominent in the South, combining *bhakti* with Brahmanical ritualism (Pechilis 2012). More standardly, group fellowships formed around a (*sat*-) *guru* often led to the emergence of *sampradāyas*, denominations or sects, in various *bhakti* branches, the *Vārkarīs* being only one. Others include the Shrivaiṣṇavas, *Gauḍiṃya sampradāyas*, Vallabhacharyas or Pushtimargis, Swaminarayanis, Lingayats, Shaiva Siddhanta *sampradāyas*, Kabirpanthis, Raidasis, Ad Dharmis, Satnamis, and Sikhism, as well as many smaller ones. Regarding all these forms, one has to keep in mind the extremely diverse social backgrounds of *bhaktas*, as well as the variations in habitus – all this in the context of very different regional histories.

And, finally, there is the aspect of *sevā* (‘service’, *Dienst*): individual *sevā* to the Lord and, secondarily, *sevā* to other humans, other *bhaktas* or, in some *sampradāyas*, most prominently in Sikhism, to people in general. *Sevā* means

25 According to Max Weber (1978, 63), ‘the Hinduistic religion as such’ does not know ‘congregations’.

‘voluntary manual labor in service of the community [...] [and] a deed of love and selfless service for fellow human beings’.²⁶ *Sevā*, then, by this understanding, is fundamental for the obliteration of ego-centredness (in the Sikh context referred to by the term *haumai*) (Murphy forthcoming).

Continuity in *bhakti*, i.e. carrying and passing on practices and conceptualisations, may then happen in different ways.²⁷ It can mean institutional continuity of a sect or *sampradāya* involving admission rituals (*dīkṣā*). It can mean continuity of a trans-regionally important religious centre (Braj-Mathura-Vrindavan) or a site of pilgrimage (Pandharpur). Institutional continuity can also relate to the canonisation of a series or ‘family’ of poets, as in the case of the Āḷvārs and Nāyanārs in Tamil Nadu, or regarding the list of notable Lingayats in Karnataka, the *vārkārī sants* in Maharashtra, or the genealogy of the ten original Sikh *gurus*. In a different way other poet-saints establish regional interlinkages by cross-referencing each other’s poetry and perspectives (most famously among the North Indian *sants*, including the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* of the Sikhs). And finally, as we saw, institutional continuity can mean carrying on with a name, and this not just by venerating the name of a particular *guru*, but also and prominently by continuing composing using his or her name as ‘signature name’,²⁸ by, more or less, reproducing his or her style of writing, and by continuing a tradition of performing and singing in his or her name.²⁹ What holds such tradition, a mere body of stories and poems and mnemonic (performative) practices, together is then the respective name (Sangari forthcoming). In these cases, it is the local singers who continue, but also add to, the corpus which in this way is simultaneously changing.

The continuity in composing shows the *availability* of poems and songs for everyone. People may for example cite or sing songs attributed to Kabir on various occasions, like when they are working, in the fields or elsewhere. And this means,

26 Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *Sikhism: An Introduction* (London/NY: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 86, as quoted by Anne Murphy (forthcoming).

27 What I refer to here is being expressed in German by the word *tradieren* – i.e. *weiterführen*, *weitergeben*. This of course relates to ‘tradition’, but the emphasis here is on the act and process of carrying and passing on certain practices and thus establishing ‘a’ line of tradition.

28 Signature name (in Hindi *chāp* – seal, or *bhañitā* – speaker) as affirmation of the claim of authorship.

29 One might here make a linkage to Shahzad Bashir’s argument in Section 2.2 in this publication, who depicts the poetic selves displayed in Taqi al-Din Awhadi Balyani’s *‘Arafāt al-‘āshiqīn* as both individualistic (‘individualistic through emphatic self-assertion’) and dividualistic (‘dividualistic through the presumption of an identity shared across humanity’: the first-person voice indexing universality and projecting intimacy ‘while being emphatically impersonal in that it is bound to a genre that does not allow for a free relationship between voice and person’).

aside from keeping a communal practice alive and going, that this religious mode also allows for everyone's individual practice of *bhakti* anywhere, anytime.

All of this implies that the oral traditions are usually much broader and at the same time more diverse than what has been put down and passed on in writing. Canonisation of texts happened in some *bhakti* traditions of more closed character, and this in some cases already at a very early stage. Several collections of hagiographies were already mentioned. Some cut across *sampradāya* distinctions or specific spiritual allegiances, like the *Bhaktamāla*. To this one can add anthologies, like the 9th/10th century *Divya Prabandham* collection of songs of the Āṭvārs; the *Tirumurai* collection of poems of the Nāyanārs, finalised in the 12th century; the Sikh *Gurū Granth Sāhib* (17th/18th century), and similar ones of other, smaller *sant bhakti* sects, like the *Gurū Anyās* of the Shivnarayanis (18th century), as well as the competing anthologies of Kabir's poems (the *Bijak* of the Kabirpanth, the *Pañcvāṇī* or *Granthāvalī* of the Dadupanth, and the Kabir songs in the *Gurū Granth*), which also include poems written by later adherents of Kabir.

From a comparative angle, what seems impressive is the great variability and versatility of this religious strand that allows for ever new articulations under changing circumstances and for the emergence of new possibilities. Institution-alisation happened in various ways and on various levels – practical, interactional, literary as well as organisational – differing in form and intensity in each case. This includes of course occasional closures and moments or processes of de-individualisation – and *a fortiori* the re-emergence of social exclusion – but no overall closure. Not only did *bhakti* retain the capacity of new inventions of new ways – and this did not even stop with (late) modernity –,³⁰ *bhakti* also kept on relying on the active involvement of individual *bhaktas*.

3 Intermediate: universal recognition and the limitations of critical alterity (in *bhakti*)

Bhakti represents an opening, spiritually and socially, concerning experiential articulation, and concerning possibilities of participation. Enunciations by the disadvantaged provide a particular window on the dynamics of *bhakti*. What stands out in the textual traditions is the attention accorded to 'lay' people, their strong presence in congregational publics, and actually the space created for

³⁰ Early modernity had actually seen a new flourishing of *bhakti* in Northern India (Dalmia, Faruqui (eds.) 2014). For examples of more recent, 19th and 20th century *bhakti* 'sects' see above fn. 6.

their articulations. At least some of the *bhaktas* who became renowned are shown turning against religious functionaries who claim control or exclusivity of access to the Divine. This means, *bhakti* does provide for those excluded or marginalised the possibility to express their religiosities in a mainstream (which does not have to mean dominant) idiom, different from local, village, or group-specific cults. This has two implications. It allows for Dalit and low caste enunciations in an idiom shared with others, a *third idiom* that transcends the limitations of conflicting positions or discourses and that, on principle, is not owned by any one side (Fuchs 2001, 266; 2009, 31). *Bhakti* provides spaces, platforms, languages which give individual *bhaktas* from excluded and marginalised backgrounds, as well as women *bhaktas*, wider recognition and lets them appear as included – in performative contexts and gatherings as well as in anthologies, canonical hagiographies or other lists of prominent *bhaktas*. Put differently, the specific experiences and visions of the marginalised as well as of women, suffering from discrimination of different degrees, can thus be translated into a language that allows appealing to others and conveying one's existential issues to the world – the issues and visions thus being universalised (issues and visions lose, to some extent at least, their 'particularistic' character).

On the other hand, this development does not necessarily signify interaction across social divides beyond the realm of spiritual practices, or the translation of a shared perspective on life into a joint social agenda transcending social distinctions. While one consequence, a kind of secondary wave of *bhakti*, thus is the advance of distinct articulations of *bhakti* from among the marginalised and stigmatised (but not of women) in the form of separate socio-religious movements, these represent only disadvantaged sections of society, but continue to employ the universalistic language, the third idiom, provided by *bhakti* (e.g. the Kabirpanth, Satnampanth, Ad Dharm, and other *sampradāyas*; Lorenzen 1987; Dube 1998; Juergensmeyer 1982; cf. Fuchs 1999).

Even though the degree of social recognition in and through *bhakti* remains limited, *bhakti* is a confirmation of the fact that some generalised recognition of human dignity was felt required – and this even more so after the weakening and (forced) demise of Buddhism in mainland India.³¹ *Bhakti* thus depicts a propensity towards the universalisation of religious ideas and practices, of possibilities of liberation and salvation. This appears of particular relevance in a context in which caste distinctions, hierarchy and the stigmatisation of sections of people have sedimented and seem deeply ingrained in the dominant social imaginary out of which they are continuously being reaffirmed.

31 On the demise of Buddhism see the remarks below in this text.

It is this combination of opening and limiting that seems of particular significance, and again and again has had the effect of hampering the unfolding of the possibilities of religious individualisation. It is the social context that infringes on *bhakti*'s potentiality, while it remains at the same time a constant stimulus for *bhakti*. This shows in many ways. The movements triggered and led by low caste and 'Untouchable' *sants* in Northern India, like Ravidas (c. 1450–1520?), Kabir and others, including the Kabirpanth (since 16th or 17th century³²), the Satnampanth founded by Ghasidas (between 1820 and 1830), or the Ad Dharm movement (since the 1920s), mostly did not find support from among the better-off. Among the *vārkarīs*, the Untouchable saint-poet Chokhamela (between second half of the 13th century and 1338) still has largely Dalit followers only, while the non-Untouchable, but low caste Tukaram (1608–1649), after allegedly having faced rejections during his lifetime, became the most venerated of the Maharashtrian *sants*. Exceptions are few and have had no larger impact. In the case of the Bavaripanth, whose first poet-saints are considered to have been Muslims, and the eponymous founder a female Sufi (late 16th century), later generation high caste *sants* seem to have continued railing against the Brahmanical ritual order and socio-religious discrimination and thus kept this counter-culture up (Luge forthcoming). In the case of the lists of the much earlier Tamilian Āḷvārs and Nāyanārs, the inclusion of a small number of low caste *bhaktas*, like Nandanar (between 660–842 CE) or Tiruppan-Alvar (perhaps 8th to 9th century), looks like a sign of liberality, carefully orchestrated, and at the same time like an appropriation of the low caste *bhakti* voices. Friedhelm Hardy gives the example of Tiruppan-Alvar a particularly emblematic interpretation: the Untouchable, the prototypical humiliated person, represents in his eyes the exemplary human in need of redemption: '[...] metaphorically the untouchable symbolises the unliberated man's distance from Vishnu in *saṃsāra*³³: he is "outside" the realm of grace and salvation' (Hardy 1991, 149). This practice of qualified inclusion extended to the cases of women *bhaktas*, like Karaikkal Ammaiyar (c. 550 CE), Antal (10th century), or Mahadeviyakka (12th century); however taming the deviance of these women *bhaktas* was of a different kind. In comparison to the situation of *bhaktas* from 'untouchable' castes, women in comparison, overstepping rules of decency, are permitted a relatively wider scope of infringement of norms.

All this illustrates: *Bhakti* is not a stand-alone phenomenon; it is, in certain ways, 'parasitic'. *Bhakti* interacts with and depends on the existence of other religious strands and other *mārgas*. And this would be the other driving-force behind

32 Dates given differ; see Linda Hess 2009, 174.

33 Transmigration.

bhakti. The constant renewal, renovation as well as continuation of *bhakti* presupposes other (and usually dominant) modes of religiosity and other religious stances from which *bhaktas* over and again distance themselves and with which they have to find secondary accommodation, again and again.

Bhakti is not self-sufficient. *Bhakti* depends on a religious and social context within and against which it positions itself. It represents modes of individualisation that require an 'other'. It is this more or less critical, nonetheless connected, otherness that is *bhakti*'s signature. At the same time, *bhakti* extends the Indian religious imaginary in a direction that is vital, that of a pervasive universality. Extrinsically, *bhakti* means challenging as well as compromising with other strands of religiosity. Intrinsically, *bhakti* stands for the universalisation of liberation and of human dignity, for relationally based selfhood.

4 Evaluation: the *bhakti* sociology of individualisation

Bhakti is inherently and fundamentally, and intentionally, relational. *Bhakti* stands for highly dynamic participatory interactions among *bhaktas* and between *bhaktas* and the Divine. The interactions that define *bhakti* provide a model and framework of and for what can be considered exemplary social relationships (in the double Geertzian sense of model). Incorporated into the modalities of its functioning and inscribed into the visions and dispositions of *bhaktas*, this relationality allows the realm of *bhakti* to open out to the world that extends beyond the religious in the strict sense of the term. What is more, this micro-social model points towards a macro-social interconnection of Indian religions, a specific civilisational modus characterised by synchronic ruptures as well as specific modalities in which these are being tackled. In very particular ways, *bhakti* brings to life the triangularity of relationships that as such may not appear unique – the relationships between the individual *bhakta*, other *bhaktas* and the Divine – and in doing so encapsulates a particular kind of *Weltbeziehung*, of relationships with the world.³⁴

³⁴ Regarding the notion of synchronic intra-civilisational ruptures see below subchapter 6 (Final note) and Fuchs (2018, 141): 'The image of synchronic ruptures contends that the respective civilizational complexes and principles coexist in tension and that they interlace at the same time by way of the interactions of the agents and agencies involved.'

4.1 The triangle

The dynamic, interactional triangular participatory relationship between the Divine or God, saint-poet or *guru*, and the congregation of (other) *bhaktas*, is a model that allows for a wide range of instantiations. Norman Cutler (1987) may have been the first to suggest such a model, however based on the semiotics of Roman Jakobson. Emphasising the inter- and transactional dimension of this constellation, several aspects stand out: First of all, all three poles or positions, not just that of the *guru* or poet, not just that of the Divine, but also that of the more ordinary human followers, represent agentive powers³⁵; they interact with each other, act on each other, put demands on each other. Therefore, secondly, the constellation, being highly dynamic, allows for ever new arrangements – all three sides continuously interpreting each other, reacting to the others' actions, and interpenetrating each other. Thirdly, built into this interactive triangle is a structural tension between authority and reciprocity: while the humans need the Divine and the *guru*, both God and *guru* also need the human followers (God pining for the presence of the devotees; in some cases the follower is even imagined to exert power over God).³⁶ But whereas the spiritual context, through the experience of transcendence, provides for ways that this tension is lifted up to a higher unity (*Aufhebung* or sublation in the sense of Hegel), the tension lingers on in the more profane interactive contexts.

4.2 Alternative relations with the world (*Weltbeziehung*)

To spell out more concretely what the abstract model enshrines: *Bhakti* redraws the social landscape, or what has been called the relationship to and with the world – *Weltbeziehung* in German. This was not the first attempt at such redrawing, as Buddhism in particular had shown earlier. *Bhakti* and Buddhism at the core share ideas of universality of the worth and dignity of each human, as well as of intersubjectivity, empathy and care for others. But *bhakti* has shown a longer perseverance, not just because important streams of *bhakti* had been involved in combatting Buddhism (and Jainism), in particular in certain South Indian regions,³⁷ but also (and not withstanding *bhakti* elements in certain forms

³⁵ Conceiving of them as just 'audience', as Cutler does, seems too narrow.

³⁶ This applies in particular to *saguna* forms of *bhakti*, or forms bordering on *saguna*. See e.g. the case of the *bhakti* of Vitthala (Vaudeville 1987b, 224); or the case of the *Gītagovinda* (esp. song X, 8).

³⁷ *Bhakti* representatives seem to have stood at the forefront of these combats; see Champakalakshmi 2011, 23f., 64–6, 72f., 438–60.

of Buddhism and Jainism) because *bhakti* remained closely associated with what became regarded as the Brahmanically dominated Hinduistic fold. Buddhism could be, and was, exteriorised; *bhakti* was not. Rather, the oppositional or deviating stances that *bhakti* enabled, being bound to its counterparty, got at one and the same time confirmed and demarcated with the elimination of Buddhism.

We find *Weltbeziehung*, understood as relation *to* the world (an externalist stance), used by Weber in alternation with two other terms, *Welteinstellung* and *Haltung zur Welt*, attitude towards the world. Weber applied the term preferably to the attitudes of collectives, including attitudes he claimed whole civilisations to hold. He was led by the idea of *confrontation* with the world, as if social actors would be occupying an external or outsider position vis-à-vis the world, and as if the world itself would be constant, invariant and passive, independent of one's interactions with(in) the world.³⁸ The term was recently reintroduced (by Jóhann Arnason 2003, Hartmut Rosa 2016, and others, following Merleau-Ponty 1962; 1968) to relate to the way humans feel situated *in* the world and interact *with* the world, which the human subjects help co-constituting (Fuchs 2016, 225; 2017d). Taking this understanding, one can state that *bhakti* represents a distinct and unorthodox *Weltbeziehung*, or better, stands for a group of alternative *Weltbeziehungen* which share a high degree of family-resemblance (*Familienähnlichkeiten*): world relations of connectedness. In our case, this is not just about relationships towards or with or in the world, but here relationality – or connectedness – actually designates the very focus of this kind of *Weltbeziehung* – connectedness as both experienced *and* desired. The world appears less as a world of hard objects, but as personalised and inter-personal. Looking more closely, this kind of *Weltbeziehung* implies:

- (1) The phenomenal world and the transcendent intersect, the transcendent actually becoming part of the phenomenal world. Picking up a term proposed by other authors in other contexts, but giving it a specific meaning, one may speak of 'immanent transcendence', without confining transcendence to immanence. Even when in tension, both dimensions are not necessarily seen as separate spheres, but as co-present, related and continuous.³⁹ Other than *saṃnyāsins*, *bhaktas* do not attempt to leave the world.
- (2) Including the divine relationship not only implies widening, expanding and surpassing the social into the transcendental, but also means transcend-

³⁸ See the critical discussion in Fuchs (2017d).

³⁹ For Kabir for example, there exists no opposition between worldly and transcendent, inner and outer, social and spiritual (Agrawal 2009, 36; comp. Hess 2015, 361). The unbroken continuity of worldly and transcendent shows in Kabir's *ghaṭ sādhanā* (spiritual practice in the body) – without *ghaṭ sādhanā* 'social consciousness and criticism are impossible' (ibid., 37 / 362).

ing the social world *as it is*, towards a world with better social conditions. This finds expression in depictions of a utopian society like that of ‘Begampura’, the city where suffering and sorrow find no place, and where there is no exploitation (Callewaert, Friedlander 1992, 126; Omvedt 2008, 106f. et passim; Hess 2015, 373). At the minimum, this implies better relationships among each other within the respective community of *bhaktas*. The option is not one of escapism, but a change of the quality of relationships in the social world in general – even though this quest is getting blocked more often than not.

- (3) Social and religious selves are hard to separate; they belong to the same world. This finds a parallel in the modes of literary presentation and the types of narrative. The poetic articulation refers again and again to the everyday – everyday practices and social placement – and combines this with metaphysical ideas and the search for liberation. ‘The ordinary’ becomes central, and becomes the space in which (the humanised) God appears and does wonders. The ordinary becomes the site of excess; ‘the ordinary becomes excessive and (thus) extraordinary’. There is both ‘transgression’ of the ordinary, as also its ‘reconfirmation’ (Vasudha Dalmia forthcoming).
- (4) The phenomenal, social world taken in this wide sense is at the same time getting reconceptualised. Kumkum Sangari (1990) has suggested the term ‘feminisation’ for this. This term might not exhaust what is new, but can serve as a good entry point. What Sangari has in mind is an ideal that in many ways is different from the attitudes that dominate society, attitudes of dominance by force. Femaleness as ideal is meant as a ‘mode of *immersion* in the world’, and an attitude of ‘willed servitude’ to God as ‘ground for agency’, or what she calls ‘[...] a humble yet powerful subalternity’ (Sangari 1990, 1472, 1537f.). She regards this as a form of heightened reciprocity that takes ‘desire and subjection, femaleness and moral duty in its stride’. *Bhakti* offers direct salvation, ‘the intermediary position’ now belonging not to a human agent, like the husband or the Brahmin priest, ‘but to the female devotional voice’ (ibid., 1473). Femaleness thus understood and generalised becomes ‘the characteristic relation of all humans to god. God is the only male, all humans are female’ (ibid., 1538), and many male *bhaktas* have consciously adopted this attitude ‘in order to gain spiritual advantage’. Implied is the humanisation of social relationships (equal human dignity) as well as a humanisation of God.
- (5) This *Weltbeziehung* is thus to be seen as the opposite of a ‘flight from the world’, *Weltflucht* or even *Wetablehnung* in German. Flight from the world is what Indian religiosity has been made to stand for, with Max Weber as

the strongest proponent of this position within the social sciences.⁴⁰ This is being reversed from two angles: (i) Certain forms of *bhakti* at least stand for an expressly positive attitude towards the world *and* to the body.⁴¹ In this, anguish about one's separation from God, the feeling of the ultimate unattainability of the divine – *viraha* – is being combined with an intense love of God and a confirmation of one's worldly existence as a human by God. (ii) At the same time, and this concerns the second angle, *bhaktas* make an effort to connect to other humans. Hierarchy and exclusion are seen as denials of relationality. What has been termed feminisation means the *subversion of the hierarchical* and an articulation of a *desire for relationality*. The lack (or restricted existence) of connectedness to others becomes the trigger for the search of relationality. What *bhakti* thus expresses is the *reality of the potentiality of relationality*: a search for the validation of the basics of humanness.

- (6) Finally, the relations and the identities of the actors involved appear *not* to be fixed, not stable: not only is the world of *bhakti* a world of constant interaction and changing contexts, also the identities and names of the (prominent) *bhaktas* are not stabilised, but are ever freshly enacted (Sangari forthcoming⁴²). One might also describe *bhakti* as a sequence of changing states of closeness and remoteness vis-à-vis God, as shifting between being with the Divine (and with other *bhaktas*), and occupying a place and role in society. People, and this would include the poet-saints, move in and out of *bhakti* engagements; they shift between the everyday and the specific occasions of *bhakti* congregations and events.

40 For the *Bhagavadgītā* (between 200 BCE and 100 CE) though, in difference to *bhakti* as practised in later periods, Weber reserves a slightly different form of *Weltbeziehung*, that of 'indifference towards the world'; see Weber 1978, 194; 1958, 189.

41 Friedhelm Hardy, in his work on (Tamil) Krishna *bhakti* and Shrivaiṣṇavism, uses phrases like 'positive attitude to the world', 'this-worldly attitude', 'world-positive (Hardy 1983, 234, 314, 447). Karen Pechilis Prentiss, in her work on Tamil Shaiva Siddhanta, talks of '[b]hakti's positive valuation of action in the world' as 'a constitutive premise of *bhakti's* thesis on embodiment' and, additionally, of 'two competing world views in *bhakti*: the perspective of renunciation and that of affirming life in the world' (Prentiss 1999, 18f.).

42 Kumkum Sangari (forthcoming): 'In the dissident devotional field, subject formation occurs in variant repertoires; it is individuated and depersonalised, affirmative and nonpossessive, relational (not contained within its own skin) and translational, contextual and mobile, oral/musical and textual, linguistic and performative, social and renunciatory, sectarian and multireligious, and everywhere implies a lack of fixture, an absence of full ownership of names and selves as is evident in the circulation, multiple attribution, substitution and reattribution of names, songs and stories.'

5 Conclusion: at the centre – relationality of selves

Bhakti seems an exemplary, fertile platform for religious individualisation. *Bhakti* allows for developing very different articulations of participatory devotion, and for different individual experiences, and is instituted in such a way that new forms are always a possibility. This does not mean that all what sails under *bhakti* would be full-fledged individualisation, nor does this exclude conventionalising these formats or limiting the scope that individualisation can take. Regarding *bhakti* we can distinguish between different grades of individualisation. There is, first, the basic concept of individual devotion or participation in God and the specific types of *Weltbeziehung* connected with this.⁴³ From this we can distinguish, secondly, the emphatic, sometimes idiosyncratic practices and constellations of *bhakti*, as also the many creative moments of invention of new articulations and paths of *bhakti* over a period of at least 1500 years. We can further distinguish between two prime modes of individualisation: the first, *from within* (*Purāṇic* or other) established *bhakti* traditions, changing the avenue and the access to the Divine for people; the other, individualisation *vis-à-vis* or *against* established traditions, especially ritual, renunciatory, tantric or other non-devotional religious traditions from which *bhaktas* try to dissociate themselves. In the last case, this is often closely interconnected with opposition towards practices of social exclusion and hierarchisation.

Regarding the specifics of individual *sampradāyas* or cases of *guru* relationships, the individualising moment can, and does, of course shade more or less quickly into one or the other form of routinisation of practices, without necessarily repudiating the individualising sting. At this point one can also encounter secondary forms of individualisation, agency and deviance that attempt to overcome tendencies of routinisation. Characteristic of *bhakti* is the constantly renewed chance of a fresh start and of breaking free of conformity.

The basis of all this, or so I argue, is the core emphasis on and experience of the relationality of one's self. In principle, a relational concept of self is nothing new nor is it confined to *bhakti*. As a general idea it was proposed by pragmatist thinkers like George Herbert Mead (Mead 1934; cf. Joas 1985).⁴⁴ *Bhakti* practices and concepts could thus be seen as not just supporting such ideas, but as

⁴³ Certain forms of *bhakti* can also be read as illustrations of a notion of dividuality, as set out in Part 2 of this publication, that takes individuality/individualisation and dividuality as two sides of the same coin. See in particular the Introduction by Antje Linkenbach and Martin Mulsow.

⁴⁴ For Psychology see e.g. Andersen and Chen 2002.

forms of social thought existent before the term. *Bhakti* practices and concepts would thus add perspectives to the modern sociological (and psychological) ones. What interests here are the specificities of the *bhakti* forms of relationality. This requires that the question of self-hood be taken as an open one, difficult to conceptualise transculturally, but even intra-culturally, and waiting for further discussion in the future.⁴⁵ Important is, concerning Indic traditions, that we take the discussions out of the confines of philological debates about terminologies. The fixation on *ātman* (the embodied, immortal self), or *jīva* (immortal essence), together with *brahman* (absolute being), and the debates about *ahaṃkāra* (ego-consciousness), and the many other connected philosophical terms found in Indian textual traditions⁴⁶ had long obliterated any serious engagement with expressions of selfhood as found in actual social and religious practice. For this one would have to get back to individual cases of *bhakti* practice, something that I cannot do here. But I can refer to the forthcoming *Bhakti and Self* volume (Fuchs (ed.) forthcoming (a)). The model just used, that of the triangle, however allows some general observations.

It should be obvious from all that I have said that relationality in the perspective of *bhakti* appears as constitutive for the self, or more exactly, for a successful (*gelingendes*) self. Persons develop individual strengths when reaching out to others, to connect and even unite with some other, and with *the Other*, or when they defy dominant ritual as well as social norms based on their connection with others and with *the Other*.

This widely shared ground allows for various fragmentary conclusions: On the one hand, there is the recognition, and thus constitution of one's self-identity, *by or through* one's divine as well as human others.⁴⁷ Here the relation itself defines the core, or lies at the core (type I). On the other hand, there is the discovery of the other, and thus the recognition by the other, *within* oneself (or one's self). Here the relationship defines *the path towards* self-realisation (type II). Significantly, this quest for self-realisation has throughout been seen as embedded in a supporting, caring, empathising relationship with other humans (Agrawal 2009).

⁴⁵ Highly pertinent and an excellent starting-point are the discussions in Mark, Thompson, Zakhavi (eds.) 2011 and Ganeri 2012; cf. Fuchs 2015.

⁴⁶ *Puruṣa* or conscious entity and *prakṛti* or single creative power; the *tattvas* or constituents of being; *manas* or mind; *saṃkalpa* or imagination and volition; *buddhi* or the faculty of discrimination (Malinar 2014); *citta* as those specific elements of one's stream of consciousness which attention centralises (Buddhagosa; see Ganeri 2017).

⁴⁷ Recognition here broadly taken in the sense of Axel Honneth (1996). For an adaptation as well as critique of Honneth's views see Fuchs 1999 and 2017c.

Both conceptions can thus be seen as forms or modes of recognition.⁴⁸ Again, both these modalities can and would have to be further specified. An example regarding the first (type I) is the debate between the cat and the monkey models of grace and the concept of self-surrender (*prapatti*; Raman 2007).⁴⁹ Regarding the second (type II), the task is more difficult. Here it is for everyone to make their own non-replicable experiences, and each of these remains inexpressible, an ‘untellable story’ – Kabir’s *akatha kathā*.

From an individualisation perspective, this then would also mean that the divine other, which represents the universal, appears ‘individualised’ as well: becomes, in a way, an individual other, or what one could call, taking another paradoxical expression, the ‘individual universal’ vis-à-vis each *bhakta*.

What relationality or connectedness, against the background of the countervailing forces, then allows for is to conceive of different aggregate states of the self. What we encounter on the one hand are affected selves, which means subject-states affected by others, socially by the oppressors one does not connect with, as well as by one’s peers, spiritually by the Divine; on the other hand different degrees of permeability (*Durchlässigkeit*) of selves. Permeability of selves does not mean relinquishing the Self: on the contrary, its very permeability seemingly helps constitute a resilient self (as Kabir exemplarily shows).⁵⁰

Analytically we might distinguish different – contrasting – possibilities of relationality in the *bhakti* context: negative and positive, denied and affirmed, non-recognitional (contempt, disregard) and recognitional (reciprocal). On the social level the modes of reciprocity of selves stand in sharp contrast to the forces of divisiveness. The experience of shared belonging in *bhakti* conflicts with the everyday experience of the afflictions of difference (distantiation and discrimination). Put differently, and keeping caste divisions in view: divisiveness and shared belonging, distantiation and reciprocal relationality, or connectedness, co-exist. *Bhakti* is not able to remove difference and divisiveness once and for all or for the entirety of social life; *bhakti* can only provide a

48 The first stands for a search for union with, and at the same time experience of separation from, the Divine; the second for the internal discovery and experience of the Divine (within one-self).

49 The reference here is to the debate between the southern (*tenkalai*) and the northern (*vaṭakalai*) schools of Tamilian Shrivaiṣṇavism regarding how to conceive of salvation through grace. The Tenkalais are associated with the position that God acts entirely on his own and saves souls out of his compassion, ‘as a mother cat carries her kitten’. In contrast the Vaṭakalais are described as adhering to the position that salvation requires some effort on behalf of the devotees, ‘as a baby monkey clings to his mother’. See Raman 2007, ix, 11.

50 For more detailed discussion of the permeability of selves see Part 2 of this publication.

counter-position. Socially, *bhakti* marks the tension between the relational and the non-relational, or non-connected, the positively relational and the negatively relational self.

Regarding this duality, again the inferences drawn can differ: On the one hand we find the argument that *bhakti* allows people, especially people in crisis or in subjugation, to look out for a point of stability, a *Fixpunkt*, in their relation with one's others – other humans, as well as 'the' Other. The idea is that of an 'embedded' self, but a self embedded in an *alternative* social setting (Pauwels forthcoming). On the other hand there is the question which Kumkum Sangari (forthcoming) asks and which, at least for now, has to remain open: 'Can an unstable corpus (of texts, poems, identities etc.; MF) yield a stable self' or only shifting subject positions? Does then the point of stability remain a dream, a point of desire? Does individualisation in this case have to remain fluid? Or does this only apply to the name-giving *bhakta*, the saint-poet, not to the followers?

But is the idea of stability required for notions of self? Can we not also think of dispersed and moving selves? Significantly, Kumkum Sangari has added the notion of 'multiple' (or multi-directional) personae to the statement quoted above.⁵¹ What this would signify is an openness for and to diverse others, and for diverse constellations and situations, kept (clamped) together, even if loosely, by an instance (*Instanzt*) constituting a person(a) or a self. In the case of the name giving *bhakta* or (*sat*-)guru this instance may be references to the core Divine, while socially it would be the interlocking articulations that keep what is 'subdivided' or scattered among those who speak in his or her name together, the clamp thus being 'enlarged to a point of elasticity that threatens to snap the thread' (Sangari forthcoming). But regarding the *bhakta* followers – participating in continuing and elaborating the name of the guru – would their identification with the name-giving *bhakta* as well as the Divine not translate into consolidation of their own selves, and thus an inner instance that integrates their (multiple) personae? An identificatory stabilisation pairing the smaller with the larger self?

What we find in examining *bhakti* is not generalised mysticism, nor is the world of *bhakti* 'other-worldly' (in the sense given to the term by sociologists of religion). What we find are conceptualisations of forms of relatedness, or connectedness, that go beyond *our* everyday sense of relation and communication and that allow broadening the pragmatist-phenomenological sociological perspective.

⁵¹ For this aspect too cf. Part 2, Section 2.2, of this publication.

6 Final note: limitations of *bhakti* as individualisation and socio-religious alternative

Bhakti provides a socio-religious alternative only up to a point. This is the kernel of truth of the often-repeated characterisation of *bhakti* as a counter-tradition. This signals not just a dimension of power. Much more deeply, *bhakti*, in its imaginaries but even more so as an alternative formation, remains dependent on what it opposes and at the same time takes from. It might be that we can here find the key to explaining the long duration of *bhakti* – as a thorn in the flesh of external religion and oppressive conditions that people again and again picked up – a lasting, unresolved ‘inner conflict of tradition’, to adapt the famous phrase coined by Jan C. Heesterman (who himself had applied this to the relationship between societal values, centred on Brahmanical ritualism, and world-renunciation). Individualising and emancipatory forces are thorns in the flesh of the dominant religious realm, of ritualism, world renunciation (*vairāgya*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and even of the other alternative that is being labelled as tantrism. It is the dominant religious realm that keeps a cap on expressions of individualisation.⁵²

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⁵² Against this background, one might also have to reconsider the place of Buddhism in Indian religious history, different from Buddhism elsewhere. As the fate of the freshly revived or Navayana Buddhism in India shows, Buddhism too is in danger of remaining (again) stuck in the position of a counter-tradition (Fuchs 2019).

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Anne Murphy

Sufis, Jogis, and the question of religious difference: individualisation in early modern Punjab

1 Introduction

We open with a verse from a mid-18th century Punjabi-language poetic narrative by Waris Shah, named for its heroine, *Hīr*:

*hauka phire deṇḍā piṇḍān vicha sāre “āo, kise faqīra je hovnā je”
maṅga khāvnā kama nah kāja karnā, na ko chārnā, te nah hī chovnā je
žarā kana paṛāike svāha malnī gūrū sāre hī jaga dā hovnā je
nah dīhāṛ nah kasaba rozgāra karnā bādshāha phira mufta dā hovnā je
nahīn denī vadhāī phira jamne dī kise moe nūn mūla nah rovnā je
maṅga khāvnā ate masīta sonā nah kujha bovnā te nah kujha lovnā je
nāle maṅgnā te nāle ghornāī den dāra nah kise da hovnā je
khushi āpnī uṭhnā miyān vāriša ate āpnī nīnda hī sovnā je (Šābir 1986, 144f., v. 254).¹*

[Ranjha] calls out, wandering in all the villages, “Come, if you will be a Fakir!”
To eat what one begs for, and not to have to work: no grazing of cattle, no milking.
Just bore through the ears and cover the body with ash: with that, become the Guru of the world!

By day, no need to work and toil; free then of the Shah himself.²
No need to celebrate births, and no need to mourn at death.
Eat what one begs for, and sleep in a mosque! Do not plant anything and do not reap!
Asking from others with a terrible grimace, with nothing to give back!
Oh Waris! To wake when one likes, and to sleep when one is tired!

¹ There is no critical edition of Waris Shah’s text; the version used here, edited by Šārif Šābir 1986, is well regarded (see comment, for example, in Shackle 1992, 259, fn 32; personal communication, Denis Matringe, September 2015). For limited discussion of the manuscript tradition and some exemplary printed editions, see Shackle ‘Transition’ and Deol 2002, 151f.; and Matringe 2003, 228–30. I make occasional reference to another version (Padam 1998 [1977]) when a preferred reading is found.

² *Nadho Shāh* is given in Šābir 1986 but in Padam (1998 [1977], 122, v. 252) this is *bādshāh* (and the verb is *joavnā*). The Padam is a more accessible reading, so is used here.

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This verse provides a typical description of an ascetic: begging for alms, living outside of conventional norms, and smeared with ash; it also features attributes specific to the Nath Yogis – practitioners of Hatha Yoga, Shaivite ascetics, but more generally known in the vernaculars of north India as ‘Jogis’ – such as the wearing of *mudrān* or large earrings bored through the center of the ear. But there is much more at work here than immediately meets the eye. This essay will explore what is at stake in a portrayal like this, and argue that the idea of religious individualisation – the subject of this volume – can provide a valuable tool for its analysis, focusing not so much the individual *per se*, but instead on individualisation as a *process* or, perhaps even more, a kind of possibility, as a comparative rubric across religions that undergirds this representation.

This portrayal takes place within a love story, a narrative known in Persian and Punjabi as a *qissā*. Ranjha³, the lover of Hir, is the figure described in the verse.⁴ Ranjha has taken on the guise of a Jogi after losing Hir in an arranged marriage to another. Her family had rejected him as a potential suitor due to his less elite caste status and his relative lack of wealth: he did not fare well when property was distributed among him and his brothers at his father’s death, and while he is also from a Jaṭ (agricultural caste) family, like Hir, his lineage was deemed less elite than hers. This series of events brings us to this verse, where we see Ranjha becoming a *faqīr*, a holy man (an originally Persian term) as a Muslim, but also as a Jogi. We can see this, indeed, in this verse, where he speaks in a complex and mixed idiom of the holy man or *faqīr*, mobilizing the imagery associated with the Nath Yogi tradition, while referring to taking refuge in a mosque. This persona is inhabited by a Muslim main character out of despair over losing his love (and, as will be discussed, is a self-conscious ruse to get her back – the theme of the inauthentic or disingenuous Jogi, is important here).

How do we explain the ease with which Ranjha takes on the identity of a Jogi, identified as he is in the text, as Muslim? What is at stake in such a move across, between and within religious communities?

Such questions are not of merely scholarly or historical interest. Anyone who works on the region from which this text hails, Punjab, faces a dilemma: how do we account for the violence within this once integrated society of Hindus, Sikhs,

³ The hero’s given name is Dhīdo, but he is generally referred to by his caste name, Rāñjhā, a Jaṭ clan from a place called Takhat Hazara. With diacritics, the name is Rāñjhā.

⁴ There are many versions of the Hir-Ranjha story, including the sixteenth century version by Damodar, and brief mention in the Vars of Bhai Gurdas, and in the Dasam Granth. The narrative inspired a large number of *kāfī* or poems by Bulhe Shah, as well as several narrative versions in Persian. See Shackle 1992, 244–7, and footnotes 4, 5, 9, 10 on these pages. See also Murphy and Shahbaz, forthcoming.

Muslims, Christians, and others, as it turned violently upon itself in 1947 at the division of the region into the new countries of India and Pakistan, shattering Punjabiness (or ‘Punjabiyyat’) as a lived experience? This haunts everything we do in this field, no matter what our temporal focus. On the one hand, we see the fact of an integrated culture. Farina Mir’s (2010) recent work, for example, excavates the shared ‘Punjabi literary formation’, as she calls it, that brought people together in the late colonial period, challenging a prior scholarly preoccupation with explicitly religious reformist and agonistic dynamics in the period. She is right to do so, for the cultural production that she highlights – colonial period versions of the *qissā* or ‘narrative literature’ tradition of Punjab that are part of the larger tradition that the text we examine hails from – does articulate a shared sense of ‘Punjabiyyat’ or Punjabiness. Indeed, Waris Shah’s *Hir* is perhaps the most quintessentially Punjabi text one might identify, the text that the anticolonial revolutionary Udham Singh sought to take his oath on when at trial; Singh was executed by the British in London for the 1940 murder of the former Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Michael O’Dwyer, who had held office at the time of the infamous Jallianawala Bagh incident, when British troops fired on peaceful demonstrators in Amritsar, Punjab in 1919. He had at that time renamed himself Muhammad Singh Azād, taking on both a Muslim name and a Sikh name, with a surname, *Azād*, that means ‘freedom’ (Bhardwaj 2007; Fenech 2002). Waris Shah’s text is thus central, as Jeevan Deol (2002, 142) has noted, to the ‘Punjabi episteme’, and continues to be a valued cultural resource on both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border, as is demonstrated by its availability in both scripts that Punjabi is written in: Gurmukhi, on the Indian side and associated strongly with Sikh tradition, and the Perso-Arabic script, popularly known as Shahmukhi in Punjabi, on the Pakistan side (Murphy 2018a). On the other hand, at the same time that we have this shared commitment to ‘Punjabiyyat’, we have the harsh reality of violence and division, now engraved in a border that separates a once integrated culture into two nationalised, religiously exclusive ones. While religion has thus taken precedence in defining difference within Punjabi society, there are and were also differences along the lines of class and caste (and the oft-forgotten category of gender, too, which has a particular significance in the text in question that will be touched on here). I will try to reconnect these social categories here, in at least preliminary terms, alongside a consideration of the religious (On gender, see Murphy 2018c.).

The problem, although stark in Punjab given the history of Partition, is however one that reaches far beyond it. The problem is a broad one: how do we account for the shared religious worlds that characterised the pre-modern period in South Asia overall (recognizing at times that religious difference could result in conflict at very particular historical junctures and locations). Is this pre-modern

religious world the utopia we seek, a kind of precolonial oasis outside of the storm of colonially constructed and now post-colonial conflict, as it has been construed in the work of some scholars and cultural critics? (Murphy 2015).

This problem is also a historiographical one, because the problem of exactly *how* to describe in historical terms the complex cultural and religious formations of South Asia continues to challenge scholarship. A wealth of scholarship has for instance highlighted the recent provenance of the term and idea of ‘Hindu’, noting its changing nature and, I think most usefully, its contrastive rather than substantive sense (Ernst 2004 [1994], 22ff.; Lorenzen 1999; Pennington 2005). Thus, for example, we can see in eighteenth century Punjabi Braj texts that express Sikh communitarian perspectives that Sikhs were contained within a sense of ‘Hindu’ in broad contrastive terms, at the same time that Sikh positions were portrayed as representing a clearly separate religious/cultural tradition alongside other traditions that were portrayed as similarly distinct (some of which are now included under the umbrella term ‘Hindu’) (Murphy 2012a). The term, in such texts, seems to function akin to the term ‘gentile’ in the West, indicating what one is not, not what one is (Lorenzen 1999, 639f.). We do see the consolidation of a caste-inflected and simultaneously inclusive and exclusive Hindu identity in the eighteenth century (inclusive in its attempts to articulate forms of authority that would apply broadly, and exclusive in its imposition of caste and other regulatory devices that would define membership along hierarchical lines), reflecting the articulation of a range of religious identities in the period, only some of which were integrated into this newly emergent identity (Hare 2011; Hawley 2011; Horstmann 2011; Horstmann 2009; Pinch 1999). We see therefore the rise of Vaishnav *bhakti* as part of a broader adoption of a supralocal and less tantric/yogic form of religious life in the late medieval/early modern period, and a kind of Vaishnava-Mughal cosmopolitan synthesis, as described in different but important ways a decade ago in the work of Kumkum Chatterjee, Heidi Pauwels, and William Pinch, and more recently elaborated by others (Pinch 2006; Burchett 2012, 40, 318; Pauwels 2009; Hawley 2015, 75, 124, 225). Chatterjee has argued that ‘the cosmopolitanisms’ of this period that interest her ‘resulted from the use of Vaishnava elements certainly, but Vaishnava elements which were conjoined to Mughal and Rajput elements as well’ (Chatterjee 2009, 150). She thus views Vaishnavism as a ‘trans-regional phenomenon that developed, matured and grew stronger during the period of the later Delhi sultanate as well as the Mughal empire’ (ibid., 151). This corresponded with increasingly centralizing and categorizing discourses within elite philosophical circles as well, as the work of Andrew Nicholson (2010) has shown. So, we do see historically a *move* towards increasing definition and consolidation, but one which simultaneously never achieves full descriptive applicability; that only occurred when such processes were accelerated, generalised, and bureaucratized by the exigencies of

colonial rule, when incorporated and homogenised religious identities were given unprecedented political weight within the mechanisms of British colonial governance, such as the census and the legal management of religious sites (Jones 1981; Murphy 2012b, Chap. 6).

2 A history of crossing

Full description and analysis of what pre-existed and accompanied such consolidation, however, has proven elusive. In the early 1990s, in keeping with a general celebration of cultural hybridity characteristic of scholarly work at that time, Harjot Oberoi argued that in the pre-modern period ‘most Sikhs moved in and out of multiple identities grounded in local, regional, religious, and secular realities. Consequently, the boundaries between what could be seen as the Sikh “great” and “little” traditions were highly blurred: several competing definitions of who constituted a Sikh were possible’ (Oberoi 1994, 24f.).

This ‘older pluralist paradigm of Sikh faith’, he argued, ‘was displaced forever and replaced by a highly uniform Sikh identity, the one we know today as modern Sikhism’ (Oberoi 1994, 25). Oberoi’s idealised portrait of this ‘alternative’ world was in many ways overdrawn, disallowing the historical fact of the unfolding articulation of Sikh and other religious identities; this was its flaw. Yet, Oberoi’s argument captured something extremely important about the transformations associated with the nineteenth century, and the shape of shared cultural and religious practices that do not fit modern formulations of exclusive identity formation. There is something about this that makes sense: we know both intuitively and in scholarly terms that people perform particular identities and positions in ways that are context-dependent, non-monolithic and variable, and it is not surprising to surmise that this is a basic feature of human self- and social-formation. This is perhaps as much a feature of pre-modernity as it is of modernity. We should expect therefore to see diverse, changing, pragmatic and idiosyncratic choices made by individuals in complex religious environments.

It is thus somewhat surprising that such an interpretation has been rejected wholesale by a range of scholars writing in the last decade. For example, in addressing the ‘two genres of religious poetry’ in ‘two distinct traditions’ (Sikh and Islamic) that provide us with our evidence of early Punjabi, senior scholar of Punjabi, Sindhi, and related traditions Christopher Shackle argues that while the interests of these traditions are in some ways strikingly parallel, Punjabi Sufi poetry cannot be ‘properly understood without wider reference to the larger religious and literary traditions by which it is so intimately informed’: that related to

Islam (Shackle 2015, xi). (This counters an earlier argument of Shackle's (2000), where he found that class supersedes religious difference in this genre.) Francesca Orsini expressed a parallel view in an insightful essay on the multi-lingual nature of north Indian literary production – work that is extremely valuable for understanding the complex religious moorings of Punjabi cultural production – to argue that ‘the alternative to selective single-language literary histories [...] is not a narrative of “composite culture”’ (Orsini 2012, 242). Both narratives of difference and of syncretism and ‘composite culture’, she argues elsewhere, ‘have had to exclude much of literary production to prove their point’, but she also notes that ‘an alternative to those flawed narratives is yet to emerge’ (Orsini 2010, 1). This is in keeping with a range of other scholarship. Scholar of Bengali Vaishnava and Islamic traditions, Tony Stewart (2001), provided a trenchant critique of the idea of syncretism, arguing in part that the term fails in explanatory terms because it wrongly assumes fully formed cultural/linguistic/religious identities that are then blended (see also overview in Hatley 2007, 360ff.). This has been reiterated by many others since, with related rationale, such as by Carl Ernst (2003), who also usefully critiques the deeply problematic idea of ‘influence’ in historiographical contexts. Farina Mir’s exploration of the practice of shrine veneration shared by members of different faith communities was similarly framed as a critique of the idea of the syncretic, although there is more to her argument that will be discussed below (Mir 2006; 2010, Chap. 5) Yet, even as Stewart’s critique is widely cited in works I refer to here, which reject the usefulness of the idea of the ‘composite’ and syncretic, this denial all too often can end with reassertion of just the kinds of reified identities that Stewart argues against. This is not to say that there are no merits to this work; far to the contrary, there is much of value here. Timothy Dobe speaks of ‘code-switching’ as a way of addressing the complexity of affiliations and practices, which he rightly argues has the advantage of ‘assuming that individuals are self-conscious and aware of difference’. This certainly does allow for a valuable interpretive frame for understanding *certain* kinds of cross-fertilisation and crossing. At the same time, however, he complicates the very notion of such a difference in code, itself, in his valuable discussion of the complex configuration of the *faqīr* figure (Dobe 2015, 25).

One important example of this tension, particularly important for the argument I will pursue further here regarding the romantic hero Ranjha, as a yogi, is the very important case of the Hindavi *prem-ākhyān* tradition, which was written in an early Hindavi vernacular from the 14th to the 16th centuries, with themes and tropes from diverse traditions we now call ‘Hindu’ and with Sufi mystical underpinnings. Aditya Behl has argued that this work ‘embodies an Indian Islamic literary tradition, the acculturation of a monotheistic faith and a literary model into a local landscape’, where the Chishti Sufis ‘promoted a surface

liberalism of outlook' that simultaneously asserted their own hegemony (Behl 2012, 19, 22). He is able to accept *literary* mixing, arguing that the 'formation of creolised or mixed literary genres implies a world of conversion and conflict, dialogue and intermingling' (ibid., 13). In religious terms, however, he frames the Islamic as taking precedence. As I will make clear at the end of the paper, I do not in the end reject Behl's stance; there are real reasons for taking it (which is why speaking of a fuzzy 'sharing' is so problematic). Here, I note the stance and its limitations: such criticism of 'syncretism' or mixing, or the 'composite' or amalgamation of cultures, can end in the reification of just such identities that are questioned within the critique, to leave us with that which is already formed, and which in the stronger forms of the argument adheres to itself fully in engagement with the 'other'. There are, no doubt, examples of just this very dynamic in the early modern period. We see this in Sikh mobilisations of Nath imagery, for example, whereby Guru Nanak takes a Nath vision of the esoteric quest for transcendence and uses it to assert a Sikh exoteric parallel practice, such as in the Sidh Gost section of the *Adi Granth* (for background, see Nayar, Sandhu 2007). Here, clearly, a Sikh articulation is being served by reference to Nath practices. But this is not how all such representations work. To argue that they do work this way suggests the radical incompatibility of religions and civilisations – a 'clash of civilisations' perhaps, in the terms described by Samuel Huntington (1993). It seems clear, therefore, that some further work is required, as Orsini suggests. How do we move beyond *both* an idealised but vague and ahistorical notion of the 'composite' and what has amounted to the reinscription of boundaries, to negotiate a more nuanced position between these two poles that have thus far been staked out?

How differently can this problem be configured, if we focus on points of intersection instead? As Nile Green has suggested, in line with Stewart's argument, we are missing something in asking how Hindus and Muslims came together at various points when 'the people we label under these terms had perhaps not yet come to see themselves as "apart" in the first place, at least in terms of a doctrine and practice model of "religion"' (Green 2008a, 1056). Commonality, not identity, might be a more fruitful way to imagine what has brought people together. This is Farina Mir's approach to understanding shared piety: she sees piety functioning 'in its own terms', 'as a parallel arena of belief', unconcerned with conventional religious difference (Mir 2010, 177, 182). My effort in this essay is parallel, but distinct. I argue here that the idea of religious individualisation, the topic of this volume, has something to offer us in the study of pre-modern, pre-communalised (that is, pre-reified and agonistic religious) South Asian cultural forms, and that in turn these forms have something to offer the KFG as a study of the applicability

of its theoretical premises.⁵ Attention to the dynamic of religious individualisation reveals not ill-defined mixing or a blending, or ‘fuzziness’, as described recently by Andrew Nicholson (2013), but instead a concerted and joint effort *at something else*, a kind of ‘entangled history’ where ‘ideas and practices that strengthen or trigger individualisation processes are transferred’ and experienced as a *single* thing (Fuchs et al. 2016, 11). This is what matters: the connections among the traditions brought together in the *faqīr*: the articulation of an individualizing ethos functioning to challenge religious and other (such as caste, gender) communitarian formations, at the same time that these formations are recognised and represented. In the context of Punjab, this ethos was positioned outside of communitarian formations that had stronger institutional foundation. This, I will suggest at the close of the essay, is also one of the reasons why ‘Punjabiyaat’, or a shared cultural and religious ethos, did not prevail in providing an alternative in 1947.

First some context. If we are to look back in time for religious individualisation in Punjab, the Sufi poets, such as Shah Hussain and Bulhe Shah, provide ample evidence. Here, in Bulhe Shah, we can see a direct relationship between individual experience and the breaking down of religious community barriers (e.g. Shah 2015, Lyric no. 40, p. 68f.). Bhakti or devotional thought and practice in both Sufi contexts and beyond both challenged and necessitated certain kinds of individualisation, both encouraging (indeed requiring) the articulation of an individual self that then must be overcome (Fuchs et al. 2016, 11). Angelika Malinar has noted that ‘the “individual self” received a new recognition in the context of bhakti’, and that ‘further religious pluralisation seems particularly intense with respect to *bhakti* communities and can be considered as resulting from individualisation process with respect to doctrine as well as practices’, fed by both asceticism and devotion, two forces that remained in tension through the early modern period (Malinar 2015, 406; see also Pinch 2006). Martin Fuchs’ contribution to this volume directly assesses this issue. Along similar lines, Imre Bangha (2000) has similarly argued that ‘one can perceive a subtle move towards the importance of individual life and sentiments in various South Asian literary cultures between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries’, in both Bhakti and secular contexts. This is the world out of which figures such as Waris Shah, and his poem *Hīr*, emerge.

The figure of the Jogi in this *qissā* by Waris Shah bears the traces of these historical dynamics among religions in South Asia – within a long history of contact,

⁵ While certainly it would be absurd to argue that there was no communal conflict (that is, along religious lines) prior to the colonial period, the evidence shows that the politicisation of religion within colonial administration was unprecedented, and that it had profound effect. The argument for a ‘pre-history’ of communalism in Bayly (1985) does not account sufficiently for the systemic way religion was mobilized to govern by the state under British rule.

and of transitions among them.⁶ As White well notes, while later commentators and scholars have privileged ‘disengagement of the senses, mind, and intellect from the outside world in favor of concentration on the transcendent person within’ as a descriptive norm of what it means to do yoga, Jogis themselves have not been portrayed as ‘introverted or introspective – but rather always as extrovert, if not predatory’ (White 2009, 38). Jogis instead were very much of the world, on their own terms, with some engaging in warfare, state formation, and family life (Lorenzen 1978; Pinch 2006; White 2009, 223). At the same time, they did occupy a place outside of ‘convention’: White has them called “‘others within’”, standing as a constructed antitype to the good people of ordered society’. It is not surprising that individualizing forces can be linked to this kind of contingent position, on the outside (White 2009, 199).

There is a wide provenance for Sufi/Jogi synthesis, and it draws on diverse representations of the Jogi figure across traditions – including within Hindu traditions themselves. Nicholson has thus argued that ‘Yoga in classical India was like open-source software. It was distributed freely and modified by different authors, all competing to come up with the best version for liberation’ (Nicholson 2013, 498). We have a precursor to what we see in *Hīr* in the Sufi-Jogi figure at the centre of the Sufi *prem-ākhyān* or ‘love story’ tradition that Aditya Behl has examined at length, where the transformation of the hero into a Jogi in order to achieve his love is one of the ‘formulaic elements’ Behl identifies as common to the four texts he examines from the 14th to the 16th centuries, as a means to describe a Sufi mystical journey (Behl 2012, 23, 71, 95). He is clear, as I have mentioned, about the ways this synthesis is articulated: ‘the poet uses the highest spiritual value in yogic language to suggest a Persian mystical concept, reimagining Islamic ideology in Indian dress’ and ‘Daud [author of one of the works] turns this symbolic vocabulary away from the Nath-panth and uses it to express the Sufi mortification of the self’ (Behl 2012, 96). Here, Yogic themes are portrayed as a ‘dress’ that nonetheless expresses core or inherent Islamic ideas. In similar terms, Shaman Hatley discusses Bengali Sufi Yogic material by arguing that ‘although the sources for this yoga are clearly indigenous, primarily the Natha cult and at a later stage Sahajīya Vaisnavism, Muslim authors encode their disciplines within Islamic doctrinal categories and articulate them as integral elements of a Sufi praxis regimen’ (Hatley 2007, 352). The use of Jog in Qutbān’s *Mirigāvātī* (1503), and indeed the entire genre, ‘here reimagines Sufi ideology

⁶ One of the most commonly portrayed interactions not only among Sufis and Jogis, but with other figures (such as the Sikh Gurus) was the miracle contest (Murphy 2012a; White 2009, 200; Burchett 2011).

within an Indian landscape and reshapes *rasa* poetics in Sufi terms' (Behl 2012, 301). The Sufic mobilisation of yogic ideas and practice is most vividly seen in Shattari Sufi practice (Behl 2012, 240, 304; see also Ernst 2005, 29f.). Yet, as noted above, Behl sees this as still embedded within a hierarchy: 'The characters in the story, and by implication the Sufis, are not exactly yogis; they are like yogis, only better, as they can use yogic practices and language framed within a Sufi romantic poetics. Through this seeming logic [the author of *Padmāvat*,] Jāyāsī spells out the Chishti Sufi claim to superiority within a local religious landscape' (Behl 2012, 176, see also 171).

There is a broad relationship here between Sufism and Yoga that speaks to this set of representations. As Ernst has explicated in great detail in recent scholarship, examination of the evidence of exchange between Sufism and Yoga reveals that 'generalities about Hinduism and Islam are relatively useless for shedding light on the significance of the text' he examines (Ernst 2003, 205; see also Ernst 2005, 42). Something else, then, is at stake in the act of cultural translation and exchange. Yoga is so fully translated *into* Islamicate (not always strictly Islamic) terms and ideas that a lack of a sense of 'radical difference' emerges, Ernst (2003, 223) argues, and thus, in one example explored by Ernst, Nizām al-Dīn Awrangābādī (d. 1730), in a comprehensive account of Chishti meditation techniques, 'fits yogic techniques into an Islamic framework that supplies the intentions and ultimate meaning that yogis may have been unaware of' and includes an array of hatha yoga mantras that had for a long period been adopted to 'Islamic themes and Sufi practices' (Ernst 1999, 355). Thus, 'yogic practices could be assimilated into a Sufi perspective without much effort. In short, there is no Sufi concept of yoga as a completely separate system. It would probably be safe to say that there was likewise no hatha yoga concept of Sufism as a separate entity' (Ernst 2005, 42). For Awrangābādī, 'yogic practices of non-Muslim ascetics are simply one more set of parallel techniques that can be added to the mix' (Ernst 1999, 357). Ernst has shown that this is the normative frame for the understanding and integration of yoga and its practices within Islamic understanding, drawing 'upon frameworks – political, philosophical, theological, or occult – that were well domesticated in their own culture' (Ernst 2016, 423). Indeed, as he notes, this is the nature of universals: that they are framed within the language of the speaker. At the same time, the finding of such commonalities is itself historically constituted. As Nile Green has aptly shown, by the colonial period 'in India's increasingly communalised colonial public sphere [...] Yogis and Sufis articulated rival forms of physical culture and religious identity in response to the wider crisis facing precolonial Indian lifeworlds' (Green 2008b, 285; see also 292, 307ff.). This inaugurated a period of denial of exchange, despite the fact that it was clear that 'on the ground' Sufis and Yogis were in frequent contact and

did cross-participate – there were Muslim Nath yogi orders that continued into the colonial period, and the colonial period meditational manuals explored by Green, while governed by a logic of *difference* between Sufism and Yoga, shared ‘transcendent moral and ethereal goals for the bodily practices they promoted’.⁷ Commonality remained, even as difference was asserted.

We have travelled far, but now return, to the example with which we opened: the portrayal of Ranjha as a Jogi. If we can see in lyrical Bhakti poetry such as that by Bulhe Shah formations of religious individualisation, what do we find here? There is some of the mystical in Waris Shah’s text, but not a great deal. When Hir is challenged regarding her love for Ranjha, and is forced to face the Qazi who would wed her to another, she invokes religious claims as well as the sanctity of love to support her position (Šābir 1986, v. 208; she does this again in Šābir 1986, v. 217). She tells us ‘Where the love of Ranjha has taken up residence, there can be no sway of the Kheras’, utilizing the same verb used at the beginning of the work to describe what happens when Sufi patriarch and probably most beloved Sufi saint of the region Baba Farid takes up residence in Punjab. At the end of the tale, we hear Ranjha’s commentary on his state at losing Hir, with lamentation at *vijog* or loss/separation: Ranjha does appear at times ready to truly embrace being a Jogi, in despair, and even exhibits some of the miraculous powers associated with this role (Šābir 1986, v. 607).⁸ So we see devotional elements, and there are certainly also allegorical ways to read the text, as scholars have highlighted, but these function on a high, summary level (Deol 2002, 146f.).

Much more than these elements, however, we have the mundane, the everyday, and intense interactions between people, often in conflict. At times, the most appropriate way to think about this text may not be through analogies with high Sufi literature and the classical Persian *masnavi*, as is formally appropriate in terms of genre, but Parsi and other forms of traditional theatre, such as Nautanki (indeed, there are moments when Bollywood does not seem far off). Satire, irony, and farce recur. Najm Hosain Syed, one of the foremost Punjabi literary critics in Pakistan, has thus called its primary mode ‘comedy’: a ‘comedy, though

⁷ Green 2008b, 289 for quote, 290ff. and particularly 309ff. on the growing denial of shared participation; see Ernst 2005, 38 on Muslim yogi orders.

⁸ Ranjha promises to cure Hir (after this verse for some time the issue of Yogis and their medicinal practices and their efficacy are debated); it seems he almost is a Jogi (Šābir 1986, v. 371). Ranjha proves himself to be a yogi to Sahiti through a simple test, and asks her to tell Hir to come. She agrees, and asks him for a boon, recognizing his power (Šābir 1986, v. 501). It is almost as if Ranjha is a Fakir at times: he says he has had enough of the world (Šābir 1986, v. 577). Later, Ranjha prays (Šābir 1986, v. 586) and Sahiti’s love, Murad, appears (Šābir 1986, v. 587). After this, the two couples escape.

unrestrained to the extent of boisterousness, still more a means of irony than hilarity' (Syed 2006 [1968], 45).⁹ How else can one explain the fantastic portrayal of young women physically attacking Kaido, Hir's uncle, and destroying his belongings, because he has told Hir's parents about her activities with Ranjha? Waris Shah describes this as being like the attack of the armies of Lahore on the city of Mathura, to the south of Delhi (Šābir 1986, 76, v. 141). How else do we view the portrayal of young women engaging in uncontrolled behaviour in public, wandering in the wild on their own, and the violent girl-fight between Hir and Sahiti, her sister-in-law, about Ranjha? (Šābir 1986, v. 548–58, v. 416–8). These instances contribute to the ethos of critique that pervades the text, as well as its sense of humour. We thus see a portrayal of the *faqīr* as a commonality, across religious idioms, in a spirit of alterity, but also, as the absurd. Indeed, Kaido, Hir's evil uncle, is also portrayed as a mendicant or *faqīr*. Why is he so upset when Hir's friends attack him, after he has revealed Hir and Ranjha's secret love to her parents? He complains that his opium and drugs have been stolen from him! (Šābir 1986, 78, v. 144). Within the farce and mocking we see consistently one element: the articulation of social hierarchies and rules, in tension, and in rupture. Indeed, this is inherent in particular to the Jogi himself, Ranjha, who is questioned and accused of being a 'fake fakir' throughout, reiterating a trope about the suspect holy man that has a long pedigree in early modern South Asia, which some scholars have argued is tied to a turn away from yoga towards devotional forms of religious expression, as discussed above, although this should not be too simply drawn (On farce and satire in Waris Shah's text, see Murphy 2018c).

My argument here is, I'll note, diverges from Jeevan Deol's: he highlights an 'erotic counter-current' that he believes 'forms a part of the poem's larger discourse of social critique, which has as its main target the hypocrisy of organised religion' (Deol 2002, 146). I agree to a degree with this assessment, which Ishwar Dayal Gaur more recently also asserts; both Gaur and Deol focus on famous passages portraying Ranjha's conflict with a mullah at a mosque, and Hir's debate with the Qazi brought in by her parents to bring her in line, as exemplifying an explicit and direct challenge to religious authority (Gaur 2009, 103–6, 164; Šābir 1986, v. 37–42; the incident in the mosque is also discussed at some length by Syed (2006 [1968] 48ff.). As Deol puts it, 'throughout the qissah, qazis and mullas are associated with bad consequences, and they often have a considerable hand in bringing those consequences about' (Deol 2002, 164–8; see 165 for quote). However, I would qualify this position; although certainly Ranjha's exchange with the mullah mocks his authority, at other points Islamic religious figures

⁹ For more on irony, see Shackle 1992, 249.

are portrayed in a different light. A Qazi or legal specialist, called upon by Hir's parents, is shown as attempting to mediate between Hir and her parents, noting the very real danger Hir is in, disobeying her parents and the norms of patriarchal society. The Qazi certainly exhorts Hir to adhere to social norms, but also clearly states that this is in order to save her life.¹⁰ Her family is portrayed, instead, as the source of threat (Šābir 1986, v. 209–16). We can see this in this example from the text:

*qāzi ākhiyā khauf khudā dā kar māpe chiha chaṛhe chāhe mārni ge
terī kiyāriyoñ jibh khichā karhan māre sharam de khūn guzārni ge
jis waqat asāñ ditā chā fatwāi us waqat hī pār utārni ge
māñ ākhāi loṛh khudā dā je tikhe shaukh dede vekh pārni ge
variš shāh kar tarak burāñ tūñ nahīñ aga de vicha nighārni ge* (Šābir 1986, v. 118).

The Qazi said, “Be fearful of God! If your parents are angered, then you will be killed. Your tongue needs to be pulled out from your throat, otherwise your shameful blood will be shed.

The moment I give judgement, at that instant your time will come.

Your mother says that this is a calamity of God, and look, sharp impertinence tears at you.”

Waris Shah, renounce your bad deeds, so that you do not fall into fire.

Regarding this ‘erotic counter-current’, Deol further argues that the sexual nature of the text is ‘counterbalanced by a refusal to acknowledge explicitly the sexual nature of the relationship between Hir and Ranjha’ (Deol 2002, 161). Such a characterisation of the sexualisation of Hir is untenable.¹¹ Firstly, explicit sexual depictions are not outside the classical and the literary as Deol asserts; as Behl’s account makes clear, in the *prem-ākhyān* tradition explicit sexuality was embraced. Hir and Ranjha also very clearly do engage in sexual intimacy; there is an involved description of Hir at the end of the text, after she visits Ranjha the *faqīr*, where all the marks of her love-making draw attention (Šābir 1986, v. 514–38). The debate regarding gender functions also far more broadly than just in relation to Hir’s sexuality – the figure of Sahiti, Hir’s sister-in-law, reveals this (about whom more below). The portrayal of Ranjha’s appearance, throughout the text, and its reception by the Jogis in homoerotic terms, also adds far more complexity than a focus

¹⁰ Islamic norms have in the past and present offered less harsh realities for women than those in accordance with ‘custom’ in Punjab and other parts of Northwest India/Pakistan. For discussion of this relationship in the British period, see Gilmartin 1988; see Nelson 2011 for the extension of this important discussion from the colonial period to the end of the twentieth century in Pakistani Punjab. Shah observes the tension between Islamic and rural/tribal systems in Sindh today (Shah 2016, 10).

¹¹ On sexuality and gender overall in Waris Shah’s text, see Murphy 2018c. and Mann 2018.

on Hir alone allows.¹² Deol has emphasised this highly sexual nature of the text, but this is only one aspect of what has been called its ‘earthy’ nature, as has been noted above with the discussion of violence and the absurd (Deol 2002, 158f.). The portrayals of Hir’s sexuality, as well as Ranjha’s, thus contribute to an overall sense of farce and rupture that pervades the work, taking a common highly sexualised portrayal of the heroine just a bit further, with a measure of mirth and farce, just as all the interactions in the work go just a step too far (Murphy 2018c). These features contribute, to be sure, to the ethos of critique that pervades the text, but the centre of that critique is found most volubly in the figure of the Jogi, and in the debates about gender that are linked to it. All of it, however, proceeds with a measure of mirth and satire.

The problematic and probably inauthentic status of Ranjha as a *faqīr* is a central theme of the work. As he tells us: ‘*sānūn joga dī rījha tadokanī sī jadoñ hīra syāla mahobat kīti*’ (‘I have had a passion for jog ever since I fell in love with Hir of Syaal’) (Šābir 1986, 163, v. 284).¹³ It is she, in fact, who tells him to become a Jogi and return to her, after her parents and the Qazi (as it is portrayed in the story) decide to marry her off: ‘*tainūn hāl dī gala main likha ghaliān, turata ho faqīra teñ āonā ī | kise jogī the jāike baneñ chelā, svāh lāike kan paṛāonā ī*’ (‘I will write to you about everything! Go and become a Fakir and return! Go and make yourself a Chela at some Yogi’s centre, put ash on your body and pierce your ears [as the Nath Jogis do]!’) (Šābir 1986, 125, v. 223). This begins an important theme: is Ranjha a real Jogi, or not? His indeterminate status as a holy man, as well as the theme of the ‘fake *faqīr*’ overall, are important themes. Immediately following this is a long series of critical comments about Jaṭṣ, the caste that both the heroine and hero belong to, albeit with the hero from a less elite lineage within the caste group (e.g. Šābir 1986, v. 225–7, v. 600). This is a persistent feature of this text: commentary about social categories and their critique. Elsewhere I have called attention to the congruences between this preoccupation with caste and discourses over caste that are visible in Sikh texts dated to the 18th century. One such text, the *Gurbilās Patshāhī Das*, challenges the hegemony of caste and articulates new kinds of social order within the Sikh community (Murphy 2018b).

12 The seeming acceptance of Ranjha by Balnath brings on disgust by the other jogis: Look, he is ready to give Yoga to this pretty boy! (Šābir 1986, 153f., v. 269). The other yogis complain, and the Yogis abandon their yogic implements (*selhīān topīān* and *mundarān*) and get violent (Šābir 1986, v. 271). (In between, Ranjha accuses them of slander: Šābir 1986, v. 270.) Then the Yogis repent and get Ranjha ready for his initiation.

13 However, as Christopher Shackle points out, Ranjha is described as a *faqīr* as soon as he leaves his home on the quest that will bring him to Hir, so in his adoption of full jogi status only means that ‘his implicit identity’ has been ‘explicitly revealed’ (Shackle 1992, 257).

While some texts of this period in the same and other genres reassert the importance of caste – in keeping with casteist discourses that prevailed in Vaishnava contexts, for example, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, discussed above – others continued to challenge these formulations. In Waris Shah, we see both the articulation of operative social categories and their critique; the text asserts Jaṭ social power, but often the stance towards Jaṭs is also mocking and teasing (e.g. Šābir 1986, 162f., v. 283).

The text features an extensive description of the interaction of Ranjha with his would-be teacher, Balnath, the beginning of a long and varied engagement with the description of Jogi practices and what membership in the Jogi order entails:

ṭile jāike jogī the hatha joṛe, sānūn āpnā karo faqīra sāin
tere darasa dīdāra de dekhne nūn, āyā desa pardesa main chīra sāin
šīdaqa dhāra ke nāla yaqīna āyā, asīn chelaṛe te tusīn pīr sāin
bādshāh sachā rab ‘ālmān dā, faqar us de haiñ wazīr sāin
binān murshidān rāha nah hatha āve, dudha bājha nah hove hai khīra sāin
yāda haqa dī šabara taslima nihchā, tusān jaga de nāl kih sīra sāin
faqara kula jahān dā āsrā hai, tāba’u faqar dī pīra te mira sāin
merā māun nah bāpa nah sāka koī chāchā tāīā nah bhain nah vīr sāin
duniyā vich hān bahuta udāsa hoyā, pairon sādīon lāh zanjīr sāin
tainūn chhaḍa ke jān main hora kisa the, nazara āunā haiñ zāhirā pīr sāin (Šābir 1986, 145, v. 255).

Going to the place of the Jogis with hands in supplication, he said “Make us one of your own, lord *Faqīr*!

In order to have sight of you, I have come from across lands far and wide.

In faith I have come to believe that I am the student and you are the *pīr*

God is the true king of all the worlds, and the *faqīr* is his minister.

Without a guide one cannot find the path: how can one make rice pudding without milk?

Remembering the truth, with faith, respect and patience, what do you have to do with the world?

The lineage of *faqīrs* is the support of the world, obedient to the chief and leader of the *faqīr* way

It is as if I have no father or mother, no relative, no uncles, no sister or brother.

I have become detached from the world, take these shackles off of my feet

Besides you, where do I have to go? You, Lord, are True Pir to me.”

Dubious at first about Ranjha’s interest in the Jogi life, Balnath questions him (Šābir 1986, v. 256, 258). This leads into an extensive description of Yogi life and beliefs, something that is repeated later. We see a great deal more on Jogis and their beliefs when Ranjha finally comes to Hir’s village as a Jogi, and enters into a lively and extensive debate with Sahiti, Hir’s sister-in-law; here, the origins of Yoga are also discussed (Šābir 1986, v. 350). We do therefore see treatment of doctrinal religious content, as well as genuine interest in renunciation, such as Ran-

jha's declaration of the temporary and pointless nature of the world: '*khwāba rāta dī jaga diyā sabha galān dhana māla nūn mūla nah jhūriye jī*' ('All these matters of the world are like a night's dream; we must not lament the price of all our riches') (Šābir 1986, 147, v. 259; see also v. 257, 261).

Balnath describes the life of *jog* as follows (giving here a short sample from a long soliloquy):

*aīsa joga de vā'ade bahut aukhe nād anhat te suna vajāūnā vo
jogī jaṅgam gaudarī jaṭā dhāri muṅḍī nirmalā bhekh vaṭāūnā vo
tāyī lāike nātha dā dhāna dharnā dasvīn dvāra hai sāsa chaṛhāvnā vo
[...]*

*udiān-bāsi jatī satī jogī jhāta istrī te nahīn pāvanā vo
lakha khūbśūrata pari hūra hove žarā jīv nahīn bharmāvnā vo
kaṅda mūla te posta afīma bajiyā nashah khāike mast ho jāvanā vo
[...]*

*kāma krodha te lobha huṅkāra marana jogī khāka dara khāka ho jāvanā vo
ranān ghora dā gāūndā phireṅ vahshī tainūn aukhaṛā joga kamāvanā vo
iha joga hai kama nirāsiyān dā tusān jaṭān kīh joga thoṅ pāvanā vo* (Šābir 1986, 150, v. 264).

These pledges of yoga are very difficult, to play the unstruck tune of the infinite, oh!

To exchange for the pure dress of the sect of Jogis: carrying dreadlocks on the head and the dress of a religious order, oh!

Adopting the stare of meditation, concentrate on the Lord, and raise your breath to the tenth door, oh!

[...]

The true Jogi lives in the forest and does not lay eyes on a woman, oh!

There might be a 100,000 beautiful fairies and nymphs, but do not mislead your life, oh!

Even without marijuana, roots, poppy, and opium, become intoxicated and enjoy! oh!

[...]

Destroying lust, anger, greed and ego, the Jogi becomes dust among dust.

Wandering around singing and staring at women – it is hard for you to earn Joga, oh!

This Joga is for the few without hope in the world. What can a Jaṭ like you hope to gain, oh?

This passage illustrates two debates that are interlinked through the narrative: the relationship between men and women (sexual and otherwise) and what it means to be a Jogi, true and false. Here we see description of the appropriate Jogi attitude towards women – and Balnath's doubts that Ranjha could ever become a proper Jogi as a result. When the Nath leader further instructs Ranjha and directs him to look at women as sister and mother, Ranjha rejects this, invoking his status as a Jaṭ: '*asīn jaṭa hān nāriyān kaṛanvāle asān kachkare nahīn purovane nī*' ('We are Jaṭ! We pull ropes. We don't string glass pearls!') (Šābir 1986, 162, v. 282).¹⁴

¹⁴ The exact reference of the ropes is ambiguous, suggesting the ropes of cattle, or perhaps the drawstrings of trousers that are commonly worn in Punjab.

The debate continues until finally higher forces, the mythical *pañj pīr* or five holy men, intervene on Ranjha's behalf (ibid., 164f., v. 285).

The exchange between Sahiti, Hir's sister-in-law, and Ranjha comprises a major component of the narrative: 60 verses, with the scene continuing with further conflict among Hir, Sahiti, and Ranjha for more than 50 additional verses (ibid., v. 327–87).¹⁵ In some ways, Sahiti is the real heroine of the text: she speaks far more than Hir, and hers is a strong and independent voice: Pankaj Singh has called hers 'the loudest and most aggressive voice contesting the idle, impatient, intolerant, egotistical, quarrelsome, boastful, imposter Ranjha' (2000, 62).¹⁶ She challenges Ranjha in all things, arguing at multiple instances on behalf of women (in contrast to Ranjha, who adopts very critical views of women) (Šābir 1986, v. 353). In this we see the conceptual centre of the work: a debate on the nature of women and men's relationship, and the nature of women and men themselves, alongside the recurrent accusation that Ranjha is not a real Jogi. This debate is prefaced by Ranjha's arrival in the village: he is popular with the young women. When Hir hears of his arrival, she wonders if it is him (ibid., v. 310). The poet describes the varied responses to the Jogi among the women: some trust him, some do not, some are generous, others are not; this is followed by discussion of different kinds of women, by caste (ibid., 191, v. 322, 325). Within a few verses Ranjha and Sahiti are directly at odds, with Sahiti accusing him of knowing Hir and being a fake Jogi (a theme that runs through the work) (ibid., 205, v. 342). The description of types continues, with debate on the nature of men and women and social categories, such as through these words of Ranjha (in which women do not fare well):

*tusiñ aisa jahāñ vicha hora hoiā, pañja seriyāñ ghaṭa dharvāiyāñ diyāñ
mard hain jahāz nakoiyāñ de, ranāñ beriyāñ hain burāiyāñ diyāñ
haṛa māsa halāla harāma kapan, ehah kohāriyāñ hain qašāiyāñ diyāñ* (Šābir 1986, v. 353).

You are different in this world, you come up short by 5 units of measure
Men are vessels of goodness, and women are vessels of badness [...].
Chopping up bones and meat without regard for Halal and Haram, these [women] are the
axes of butchers!

¹⁵ Deol sees the debates between Ranjha and Sahiti as only sexual, but this I think misses their full content (2002, 162); he talks only briefly about Sahiti's criticism of Ranjha as a *faqīr*, and not about their debates about gender (2002, 164).

¹⁶ Her view contrasts starkly with that of Syed, for whom Ranjha is 'the essential human being [...] shorn of all recommendations of money or influence' and is 'the touchstone for the world' (Syed 2006 [1968], 53, 57).

In this we see the conceptual centre of the work: a debate on the nature of women and men, and their relationships, alongside the recurrent doubt that Ranjha is not a real jogi.

Hir and Ranjha achieve their goal in the end: after Hir and Ranjha escape and are caught, they make a successful appeal to a prince for mercy (Šābir 1986, v. 593). This victory is fleeting, however, since Hir's family murders her to prevent their marriage. Hir and Ranjha's almost-success, however, comes through Hir's intercession: it is Hir who curses the town (her, not Ranjha) (ibid., v. 608). Ranjha only helps her enact her curse (ibid., v. 611). Of course, he gets credit for the curse, being the *faqīr* (or, so it seems) (ibid., v. 613). Who has the power here? Deol argues that Hir's curse is ineffective without Ranjha's help – that 'the world will only heed the words of Ranjha' – but I do not see this incident in these terms (Deol 2002, 158). The text at its very end calls this into question, even as the story quickly ends in Hir's death, and then Ranjha's.

3 Beyond/within the 'composite' and the problem of comparison

What do we see in Waris Shah's *Hir*? Firstly, we see a range of debates around caste, gender, and status, in jest and in mocking. We see a challenge to religious authority, as highlighted by prior scholars Deol and Gaur, but this reflects a larger questioning of social hierarchies overall. This indeterminacy of social position is most centrally articulated in the status of the Jogi and the theme of the fake *faqīr*, linked to the debate about the falsity of conventions and critique of authority. We also see a debate about gender, which does not centre around sexuality primarily (as Deol 2002 argues), but around a comparison between men and women that is in turn linked to a challenge to social conventions and authority overall.

It is clear that what is at issue in Sufi Yogic transformations such as we see here is not the naming of religion *per se*. The aim of this essay is to suggest what might be named in its stead. Fuchs has argued that 'individualisation represents an attempt by social actors to fight and overcome conditions that limit or constrain them with regard to their spiritual as also their political wants and needs, their search for self-realisation, or even exclude them from participation in (religious as well as non-religious) communal life and from liberation' (Fuchs 2015, 336). We can see in this text, in this struggle against convention and authority, and the fluidity of movement in and out of social roles, the kind of individualisation Fuchs describes. What we see in *Hir* therefore are processes of individualisation that are both religious and social, reflecting a variety of operative norms

and diverse but shared religious individualizing processes (Malinar 2015, 387). The social critique in Waris Shah's text is paralleled by a critique of caste across the board in other texts of this period, as has been noted, so we can see this as broadly applicable to the period: the eighteenth century was characterised by violence and change, as centralised Mughal power waned and successors vied for power in Punjab (and elsewhere). The religious and social individualisation visible in the text under examination reflects this environment. We must therefore argue for modification of Mir's claim that the dynamics she sees in colonial period versions of the Hir-Ranjha story reflect the unique pressures of that period, 'the contemporary significance and reworking of social structures under colonialism [...] [and the] expression of anxieties produced by the social mobility induced by colonial rule' (Mir 2010, 132). We can see a similar dynamic, and movement towards religious individualisation, happening at this crucial juncture of the eighteenth century, amidst another period of tremendous social change. This allows us to see that the religious crossing we see is *secondary* to the *common* articulation of religious individualisation that this text describes, across social and religious roles, even as those roles themselves are described. Bernd-Christian Otto has described four aspects of individualisation: (1) enhanced ideas about individual choices/options, (2) a focus on the self or on creativity; (3) deviance and critique which can include 'openly criticizing established religious norms, concepts, persons and/or institutions' and (4) a focus on experience (inwardness, spiritual transformation, the move toward enlightenment – the link to bhakti or devotional traditions, mentioned earlier) (Otto 2017, 33–36). We can see aspects of all of these dynamics here. Religious individualisation is what links Jogi with *faqīr*, here, and both to a set of challenges to social norms and hierarchies.

What is at stake in the mixing of religious idioms here – that problematic 'composite culture' that needs to be explained today – is a drive towards religious and social individualisation, common *across* religious identities (and problematizing other social identities, such as caste and gender). It is the mobilisation of different technologies of individualisation that is at stake in the capacious choices that are being represented. As with *bhakti*, the choice to cross boundaries is linked not to an amorphous and ill-defined 'composite' culture (as has been rightly critiqued) but to the strategic destabilisation of authorities, hierarchies, and categories of meaning in order to foreground a form of critique, a kind of social and individual possibility, as an aspect of this early modern moment of religious and social articulation. A vision of alterity is embraced within this process of individualisation, and as such it depends as much on those very boundaries as it denies them, allowing us to account both for both the articulation of boundaries and their denial (instead of claiming, as the more assertive argument for the 'composite' did, the fuzziness of things in broad terms). Frances Robinson in a recent essay has argued that 'Muslim

societies across the world have been subject to a prolonged and increasingly deeply felt process of renewal' since the eighteenth century, but reflecting a longer dynamic (Robinson 2008, 259f.). This discussion attempts to bring some historical specificity to one instance of renewal, in Punjab, in the eighteenth century, before its modern forms that Robinson and many others have detailed.

The religious individualisation detailed here functions in particular with respect to the cultural resources of early Punjabi as a language and literature positioned in interstitial locations, rather than in courtly and institutional religious contexts, in the early modern period. This can help us to understand in a new way cultural production in early modern Punjabi outside of the court patronage, which has been associated with the achievement of literary vernacular cultural production in the subcontinent (e.g. Busch 2011). These questions, I believe, must fundamentally inform our understanding of religious identity in Punjab and the emergence of the language of Punjabi as a literary vernacular in the early modern period, and as a language of literature on the outside (Murphy 2019).

There are dangers to this argument, however, and I am well aware of them. First is the problem of any attempt to look across cultures/histories/religions to understand parallels. This argument can be seen to be akin to the designation of an underspecified 'mystical', for example, as a common religious core, regardless of historical difference, through the claim that the mystical is beyond description. If we fail to attempt comparison, however, we lack the ability to discern any explanatory or analytical mechanisms that 'cross boundaries' – which only reifies those boundaries themselves. This is the problem this essay began with. There clearly was, in short, something to compare and find in common for Sufis and Yogis, at particular times and in particular locations. I hope that the historically specificity engaged here allows us to avoid destructive simplification, to engage comparison in a way that discerns what was visible to some in their own time (regarding common technologies of knowledge production and physical transformation, for example). To put it simply, they have already compared and found commonality. It is a wonder why we have trouble doing so as well.

The second danger is related, although perhaps not in a way that is immediately apparent; it is also particular to the histories and contexts examined. Sufism has often been framed as 'outside' of Islam, as a way of domesticating it within the Indian national imaginary. As Partha Chatterjee noted in 1993, this national imaginary was built on claims to a Hindu classical past; we see the ramifications of this today in India. His words are worthy of long quotation:

The real difficulty was with Islam in India, which could claim, within the same classicizing mode, an alternative classical tradition. The nationalist past had been constructed by the early generation of the Bengali intelligentsia as a "Hindu" past, regardless of the fact that

the appellation was of recent vintage and that the revivalism chose to define itself by a name given to it by “others”. This history of the nation could accommodate Islam only as a foreign element, domesticated by shearing its own lineages of a classical past. Popular Islam could then be incorporated in the national culture in the doubly sanitized form of syncretism. (Chatterjee 1993, 73f.; see also discussion in Ernst 2005).

This explains Behl’s decision to emphasise the Islamic nature of the *prem-ākhyān* tradition, to combat earlier efforts to ‘fit’ these texts within a ‘Hindi’ (not Urdu) literary canon by de-emphasizing their Islamic nature (Behl 2012, Chap. 1). We can see parallels in India today, where the absorption of a de-Islamicised and therefore ‘safe’ Sufism can accompany the continued exclusion of Muslims. The problematic of the binary of ‘composite’ vs. reified boundaries possesses urgent contemporary force. For this reason, I do not ultimately reject Behl’s characterisation, his efforts to characterise the *prem-ākhyān* tradition as *essentially Muslim*. The politics of our day require it.

While terms like ‘mysticism’ are laden with both theological and ideological content, so too is *any* explanatory mechanism (and the effort to avoid one). (Green 2008, 1046ff.) The idea of religious individualisation as a process engaged by religious actors can perhaps allow us a heuristic device that moves beyond the binary of the undefined ‘composite’ and reified identity, to appreciate a shared quest from within. There are two things which save us falling into simplistic evolutionary schema (both those that posit a simple rise or a fall in rationality, individualism or even religious ‘purity’): first, that religious individualisation is not a teleological process that reaches somewhere and is finished; instead, it appears in multiple cultural and historical contexts (and thus, for example, might have been a feature of Punjabi, Sufi, or Yogi contexts at multiple points in the past and today; here we name only one); and second, that this is not a simple opposition, that deindividualizing forces always accompany individualizing ones, the striving towards ‘traditionality’ that Otto speaks of (Otto 2017, 49). These are dynamic relationships, not *simple* oppositions. Thus, they rely upon each other, and this is why we see so often in Waris Shah’s text the articulation of both hegemonic forms of social organisation alongside their critique: the threat of violence against Hir (which eventually is fulfilled) by her family, when she dares to love Ranjha. They discuss violence as a means of re-establishing control, and she asserts the evil of killing daughters (Šābir 1986, v. 115). The social norm and its rupture are both present in the text, side by side. We are meant to sympathise with Hir, perhaps, but we also see the other side.

If we remain aware of the dangers of simplistic formulations along these lines, there is a broader possible explanatory power of this line of inquiry that brings us back to the problem articulated at the opening: the division of Punjab in 1947. A wealth of literature has demonstrated how contingent this division was,

how it could have gone, until very late in the day, either way. We can perhaps understand what was arrayed against it, through our line of inquiry here. If the cross-religious, the in-between, both as kind of *bhakti* or devotional experience (as we saw with Bulhe Shah) and as a form of religio-social critique (as with Waris Shah) was tied foundationally to religious individualisation, it was grounded outside of the less individualizing institutional realms that received patronage in the colonial period. At that time, colonial administrative mechanisms encouraged collective organisation that denied the religiously individualist, demanding the designation of exclusionary religious identities, for example, and imposing judgements about the definition of such identities that privileged classical and canonical texts that did not seat or voice the individualizing discourses that were so prevalent in the non-canonical such as Waris Shah. This allows us to think in clearer analytical terms about the forces that failed to prevail in 1947, given that they found no institutional purchase in a colonial environment that theoretically privileged the ‘modern’ but in practice gave voice to entrenched institutional and communal forces and denied recourse to any discourse of the individualised, marked as that discourse was by ‘mixing’, by the vernacular.¹⁷ It was in the colonial period, we must remember, that Sufi ascetics and Nath Jogis came to be seen as competitors, rather than allies. Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims: all were under pressure to deny their points of intersection, and to cleanse themselves of locations where other conversations were ongoing, outside of a clear community definition. Thus we have a way out of the fuzziness of ‘composite culture’, towards a specific and particular understanding of a capacious vernacular religious positioning *on the outside*, positioned here as a specific effect of religious individualizing processes that were excluded from power within the colonial frame. This is why shared forces did not find the social power to counter the forces of division that prevailed in 1947, as strong as they were. These particular, individualizing tendencies persist today, within religions¹⁸ and across them, and particularly within ongoing modern Punjabi vernacular cultural production that exceeds the interests of the state and religious hierarchies alike, across the Indo-Pakistan border (Murphy 2018a). But that is a story for another day.

17 There is a large literature that demonstrates the ways British rule contributed to the construction of “feudal” and non-modern cultural forms; one of the most compelling is Ali 1988.

18 As portrayed in the brilliant trilogy of films by Ajay Bhardwaj 2005; 2007; 2012.

Note on transliteration: I utilise *ñ* to indicate nasalisation, except before a labial consonant, both internally and at the end of a word, unless a full *na* is indicated. Orthographically in the Perso-Arabic script (or Shahmukhi, as it is called in Punjabi), a final nasal is distinguished from a full *na*, but this is not the case internally (that is, *nūn* from *nūn ghunna*); different kinds of nasals are thus not distinguished in Shahmukhi. In Gurmukhi, a distinction is made between nasalisation and internal use of full *na*, and among different kinds of nasals; most often the distinction is between the dental (*na*) and retroflex (*ṇa*) and other forms rarely occur. (Internally, in Gurmukhi, palatal *na* (indicated by *ñ*) will be utilised as needed, if reference is made to the Gurmukhi text and the distinction is given). *kh* is used for *khe*, *ẓ* indicates *zāl*, *z* is *ze*, *zh* is *zhe*, *s* indicates *se*, *s̄* indicates *sīn*, *sh* is *shīn*, *š* is *swaad*, *ž* indicates *zwād*; *t* indicates *toe* and *ṭ* indicates *zoe*. *h* indicates *vaḍḍī he* and *h* is used for *choṭī he*; *gh* indicates *ghain*. Otherwise, conventions are as standard for new Indo-Aryan languages, with the standard dot underneath consonants to indicate retroflex sounds. Please note that the gemination so common in Punjabi is almost never indicated in Šābir’s text. Certain words will appear incorrect to a Punjabi speaker, as a result; I have not corrected this in the version of the text given here, to retain an accurate representation of the text as published by Šābir. I have however made several transliteration decisions meant to make this text more accessible to a more general audience: the use of *ch* for the unvoiced palatal unaspirated consonant (necessitating the inelegant *chh* for the aspirated version, but still more accessible for the non-specialist reader) and *sh* for *shīn*.

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Afterword: the social lives of religious individualisation

1 Looking beyond the individual

To consider the individual is to consider contexts, entanglements, and histories of the constitution of personhood in diverse locations: temporal, geographic, and cultural. Religious individualisation is enabled, taught, experienced, and denied within social contexts, and embedded within social relationships and structures. While the relevance of these has been denied by certain thinkers, as *Andrés Quero-Sánchez's* contribution makes clear through his work on the German Idealist philosopher Friedrich Schelling, these thinkers still recognise the constitutive nature of such particular entanglements – that which is not the Absolute, that which is contingent and incomplete – as a kind of threat to the Absolute of the Idea, in itself. Even in its denial and as threat, then, the social demands full recognition.

The articles in this section present different refractive views of the social entanglements that constitute the conditions of possibility for religious individualisation, and show how the intimate and dynamic relationship between such individualisation and the social ground can both give it life and prevent its flowering. We see how relationships to religious authority and/or divinity infuse particular force and meaning to relationships between co-religionists in *Martin Fuchs's* exploration of *bhakti*, and simultaneously how individualisation can both challenge and enable particular forms of social engagements and forms of critique, in *Anne Murphy's* contribution. *Rubina Raja's* article shows how material culture represents an imprint or trace, a kind of relic one might say, of the individual's role within a larger social-religious matrix. The individual, in this case, is made visible within the material trace, but simultaneously expresses multiple socially embedded allegiances and choices. To consider the individual as being outside of the social, is, in this case, to misapprehend the conditions which allow for the individual's emergence, and to ignore the ways in which the social functions to provide a meaningful location for the individual.

Looking beyond the individual, then, is key to a full understanding of religious individualisation and of the ways in which connectivities and social contexts constitute the individual in fundamental terms. As will be discussed below, this suggests that the individual should be seen as an inherently relational figure – the flawed particular, one might say, in the terms laid out in Quero-Sánchez's article – as well as

a self that is not bounded, is internally ‘sub-divided’, shifting (Murphy, Raja, Fuchs, as well as the subject of Part 2 in this publication). At the same time, as explored in Part 3, institutionalising forces are therefore fundamentally tied to the articulation of the individual, representing the social dimension of the individualising drive.

2 Seeing the religious through the social and the social through the religious

Can religious experience and the religious exist without the social, without the group, the unit? Can the individual act within a religious setting without a relational (and in this sense social) framework? Can processes of religious individualisation exist without the social at its core? The articles in this section allow us to view the religious through the lens of the social and vice versa. The social functions as a platform for communication and the means for the constitution of the group, the event, the text, the inscription, and the monument. This, in turn, perhaps paradoxically, provides possibilities for expression of the individual. The social, however, is constituted differently, and this partly under the influence of respective processes of individualisation.

We see the possibilities for expression of the individual clearly in the case of the Palmyrene *tesserae* examined by Raja: how a highly structured religious framework and the events which took place within this framework over time allowed for a high degree of individualisation in terms of how the entrance tickets to religious banquets, commissioned by individuals, were shaped through the visual language which they carried. On the one hand, these tickets are evidence for individual choices; on the other hand they were responses to a social framework around which the religious life in Palmyra was structured.

The same basic principle can be found in the case of *bhakti*, which is the topic of Fuchs’ contribution. Through providing religious individualisation for, in principle, everyone including marginalized people, *bhakti* is at the same time also based on the relational (individual-group, group-divine, individual-divine) as well as participational action. Through emphasis on connectedness and self-affirmation, the religious is strengthened through the group and at the same time allows for a firm location of the individual and processes of individualisation within this framework. Equally, the individual self is opened and opening out to others, ‘the’ Other, and the world, via its relations. In early modern Punjab literature, as presented by Murphy, processes of religious individualisation provide a framework within which religious as well as social differences are reconciled, integrated and equilibrated through the individual and his/her actions.

Regarding both the Punjabi and the general *bhakti* cases, all this has to be seen against the background of the (rigid) rules that inform worldly social relationships, which are both deeply hierarchical and gendered. In the writings of Schelling, as presented by Quero-Sánchez, an absolute rejection of the social aspects of the religious is encountered. However, through this extreme rejection, it also becomes starkly clear that this sort of individualisation could not have been voiced without ‘bouncing’ off the group, family and friendships. In this extreme case, one (the individual and the individualisation process) could in fact not exist without the other (the group and the social).

Reversing the perspective and seeing the social through the religious, we see in all four cases in this section not only that the social provides a ground upon which processes of religious individualisation are, if not promoted, then at least made possible, but also how the religious mediates the social, at the very least within core arenas. The limits of the plasticity of the religious were invented, tried, pushed and broken down by individuals always while referring to a social framework, which created the relational basis of the individualisation process. At the same time, the religious, differently in each case, creates its own social. This coalescing of the religious and the social suggests factoring in what we describe below as a triangular relationship of the individual, the group and the divine, or the absolute ground. Mediated by practices through which each of these agential instances is experienced (ritual, material practices, text, performance, teaching), it is the dynamic between all three poles/nodes that keeps religious life vibrant, and which also is the source of changes and novel lines of approach. The lenses of the social and religious, when used to reflect upon each other, allow us to investigate the processes and strategies of individualisation in a nuanced setting.

3 Interactional forms

In the above essays we have presented cases in which we see the individual (self) and the interpersonal brought closer together and related to what some call an underlying ‘Ground’, related to the ‘Absolute’ as described by Quero-Sánchez, or imagined in *bhakti* frames as a *nirgun* (formless) or *sagun* (with form) divine. This ground, absolute or divine, is included in a web of relationships with human selves and social formations, and this lends itself to notions of communication – relationships defined in or through communication. This ground or aspect of divinity is experienced as part of reality, part of one’s life and one’s relationships. At the same time, the experience of difference of the ‘Other’ (to whom one relates) persists. Thus the idea of transcendence within immanence, as invoked by Fuchs,

would have to be expanded. The image rather requires that we think of this third element in two respects simultaneously, on a horizontal level as constituted by the different actors or agents – the individual (self), other humans and ‘the’ Other – and with a vertical and paradoxical metaphor as a relationship to that which is experienced as the non-accessible.

The ‘Other’ here has a specific meaning. It is not so much, or not completely, the other as the unknown, unknowable and non-accessible, but it is that one with whom one shares something, or has something in common, and that one can thus address, experience, and expect responses from. The image itself then becomes one of intense (social) dynamic. In this sense the ‘Other’ is included in relationships with one’s human others.

The best way to depict this is that of a triangular model, but not one on a level plane. In this model the individual is not standing alone vis-à-vis the ground or divine, confronting God or ultimate reality, or being confronted by it. Instead, the individual, and the process of individualisation, grow out of social communication and relationships. The relationships have to be looked at from the angle of all three positionalities involved, that of the respective individual, that of the co-religionists, and that of the divine, which seen from this perspective is both an agent and a patient, a subject of others’ actions, too. The way this is being addressed in the different contributions varies. It reaches from setting the basic frame of triangularity to a depiction and analysis of the different voices and actions within this setting. Moreover, the cases are distinguished in the way they represent these interactive dynamics.

4 The issue of representation

The triangular model proposed here indicates the difficulty, if not impossibility, of representation in relation to the nodes that we hope to define. We have struggled with how to name its third node: it can be named as ultimate abstractness, reality, absolute, ground or divine. South Asian religions, for example, define aspects of this problematic through the terms *sagun* and *nirgun*, defining that which is named as either infused through the materiality of this world (‘sa’ = with, ‘guna’ = properties), or (with the second term) by its radical alterity from that world (where ‘nir’ indicates lack). This reflects a larger conundrum in the conceptualisation of religion as a whole: the sometimes radically contradictory variety of definitions that exist for the transcendental force, presence, or way of knowing that is seen to undergird the religious as a category, beyond (although often intimately linked to) a literal and materialist understanding of the world. The inadequacy of our

representational abilities is an urgent issue in the case of this third node, but the issue in fact informs this whole discussion. Moreover, we speak of the self, but this is not intended to imply or denote a stable and unitary self. It, too, eludes easy and cross-culturally appropriate delineation, and the effort to define it is immediately undermined by the variety of its definition, experience, and articulation across cultural and temporal contexts. Instead, our operative notion of the self is one that is fragmented, performative, and contextually defined (comp. Part 2 of this publication); the same is the case for any understanding of the non-materialist aspect that might define the religious. However, any critique of the idea of religion that follows from this problem (and that might argue that religion itself does not exist) does not generally satisfy – given the strong parallels that persist despite differences, and because the heuristic value of a category is not *necessarily* limited by the problematics of its application.

Similarly, notions of the social must necessarily be flexible and multiple in their configuration, and must be seen as directly part of the self – the self here is a relational self, as Fuchs' essay makes clear in the *bhakti* context, but can be generalised to a broader theorisation. Both material instantiations and textual representations here only gesture towards these elements, and these elements themselves are 'fuzzy' – they do not function as bounded entities, instead representing a set of relationships that are dynamic. The three nodes delineated, which comprise our triangular form, thus function in dynamic relation, constituting and shaping each other in interaction.



Part 2: **The dividual self**

Antje Linkenbach and Martin Mulsow

Introduction: the dividual self

Suddenly there is a young woman, in her mid-twenties, who arrives at the dhuni. She has a large, scarlet rhododendron flower in her mouth. She begins to circle the fire. People milling around move away to give her room, forming a circle of on-lookers. The elderly drummer who is sitting with his back to the wall of the small room beats his drum [...] The young woman begins to dance to the rhythm all the while circling the fire. At one point she trips over one of the logs and falls badly on her side, almost into the fire. A middle-aged woman – her mother perhaps – tries to help her up. She continues around the fire one more time then she drags a large log that is partially burning with her to the edge of the temple floor to the left of the drummer and the small room. She is handing out coconut halves to pilgrims who come up to her to accept the prasada. “Who is this woman?” I ask people standing near me. “It is Devi, the Goddess,” they answer.¹

The story outlined in the ethnographic vignette brings us to the heart of the questions taken up in Part 2 of the publication. Possession or embodiment is a phenomenon existing in the contemporary ‘modern’ world that makes us aware of the possibility of an experiential reality in which ‘the boundaries between an individual and her environment are acknowledged to be permeable, flexibly drawn, or at least negotiable’ (Boddy 1994, 407). Embodiment presents us with a multi-dimensional self and forces us to seriously rethink modern notions of individuality, agency and subjectivity.

The *Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe* has set itself the task to explore and compare processes of religious individualisation and its institutionalisation in historical perspective and across a wide range of geographically different regions. By investigating individualisation processes in a variety of non-secular (religious) and non-western contexts the researchers express a strong theoretical concern, namely to question the standard narrative of modernisation that considers individualisation as a specific phenomenon of western (early) modernity or (post-Reformation) Christianity. While the majority of investigations give proof of individualising ideas, narratives and practices in ancient, medieval and modern religious contexts of the Western and (South-)Asian hemisphere – showcasing deviance, marginality and social critique, as well as more or less successful processes of conventionalisation of individualisation – some of the investigations did not easily confirm a straight path to individualisation but opened the view for other, additional dimensions of self-constitution. Research on Roman Christianity, heterodoxy in 16th century Venice, or Persian literature of the 17th

¹ Aditya Malik, ‘The Swirl of Worlds: Possession, Porosity and Embodiment’; Section 2.3 of this publication.

century draws attention to multiple identifications, dialogic forms of writing, use of pseudonyms, the split between the poetic and the prosaic self, and thus to a certain way of parting and pluralising the self, or acting with multiple personae. Other examples challenging the one-dimensional individualisation narrative are performances of divine embodiment, which can be encountered even in contemporary religious contexts as illustrated in the ethnographic vignette above. While a spiritual medium presents herself as a singular, individualised person, her agency has to be understood as a shared or complex one – the human and the divine merge in an individual body. To understand such ambivalences and multi-dimensionality the research group engaged with debates in the social sciences evolving around the notion of the ‘dividual’ or ‘dividuality’.

The term ‘individual’ has become a commonplace even in contemporary everyday life and it easily escapes one’s attention that it is a word modified by a prefix. In-dividual presupposes something dividual, a divisible entity which was turned into something in-divisible. More recently the ‘dividual’ and its broader conceptual history has received some attention, for example in publications of Michaela Ott (2014) and Gerald Raunig (2015). Raunig traces the term in various societal and historical contexts and academic disciplines. He starts with Roman theatre and Greek philosophy, continues with Christian scholastic tradition, contemporary philosophy and anthropology, but pays special attention to processes of self-division in modern ‘machinic capitalism’, digitalised communication, economy and financial engineering. In her reflections on dividuality, Michaela Ott focuses solely on the present and suggests applying the concept of the ‘dividual’ to understand the human condition in the context of modern realities. In particular, she explores the multiple bio- and socio-technological processes of (forced) participation and appropriation of the contemporary human subject. Ott recognizes the human subject as deeply relational and thus embedded in a web of relations and occurrences that have powerful effects although they are often imperceptible. While webs involve immediate persons, things, or events, Ott is mainly interested in those technological dispositives which spatiotemporally increase human communication, interdependencies, possibilities of intervention and information – in brief, which allow multiplication of participation (*Teilhabevertiefung*). However, such processes of ‘subjectivation’ are ambivalent, they have a flipside. They do not go along with increased autonomy and individualisation² but carry aspects of objectivation. Based on the concept of ‘control society’, applied by

² Ott uses the term individuation in her text (2016, 19) to characterize participation under the auspices of boundedness, distinctiveness, autonomy and freedom. We replace individuation, which for the *Kolleg-Forscherguppe* indicates the ontogenetic process of a human being, with individualisation. Later and with reference to Ulrich Beck, Ott also talks about individualisation.

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, Ott asks whether freedom actually turns out to be unfreedom, action to be patience (2016, 26).³ She perceives the modern *anthropos* as embodied, governed, controlled and co-constituted by multiple others, embedded in partly unknown socio-technological dispositives of different scales (2016, 18). Against this backdrop of multiscale (inter-)dependencies, the modern human being appears increasingly self-alienated.⁴ Ott suggests capturing such de-individualising (*deindividuiierende*) and self-alienating processes with the term 'dividuation' (2016, 27, 63).

Both authors, Michaela Ott and Gerald Raunig, have (re-)discovered the semantic field of 'dividuum' and 'dividuality' to especially describe contemporary processes of multiple and often forced participation of the human being in larger configurations, leading to de-individualisation: that is, unintended and unwanted partibility, loss of control and agency and thus self-alienation. While this is definitely an important and legitimate analytical approach, with the contributions of Part 2 of the Individualisation-volume we want to indicate and open up another trajectory for research and interpretation: one which (a) (positively) emphasises the existential moment of relationality and porousness between human beings, things, and the transcendent, and acknowledges the capacity of relevant actors to co-create the human being and her/his perception of the Self; and (b) recognises the human potential of partibility and multiple identification and belonging as creative and enabling forces in human interaction. As a starting point for an investigation into spatio-temporal ways of constructing the Self as in-/dividual, we will start our enquiry by looking into the anthropological debate on personhood.

The American anthropologist and South Asianist McKim Marriott was one of the first who took up the notion of the 'dividual' to characterise what, from an allegedly 'emic' perspective⁵, appears as the composite nature of the human

³ Ott quotes literary and media scholar Mark B. N. Hansen, who sees agency no longer as the prerogative of privileged single actors. He states: 'Weit davon entfernt, eine unabhängige Kraftquelle zu sein, die von der restlichen Umwelt [...] irgendwie abgeschnitten ist, operiert menschliche Handlungsmacht als Konfiguration [...] innerhalb größerer Konfigurationen' (Hansen 2011, 366f., in Ott 216, 17). Ott states that in the light of the potency and spatiotemporal dynamics of those larger configurations it seems increasingly puzzling why an individual person still imagines her/himself as an independent source of power and agency, as an undivided and distinctive individual (2016, 17).

⁴ Ott understands the basic relationship of human beings to their significant Others already as a form of dependency and thus as alienation: 'Grundsätzlich selbstentfremdet, weil schon aus Gründen des Überlebens und Gedeihens auf menschliche Andere angewiesen und durch deren sprachliche Akte in seiner psychischen Realität mithervorgebracht [...]' (2016, 18).

⁵ The emic perspective refers to a view from within and Marriott claims to represent the indigenous-Hindu view. The 'emic' is opposed to the 'etic' perspective, the external and

being in Hindu India (Marriott 1996).⁶ In contrast to the bounded individual of Western imagination, which relates as an undivided unity to other such unities, the Hindu person appears as open, permeable and divisible, constituted by incorporated relations and transactions. Marriott designates Hindu culture as a ‘transactional culture’, characterised by institutional forms of giving and taking in the areas of kinship, parentage, services, ritual and worship.

To exist, dividual persons absorb heterogeneous material influences. They must also give out from themselves particles of their own coded substances – essences, residues, or other active influences – that may then reproduce in others something of the nature of the persons in whom they have originated. [...] Dividual persons, who must exchange in such ways, are therefore always composites of the substance-codes that they take in [...].

(Marriott 1976, 111)

The crucial point, so Marriott, is to understand that in Hindu contexts ‘those who transact as well as what and how they transact are thought to be inseparably “code-substance” or “substance-code”’ (Marriott 1976, 110) – the personal and the material element are seen as necessarily connected, as an entity. This has further assumptions: The substance-code-entities are of different quality and partible; the parts of substance-codes are in constant circulation; and all natural units (like persons) transform themselves by partition/division and absorption/combination of substance-codes. With regard to the concept of personhood one has to conclude that a singular person is not *individual* but *dividual*.

Within the framework of composite personhood, hierarchical structures and caste relations open up for new interpretations. Marriott argues that in Hindu contexts strategies of exchange differ between castes, respectively *varnas*. In view of the fact that giving or absorbing substance-codes transform the composition of a person, those who consider themselves of high and pure status are constantly alert not to negatively influence their nature and composition by incorporating inferior, impure substance-codes. ‘Persons [...] may preserve their particular composite natures and powers by stabilizing [...] their constituents, and by admitting into themselves only what is homogeneous and compatible [...]’ (1976, 111).⁷

objectifying perspective of the western socio-philosophical theories of society and action.

⁶ Marriott developed his approach by engaging with the theoretical works of Louis Dumont (especially *Homo Hierarchicus* 1970) and David M. Schneider (*American Kinship: A Cultural Account* 1968). Empirically he relied on Ronald Inden’s ethnographical studies on kinship and marriage in West-Bengal. Deeply influential was also Marcel Mauss’ essay on ‘The Gift’ (1954; French original ‘Essai sur le don’, 1925).

⁷ Marriott distinguishes between four ideal-typical transaction strategies, outlined in ‘classical moral code books’ and observable in Hindu everyday practices in all South Asian regions (1976, 122–9). Firstly, the asymmetrical *optimal* strategy of Brahmins: the Brahmin, as member

South Asia scholars criticized McKim Marriott's approach, especially for claiming an emic perspective while in fact applying abstract models and using mathematical language to illustrate the allegedly Hindu way of thinking (e.g. Moffat 1990). Another aspect seems to be similarly, or even more, problematic. Dividuality in Marriott's argument is meant to explain and legitimise the power of normative codes grounded in Brahmanical ideology, and with that the belief in and acceptance of *karmic* destinies and hierarchical social relations. Furthermore, Marriott exoticises the Hindu concept of personhood by presenting it as the unbroken Other in comparison to the Western individual, imagined as absolutely free and self-contained.

McKim Marriott's conceptualisation of dividual personhood did not cross the disciplinary boundaries of South Asian anthropology and even remained of limited influence within the discipline. When more than a decade later Marilyn Strathern re-introduced the concept of the dividual in her book *The Gender of the Gift* (1988), it made a far greater impact and triggered an intensive but also controversial debate within anthropology and across disciplines.

According to the author herself, *The Gender of the Gift* can be read as 'ethnography of Western knowledge practices'. Strathern critically dismantles anthropological and feminist approaches and confronts them with what she constructs as Melanesian knowledge practices (1988, xi). As a starting point she challenges the Western assumption which claims that, also at the heart of Melanesian cultures, there 'is an antinomy between "society" and the "individual"' (1988, 12). According to Western conceptualisations, it is society (sociality) that connects individuals, creates relationships and works as a unifying force, gathering people together 'who present themselves as otherwise irreducibly unique' and distinct from each other (ibid.). While Strathern considers sociality as a useful concept to describe the process of creating and maintaining relationships *between* individuals, she suggests a new vocabulary, which will allow describing social relationships also

of the highest *varna*, is predominantly a giver; he does not accept any lower and imperfect forms of substance-codes in order to preserve his ritual purity and power. Secondly, the asymmetrical *pessimist* strategy of Sudras: the Sudra is primarily a receiver of substance-codes that are considered valuable as they are coming from higher castes; the Sudra's givings are limited to deferential services. Thirdly, the symmetrical *maximal* strategy of Kshatriyas: as a member of a politically and economically dominant landowning group, a Kshatriya strives to preserve his power through cooperation and alliance-formation by exchanging goods and women. Giving and receiving practices are balanced. Fourthly, the symmetrical *minimal* strategy of Vaishyas: members of this *varna* are traders, merchants, and highly skilled artisans; they do not own landed property and are not involved in agriculture. They try to retain independence and economic mobility by minimizing exchange. They preferably give and take money, metal and grains and avoid goods attached to bodily substance codes.

within an individual, or, in her own words, ‘to talk about sociality in the singular, as well as the plural’ (1988, 13). Based on Marcel Mauss’ idea of gift exchange and referring to the work of McKim Marriott, Strathern understands Melanesians as ‘dividual’. Partibility and permeability are markers of Melanesian persons: these are the product of gifts, divine or human substances; they are constituted of the detached parts of, and relationships with, other persons through prior practices and exchanges (see Mosko 2010, 215). The following quote reflects not only the core of Marilyn Strathern’s theoretical approach but also of the New Melanesian Anthropology (NMA), which builds on her approach.

Far from being regarded as unique entities, Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived. They contain a generalized sociality within. Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produce them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm (1988, 13).

For Strathern, the plural and the singular – the collective and the person – are homologues. The collective as a unity of many is achieved by eliminating what differentiates them, and the same happens when a person is individualised: then the causes of internal differentiation are suppressed. She further highlights that a pluralised context can be the group, but it can also have a particular form – the dyad or the pair. In his ‘Strathernograms’, art anthropologist Alfred Gell has emphasized the importance of the dyadic structure, which underlies all (triadic, multiple) relationships (1999, 36). Why is the dyad, the pair so important? Single, composite persons do not reproduce, answers Marilyn Strathern: ‘it is dyadically conceived relationships that are the source and outcome of action’. Consequently, ‘[t]he products of relations – including the persons they create – inevitably have dual origins and are thus internally differentiated’ (1988, 14). However, for two persons to be able to come together as a pair, each must eliminate the internal dualistic (and multiple) differentiation to become the unitary individual.

The dual structure of agency in Melanesian life-worlds contrasts with the Western concept that imagines persons in a ‘permanently subjective state’, being the sole cause and source of activity (1988, 338). In Melanesia, so Strathern, though the agent acts from her or his vantage point and consequently also for her- or himself, s/he always acts with another’s vantage point in mind; therefore cause and action, person and agent are split. The *cause* is the objectified *person* the agent relates to and with whom s/he wants to maintain or transform this very relationship. The *agent* is the one who, because of this relationship, is revealed in his or her *action* and constitutes a ‘self’. However, activity and passivity, action and cause, subject and object are part of a mutual process and are evenly distributed. ‘The one and the same figure is both an object of the regard of others (a person) and one who takes action as him or herself on behalf of these others (an agent)’ (Strathern 1988, 273f.).

To roughly summarise Strathern's complex ideas: In Melanesia, sociality appears in two forms of plurality – the collective and the singular – and the singular plurality has also two forms: it appears as composite and dual (dyadic). As a dividual, the singular body manifests itself as partible and permeable, and represents a social microcosm of multiple relationships. However, dividuality is only one state of being. To be able to *act*, the singular *dividual* must become individuated: the multiplicities have, firstly, to be reconceptualised as dual, and then, internally, the dually conceived entity has to detach part of itself, to 'shed half the dual form' (1988, 275), namely that of the opposite sex partner, to be able to, externally, come together with another individual to form a pair. In her social life, a Melanesian person constantly moves from one state to another: 'from a unity (manifested collectively or singly) to that unity split or paired with respect to another' (Strathern 1988, 14). Although a person is intrinsically both dividual and individual, usually, and according to the social context, one of those characteristics features more prominently than the other.

Marilyn Strathern's book has been praised as 'a milestone in Melanesian studies', as the 'culmination and synthesis of analyses of the person' in anthropology (LiPuma 1998, 74f.). However, it has also triggered critique. Relevant in the present context is the argument that she contrasts a widespread Western ideal or 'imaginary' of the autonomous and detached individual with a Melanesian dividual reality, which is in fact constructed from an idealist point of view. Strathern 'describes a world in which the real is an idea, or a system of ideas, signs, and so on [...]' (Gell 1999, 32). Gell even does not see the Melanesia of Strathern's discourse as a real place that one could visit to verify or falsify the claims of the anthropologist; it moreover 'stands for an intellectual project rather than a geographic entity'. Melanesia and Melanesian cultures are the 'setting for a sustained thought experiment' (Gell 1999, 34). Despite his critique Gell strongly emphasises the methodological usefulness of Strathern's work, as it opens up new ways of imagining the person not as opposite to the social but as an inherently relational being. However, if we believe Edward LiPuma (1998, 74f.; 2000, 131), the strength of Strathern's account of dividuality is also its weakness: a project, meant to relativize our own categories, can easily lapse into an essentialisation of the opposites and invite an ahistorical and relativistic reading. Melanesian and Western personhood then appear as incommensurable, the dividual as the 'other' of individuality.

A number of anthropologists concentrating on Melanesia and inspired by the work of Marilyn Strathern, took an effort to further develop her approach on dividual personhood; they especially aim to avoid her essentialist bias and, by following a historical approach and focussing on processes of social transformation, try to understand individuality and dividuality as two dimensions of both

the pre-modern and the modern Self. To this end, they argue, historical developments like the Melanesian encounter with colonialism and the colonial state, with Christianity, and with new forms of commodity exchange and labour in the context of capitalism have to be taken into consideration. They ask, whether and in which way Melanesian personhood became modified, reshaped, and altered within the new socio-historical contexts?

Most prominently, Melanesian Christianity was established as a major anthropological research area, in which concepts of personhood were discussed.⁸ The debate was triggered by an article of Mark Mosko (2010) in which he criticises scholars who present Melanesian Christian personhood as strictly individualistic, and instead argues that Christianity lends itself to a dividualist interpretation and tries to illustrate the dividual character of personhood and agency among Melanesian Christian communities. He sees the relations between Christians, and those between them and their deity, as based on forms of reciprocal gift-exchange: Jesus and the Holy Spirit are considered detachments of God, who enter people's lives, are with them, help and heal them through 'visitations', and in return people give them praise through prayer, songs, sermons etc. Mosko argues that the concepts of partibility and detachment are deeply compatible with Christian ideas and teachings, a fact which could explain people's willingness to adopt the new faith as well as the rapidity of conversion in the region.

Edward LiPuma (1998; 2001) made the concept of dividuality fruitful for anthropological debates on the dynamics of Melanesian history and modernisation. He takes note of the fact that structures and processes of capitalism, the (colonial, national) state, international organizations (like The World Bank) and globalized Western culture engulf non-modern socio-cultural life-worlds – a process he calls an 'encompassment' of others (2001, 20). LiPuma recognizes that due to the powerful forces of encompassment, new structures and practices, but also desires, emerge and 'the cultures and people of Melanesia are tellingly transformed' (ibid.). For example, he highlights the mediating function of capitalist forms of labour and commodity exchange, which somehow reshape the cultural (dividual) form of the person in such a way that it 'becomes progressively reified as a self-contained, self-shaping, independent agent' (2001, 134). LiPuma strongly dismisses and argues against a perspective which disregards the complexities of the transformation process, ignores the possible resilience of local social structures as well as conscious resistance against new influences, and

⁸ See for example the following publications: Hess 2006; Mosko 2010; 2015; Robbins 2010; Errington, Gewertz 2010; Knauff 2010. See also the contributions of Barker, Dureau, Scott and Wilkes in 'Individualisierung durch Christliche Mission?' (2015). Aparecida Vilaca (2011) tries to make the concepts of dividuality and partibility useful for an exploration of Amazonian Christianity.

instead assumes an un-contradicted embracing of modern ideas and practices that do not leave traces of previous cultural particularities. LiPuma is convinced that both ‘dividual and individual aspects of personhood will vary across contexts for action’ not only in colonial and postcolonial Melanesia, but within *any* given culture (2001, 131); they are constitutive for personhood in *all* cultures and societies. LiPuma becomes even more explicit by arguing that the dual person, delineated by dividual and individual facets, is the ontological or existential form: The ‘person emerges from the tension, itself always variable and culturally/historically shaped, between these two aspects of personhood and the ways in which they are objectified and embodied’ (1998, 75).

Tracing partibility and dividuality in an anthropological, but also in a distinctly modern, context is the merit of art anthropologist Alfred Gell. In his foreword to Gell’s posthumously published book on ‘Art and Agency’ (2013), Nicholas Thomas highlights Gell’s concept of agency, applied to the field of art and strongly influenced by the thoughts of Marilyn Strathern. Actions are not expressions of individual will (the agent is not the one who causes events to happen, see above), but an outcome of mediated practices in which agents and patients are implicated in complex ways. Neither is the agency of the artist self-sufficient, nor is the art-product (the index) simply outcome and ‘end-point of action’, but a ‘distributed extension of the agent’ (Thomas 2013, ix). Gell does not restrict agency and patiency to human beings, but includes things and artefacts. They all possess a ‘kind of second-class agency’, which develops once they are interwoven into a texture of social relationships, are in conjunction with human associates (2013, 17), or as sociologist Jane Bennett (2010) would say, are part of an ‘assemblage’ (a term borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari). Gell also attests agency to the recipient of an artwork: here agency can manifest either as patronage or in the form of seeing, in which perception ‘goes beyond the information given’ (‘active spectator’); the recipient constructs the image of the thing perceived; the particular way of seeing comes as a function of previous experiences, etc. (2013, Chap. 3).

So far, the discussion on dividuality has clearly identified the problematic status of a theory of modernity which contrasts the Western imaginary of individuality with the constructed ‘dividual other’ of social and cultural anthropology. It has further highlighted the need to approach the question of dividuality versus individuality more broadly, namely from a historical as well as from an ontological angle. The historical (and praxis-oriented) perspective allows seeing the different and context-related ways in which dividual personhood may be transformed under conditions of ‘encompassment’ in colonial and postcolonial settings. It also allows identifying dividual aspects of personhood in Western modernity, and even may show how, in particular modern Western

contexts, real life conditions often contradict the idea of self-contained, independent individual personhood and agency.⁹ The ontological perspective brings the (primary) relational sociality of the human being into focus. Relationality, as *conditio humana*, implicates openness, partibility and vulnerability of the human subject even in its fully individuated form and in all social constellations, including modernity. While thus the co-existence of dividual and individual elements is constitutive for human subjectivity (personhood) throughout human history, the socio-economic and cultural challenges are decisive for the degree in which dividuality or individuality are required and valued in a particular historical formation.

The previous reflections may find support in Charles Taylor's book, *A Secular Age* (2007). As one crucial aspect of the process of 'secularisation' in the European world, Taylor addresses the changes in human self-perception ('sense of Self'). A modern social subject can no longer experience the 'fullness' of life by focussing her (his) highest spiritual and moral aspirations exclusively to God; in fact, these can now be related to different sources, even to those which deny God. Exclusive humanism, with its confidence in human powers of moral ordering, replaces an enchanted view of the universe, and a 'buffered' Self replaces a 'porous', vulnerable Self which is open to a world of spirits and powers (2007, 26f.).

The enchanted world of Charles Taylor is the outer, the natural world, inhabited by spirits, demons and moral forces, all endowed with thoughts and agency, and providing meaning. This world vanishes in a process of disenchantment, caused by the rise of naturalistic materialism and science. It makes space for a different world – or better, a world that is differently perceived – 'in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, spiritual élan is what we call minds' (2007, 30). The only minds, however, are human minds; they are bounded, they are 'inward spaces', and thoughts, feelings, agency and meanings are situated within them (2007, 30f.). An inward/outward geography represents the separation between the inner world of the human mind and the outer natural world and is also mirrored in the new way of sensing the Self. While the 'porous' Self characterises a state of being in which the 'line between personal agency and impersonal forces'

⁹ Karl Smith (2012) hints at the imbalance of the possibilities of individual agency and self-determination in patriarchal, multi-ethnic and class-based societies. He writes: '[...] men *might* be able to construct themselves as such, while women are expected to conform to socially ascribed roles. In multi-ethnic societies, the dominant ethnic group *might* permit individual authorship, while oppressed and marginalised groups often have their identities ascribed by the dominant culture. In class-based societies, the dominant class *might* permit its members to author their individual identities (but only within clearly circumscribed parameters), while subordinate classes are expected to perform their socially prescribed roles and so on' (2012, 58).

is not clearly drawn, the inner/outer boundary works as a buffer to the Self, ‘such that the things beyond don’t need to “get to me”’ (2007, 38).

While Charles Taylor concentrates on the significant transformations the human subject undergoes in its relationship to the outer world, he also traces changes regarding the subjective and the social world. All changes seem to be intertwined with an increasing consciousness of being an individual, and this sense of individuality could even pass over into atomism. On the subjective side, Taylor mentions shifts in identity,¹⁰ reflected in disengaged reason and the disciplined self-remaking as described in Norbert Elias’ ‘civilizing process’, including the ‘narrowing and intensifying of intimacy’ (2007, 300). Yet, such positive identity shifts also have a negative side: Boundaries can operate as limits, as ‘prisons’, which do not allow experiencing what is hidden by the instrumental-rational access to the world. The invulnerability of the buffered identity ‘opens it to the danger that not just evil spirits, cosmic forces or gods won’t “get to” it, but that nothing significant will stand out for it’ (2007, 303).

Regarding the social realm, Taylor asks whether disengagement – an attitude towards the natural world – is also carried out ‘in relation to one’s whole surroundings, natural and social’ (2007, 42). Living in an enchanted, porous world was, so Taylor, living socially – it was the whole society, which dealt with the positive and negative forces collectively, for example in ritual. By contrast, the modern, disciplined, buffered individual ‘moves in a constructed social space, where instrumental rationality is a key value, and time is pervasively secular’ (2007, 542). ‘Responsible individuals’ constitute societies ‘designed for mutual benefit’ (ibid.). However, there is also another side to the rationally constructed sociality. Taylor points to internal spaces of the modern buffered individual, which he considers pertinent for social relationality based on emotions. Discipline, self-control go along with an increase of privacy, which in turn demands intimacy.

Intimate space is, of course, social space, in that it is shared with (a few, privileged) others. But there is a close connection between inner space and zones of intimacy. It is in these latter that we share something of the depth of feeling, affinity, susceptibility, that we discover within ourselves. Indeed, without this sharing, be it in prayer, conversation, letters, without the sympathetic reception by close interlocutors, much of our inner exploration couldn’t take place (2007, 540).

Charles Taylor postulates a qualitative difference between the sense of Self of the pre-modern and the modern human being. While both pre-modern porosity and modern boundedness are most obviously apparent in relation to the outer (objective)

¹⁰ Taylor himself uses the notion of identity and speaks about ‘buffered identity’ (e.g. 2007: 136, 300, 303ff).

world, this qualitative difference also applies to the subjective and social world. However, if we take Taylor seriously, the pre-modern/modern difference seems to be not so clear-cut. Even in the modern constellation the individual as an emotional and a social being is characterised by a certain degree of permeability, which s/he can display in particular areas of life.

Pushing Taylor's insights a bit further one could suggest recognising the porous and the buffered self not as dichotomy representing historical stages (pre-modern vs. modern, enchanted vs. disenchanted, engaged vs. disengaged), but as imagined end-points of a socio-historical continuum (see also Smith 2012). However, this does *not* mean that such 'ideal-typical' endpoints coincide with the *social realities* of personhood – persons are never only porous individuals, nor unambiguously buffered individuals. Rather, the idea of a continuum allows acknowledging the necessary *co-existence* of relational/dividual and individual aspects of the human Self, although in varying degrees. It would thus allow exploring ideas and realities of permeability and partibility on the one hand, of closeness and boundedness on the other, in particular historical and socio-cultural contexts as well as in particular areas of life and particular situations.

So far we can conclude that throughout history persons move in different social contexts or areas of life – in which they relate to other persons, things (objects) and 'not unquestionably plausible' agents or authorities (the transcendent, the divine)¹¹ – and these contextual relationships require dividual as well as individual traits, each in different degrees.¹² Thus in/dividuality always includes both the openness (relatedness) and partibility of human beings as well as their capacity to become more bounded, indivisible, possessive and autonomous entities under particular historical circumstances.

Having said this it seems fruitful to briefly relate our reflections on in/dividuality to another debate – the one on the notions of belonging and multiple belonging.¹³ This debate emerged as a continuation of reflections on 'identity', but rightfully claims to go beyond this concept and avoid its limitations.¹⁴ The

11 Jörg Rüpke (2015, 348) defines religion 'as the temporary and situational enlargement of the environment – judged as relevant by one or several of the actors – beyond the unquestionably plausible social environment inhabited by co-existing humans who are in communication (and hence observable)'.

12 This is also illustrated with reference to Bhakti in Section 1.2 of the publication.

13 Significant contributions in this debate come for example from Anthias 2002; 2006; Hage 2002; Yuval-Davis 2006; Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, Vieten 2006; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013.

14 Identity, a concept deriving from psychology (Erikson 1980), relies on the drawing of sharp boundaries. In anthropology, but also in other social and political sciences it is strongly linked with the concept of ethnicity (Barth 1969; Nagel 1998) and ideas of nation and region (Anderson 1983; Elwert 1998; Gellner 1994). Studies on diasporas and multicultural environments as a result

notion of ‘belonging’ perceives human beings in their multiple relations to their social, natural and transnatural environments and thus strongly highlights positionalities, connections and attachments. Looking into these dynamics and flexibilities of personal belonging implies focusing on the ways persons ‘navigate’ diverse constellations of their life-worlds.

The concept of ‘belonging’ refers to ‘an emotionally charged, ever dynamic social location – that is: a position in social structure, experienced through identification, embeddedness, connectedness and attachments’ (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013, 13). Belonging has three dimensions: commonality, reciprocity, and attachment. It is about sharing values, experiences, practices and relations (including with non-human beings, artefacts and landscapes); it is about loyalty, trust, feeling safe, having strong linkages and possibilities (*ibid.*). Regimes of belonging such as families, ethnic groups, religious groups, or associations are defined through allegiances and bonds; to belong, they require particular orientations and moral commitments from those who want to belong. However, belonging (inclusion) also points to the other side of the coin – it always comprises exclusion as its opposite.

From the perspective of a person in a particular socio-historical context, belonging is always multiple; not only do in/dividuals live in several life-worlds at the same time, these life-worlds are also internally differentiated, and they may conflict with each other. Thus personal attachments, allegiances and solidarities have to be constantly negotiated, re-visited and re-formed – persons have to re-orient and re-position themselves – in short, they have to navigate the diverse constellations of belonging.

Multiple constellations of belonging and the need for at least some forms of personal manoeuvring are typical for all life-contexts throughout history and regardless of geographical location; however, they become especially evident with the ever-growing number of diverse socio-moral worlds and life-options on the way to modernity, as well as in situations of socio-political transition, (religious) conflict, or ecological risk, when established forms of coexistence begin to erode, and many people are forced to move to other geographical regions and adapt to new social environments.¹⁵ Such need for navigation of multiple contexts and belongings shapes not only a person’s behaviour and practice, but has

of migration processes started to challenge concepts of identity and ethnicity (Gilroy 1991; Brah 1996; Anthias 1998; Hall 2004). For a comprehensive anthropological discussion on identity and multiple identities, see Sokefeld 1999; for a discussion from the perspective of social and historical sciences, see Friese 2002.

¹⁵ See for example recent research in anthropology and sociology on the issues of diaspora, migration, refugees, displacement etc.

impacts on the perception of the self. First of all it means that a person has to (tacitly or consciously) divide his/her orientation and allegiance, gain the ability to operate in various life-worlds and then integrate the multiple normative orientations and positionings. The person presents her/himself as partible, as dividual, and this may allow a pluralisation or even a hybridisation of commitment and action.

This idea of *pluralisation* becomes extremely relevant for the European early modernity (1500–1800). It makes a big difference whether we describe this epoch using concepts of teleological processes such as secularisation and individualisation, or whether we think more cautiously in terms of a field of tension of pluralisation and authority, within which we can find a place for other characteristics of the time (Schulze 1998; Müller et al. 2010). Pluralisation means here principally the multiplication of social environments, frameworks of orientation, religious confessions and world-views, all of which made absolute claims to validity and consequent demands for loyalty. There were no factors, such as privatisation of religion, tolerance, and democratic institutions, mitigating the intensity of this competition; it bore down with its full weight on individuals, who had to find a way to come to terms with this plurality. One reaction was often the reinforcement of authority: to hold fast to one's own confession, way of living or world-view, if necessary under forcible imposition by a ruler. But this was not enough for some; there were certainly intellectuals or religious seekers who tried to steer their own course through the different possible social environments and systems of authority, to adapt to and withstand pluralisation and to respond to it constructively. We can connect this new perspective on the early modern era with the debate on 'multiple belonging', at least as far as individuals are concerned. There were for example professors and politicians who carved out careers crossing confessionally diverse territories with multiple conversions and reconversions (Mulso 2003), and there were libertines and freethinkers who devised conceptual constructs to give plausibility to their navigation beyond the reach of binding claims to the absolute.

Starting from this point, an alternative narrative to that of 'individualisation' in the European early modern era can be developed. This would be based on the idea, as with LiPuma and with our transformed approach from Taylor, that there have always been two aspects of personhood, one more individual and one more dividual. The individual aspect has often been described: from the self-assertion of the Renaissance person; the direct relation to God in Protestantism, further intensified in Spiritualism and Pietism; the moulding of the self by confession of sins; the Cartesian *cogito*; the discovery of autobiography; sensibility; and the Declaration of Human Rights (Van Dülmen 2001). But the altered awareness offered by the concept of dividuality is required to discover beside this a con-

cealed history of dividualisation, which runs alongside it and complements it, and which paradoxically often made an individual and distinct standpoint possible precisely by means of dividualising strategies.

Various conceptual tools were available for these strategies; they were forged by individual libertines and freethinkers, in order to enable an understanding of themselves as navigating between different worlds with varying systems of authority and validity (Mulsow 2007, 106, 206ff.). Initially these tools were theological distinctions, such as those between human beings in their originally biological nature (*status naturae purae*), and their condition as beings created by God (*status gratiae*). One could then ask the question whether, for instance, the philosophy of the ancient world, developed by thinkers who did not know of the Christian God, was one which saw the human being in '*status naturae purae*', even though this was for Christians merely an abstraction from the full image of mankind. Or one could maintain that one was putting forward a particular thesis from the standpoint of the *natura pura* only, while abstracting from 'grace', i.e. from Christianity. In this way some Renaissance philosophers tried to carve out a free space in which they could speak freely, purely as philosophers (for instance on the mortality of the soul), while otherwise submitting to the views of the Church. In doing so, these thinkers split their personhood into a part which was independent of theological prescriptions, and another which respected them. (Mulsow 2012, 58–79).

In the late 17th century Samuel Pufendorf's theory of natural law offered the possibility of refining this differentiation and of no longer expressing it in borrowed theological terminology. Pufendorf adapted the late scholastic doctrine of the *personae morales* (Kobusch 1997) for his own purposes, reframing it so that the different 'personae' which one could assume were something like social roles: one was at the same time, for example, a king, a father, a student of riding and an author, all according to the context one found oneself in. Shrewd proponents of the early Enlightenment such as Theodor Ludwig Lau saw in these concepts the opportunity to reformulate the free spaces which the Renaissance philosophers and libertines had created for themselves: an author could in one respect advance atheistic theories, and in another respect, privately so to speak, be nevertheless a good Christian (Mulsow 2012, 68). He would then have two different 'personae': an intellectual one in relation to his readership, and an inner one which rested on his private conduct. Lau related this notion to the contemporary idea of an 'eclectic' choice of convictions – the idea that one should not be confined to a single tradition (*secta*), as this would lead to pointless demarcation disputes, but should be without allegiances and free to select from all traditions, choosing only what stood the test of one's own judgement. The 'persona' which has this freedom is the intellectual one.

We can see in this a ‘division of knowledge’ which became ever more pronounced in the course of the 18th century, and which the theorist of literature Michael McKeon has described as a process of ‘domestication’ (McKeon 2005). This process goes hand in hand with experiences of, for instance, theatre productions, seeing and being seen, and increasing reflection on the question of what should be public and what should be private. The publication of the private, but also conversely the creation of imagined public realms, and the setting apart of a realm of the domestic and of the body, all contributed to the new sensibility for the division of knowledge. This was soon followed by philosophers such as Adam Smith, who no longer viewed the self as an ‘individual’ point, as Leibniz had represented it to be, but as something which was actually constituted only through being seen by others and in interaction with others. This was a social theory of the self (Haakonssen 1996, 131), through which Smith sought to understand morality as an attempt, founded in our gift of sympathy, to identify ourselves with the standpoint of an impartial observer.

To see the extent to which the idea of a *dividual*, social self – a self which constantly distinguishes between its own position and the public space of observers, but which allows each to be dependent on the other – has gained ground in the thinking of modern times, we only need think of how this theory of Smith’s found its influential 20th century reformulation in the work of George Herbert Mead (Costelloe 1997). Mead stressed the importance of the distinctions between the ‘I’, the ‘me’, the ‘self’ and the ‘mind’ – distinctions informed by language – and although Marilyn Strathern comes from another school of thought, some of her proposals are closely aligned with Mead’s: ‘it is through the separation of persons from one another that specific relations are created, and through relations that persons are defined [...]’ (Strathern 1999, 16). Even the transactional analysis developed by Eric Berne, though rooted to an extent in psychiatry, through its model of different ego states (child-like, adult-like, parent-like) – related to Freud’s structural model of the psyche – developed a possibility of analysing complex interpersonal communications in such a way that individual acts of communication can be thought of as emanating from different ‘egos’ or persons. In sociology, Bernard Lahire speaks of the ‘*homme pluriel*’, in the sense that in modern times one must be able to respond quite differently across a range of very different levels and situations (Lahire 1998); while theorists of literature examine ‘relational authorship’, detaching the creation of works from exclusive dependence on the individual.

These newer developments in the theory of *dividuality* make clear that an understanding of personhood in modern times cannot be based solely on the individual aspect – from the theoretical relation to the self, to self-awareness, to the ‘singularities’ of society (Reckwitz 2017) – but must always also include

the dividual. Whether we can deduce from this a process of dividualisation, which is consistently present alongside that of individualisation, is doubtful. Just as the *Kolleg-Forschergruppe* has already questioned the linear coupling of individualisation with modernisation and secularisation, we would not wish to describe dividualisation as a teleologically conceived thread, but as a moment – one which has taken on different forms again and again in different epochs and in different cultures, and which should always be taken into account, in any situation.

The structure of Part 2

By now it will have become apparent that we consider human beings being constituted by both dividual and individual qualities. Part 2 of the publication lays emphasis on the dividual side of the human being, and we consider dividuality to manifest itself in a twofold way. Firstly, dividuality is the dynamic foundation of human sociality and individuality, indicating the irreducible relationality of social subjects and their openness towards fellow human beings across different temporalities and societies. This basic relationality is not necessarily acknowledged in a respective social context and can be even suppressed in constructions of the Self, in social imaginaries and ideologies (e.g. in Western individualism).

Secondly, dividuality is a lived social reality and concrete social praxis in particular societies and social environments. Here social subjects may be aware of their relationality, permeability and their deep social bonds with others; they may also be aware of their partibility, allowing navigating diverse social contexts which require different ways of self-representation and action. However, while they possibly express this awareness in everyday life as well as in ritual practices and performances, they do not always and necessarily have an explicit (epistemological) concept of dividuality.

The three sections of Part 2 of the publication engage with different ways of understanding dividuality – in focus are in turn relationality, partibility and permeability. The distinct contributions refer to different geographies and temporalities, and this is exactly why the texts have intertextual qualities – they speak to, enforce and supplement each other. However, while addressing multiple ways of conceptualising dividuality or in/dividuality, the authors do not claim to be able to cover all possibilities of how to approach the concept.

The contributions will only be introduced briefly at this point. An afterword to each section, written jointly by the respective authors, will summarise the papers and highlight their connections.

Section 2.1 takes up *dividuality as ontological basis and pre-condition of humanity and human sociality*. All contributions develop their argument by looking into the Western scholarly tradition. *Julie Casteigt* and *Markus Vinzent* trace the development of relationality, reciprocity, respect and recognition in scholastic thinking, referring to the work of Albert the Great and Meister Eckhart. *Antje Linkenbach*, consulting debates in western intellectual history and contemporary phenomenological anthropology and philosophy, discusses empathy (sympathy) in its particular form of co-feeling the pain and suffering of fellow-beings and thus as basic element of morality. *Arthur Bueno* concentrates on the work of sociologist Georg Simmel, well known as an advocate of modern individuality. Bueno carves out a different perspective in Simmel's writings, in which a dimension of sociality comes into view that does eliminate and even blur the boundaries between individuals.

Section 2.2 focuses on *dividuality as partibility*. The contributors emphasise both the capacity of the person to move within different, often conflicting (religious) life-worlds and thus navigate multiple ways of identification and belonging, as well as the internal pluralisation of the person in literary accounts. *Riccarda Suitner* introduces the reader to the cosmopolitan, multi-religious environment of 16th century Venice, discussing confessional eclecticism and multiple conversions. *Shazad Bashir*, in his account, tries to make us familiar with 17th century Persian poets and poetry, presented as a biographical dictionary compiled in Agra (India) by one single author. Here, in/dividualisation as partibility comes to the fore through the complexities of two voices, the prosaic and the poetic self. *Martin Mulso* presents an analysis of pseudonymous philosophical and theological works from 17th century Europe, while *Matthias Engmann* directs attention to the pseudonymous writings of Søren Kierkegaard. Both contributors highlight the dialogic structure of the texts and the use of multiple pseudonyms, representing different (conflicting) theological positions or perspectives on existence.

Section 2.3 discusses dividuality primarily as *porousness or permeability*. The first contribution, the one of *Harry Maier*, brings us to Christian Rome in the 1st century and effectively links the previous and this section. Maier examines a letter of the apostle Paul to Philemon, in which Paul asks Philemon to accept Onesimus, a previous slave, as brother. Maier shows that the protagonists are not only engaged in multiple roles, are polypositional and multifaceted, but are also interpenetrated by superior powers and, accordingly, reveal shared agency. Complex agency and embodied experience of openness to the divine are also at the centre of *Esther Eidinow's* paper on ancient Greek divination. In addition, she draws attention to a reflexive sense of distance from self of those who (in a state of possession) gave and those who received oracles, creating a shared narrative

of the experience. *Aditya Malik* focuses on contemporary forms of embodiment in the Himalayan region of Kumaon (India); he refers to the example of a young woman embodying the Goddess in the temple of the God of Justice, Goludev. Malik poses the question whether the permeability of the individual person, realized in actual embodiment of the divine, results in radical alterity, in 'being another'. The two last contributions again relate to Christianity. *Christine Dureau* reflects on the ideal of self-sacrifice as the core of Christian personhood, an ideal shared by missionaries and converts in the Salomon Islands (South Pacific). She sees Christian views as perfectly in line with ideas of dividual personhood characterised by partibility, exchange of substances and thus by the significance of the gift. *Jutta Vinzent* investigates the field of visual art and concentrates on representations of Christ's crucifixion in (documentation of) performance art. She again brings up the issue of complex agency and raises questions concerning the authorship of the artwork, but also about the role of the spectator. Corporeality in art, in particular, evokes partibility and shared creativity, and creates sensual, embodied viewing.

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Section 2.1: **Dividual socialities**

Julie Casteigt

The subject as *totum potestativum* in Albert the Great's *Œuvre*: cultural transfer and relational identity

1 Introduction

When Albert the Great comments on the eleventh proposition of the *Liber de causis*, an anonymous tractate that had probably been composed in Baghdad in the ninth century in the circle of the Neoplatonic philosopher Al-Kindi and that had been translated into Latin in the twelfth century in Toledo, he is confronted with a theory of identity that questions the Aristotelian conception of the subject as a substance. According to the theory of identity in the *Liber de causis*, the first metaphysical principles, which are substances such as Being, Life and Intelligence, are not only defined by what they are in themselves but also by what they are in their causes and by what they are in their effects. So is it as well the case, according to the *Liber de causis*, of the soul and its faculties: the vegetative, sensitive and intellective ones. Their identity is not only to be conceived of as substantial (what they are in themselves), but also as relational (what they are in relation with others).

The cultural transfer of Neoplatonic Greek-Arabic metaphysics into the Latin world entails a change of paradigm in the idea of the individual as an isolated substance that constitutes an indivisible entity. Instead of conceiving of the identity as a substance in an atomic and static way, the Albertian appropriation of the *Liber de causis* theory offers a dynamic and relational conception of individual identity: far from excluding what is different from it, this conception includes it. This individual identity is, therefore, to be conceived of as a totality with what is different from its substance. Such a totality includes what is different from the individual substrate and is reciprocally included in it.

This dynamic and relational conception of the identity of the subject was not unfamiliar to the Middle Ages. The Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church had already applied the model of the *perichôresis*, or *circumincessio*, to conceive of the psycho-theological homology of the soul and its faculties with the divine persons, as they are described in the *Gospel of John* (for instance, in *Jn* 10:38 and 14:10): the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father. And, in his *De trinitate* (Augustinus Hipponensis 1968, 330, 29–331, 60–3), Augustine takes up this inheritance and conceives of the human soul as identical not exactly with its own substance but with the operations of its faculties: memory, will and intelligence. The soul does

not lie, therefore, under its operations, like a *substratum*. As a principle of life, the soul expresses itself through its faculties in different ways. These various modes of expression form, in return, the interiority of the soul. As in a Möbius strip, the inner and the outer are in the soul as a single act, a unique identity.

However, Alain de Libera, in his *Archéologie du Sujet* (Libera 2007, 287), asserts that this dynamic and relational model of the identity of the subject has only temporarily offered an alternative model to what he calls ‘attributivismus’: that is, the Aristotelian conception of the subject that the Middle Ages inherits. The ‘attributivismus’ model refers to the identity of the subject defined by the attribution of properties (qualities and faculties) to an individual substrate. According to Alain de Libera, soon the dominant conception of the subject as a *substratum* to which properties are attributed has annexed the Augustinian model according to which the identity of the subject includes differences and reveals itself through them.

In this paper, I would like to show, firstly, that Albert the Great introduces the categories of potentiality and relation into the conception of substantial identity inherited from the ‘attributivismus’ model. To do so, he appeals to the Boethian *totum potestativum*. Secondly, I would like to highlight that he is not completely satisfied with the Boethian attempt to conceive of a dynamic and relational identity. Especially, the hierarchical characteristic of the Boethian *totum potestativum* fails, according to him, to provide the means to think of a dynamic and relational totality in which the different powers are, simultaneously and reciprocally, in each other. However, Albert the Great finds this reciprocity in the *Liber de causis*.

2 Is the soul identical to its faculties?

The ‘attributivismus’ model appears in the conception of the soul that Albert the Great develops, in particular in his commentaries on the Aristotelian tractates (Anzulewicz 2012, 325–46) and in his anthropological synthesis *De homine*. But this conception, which is elaborated in a physical and anthropological frame, is put into question when it is transferred to a theological field. To expose the Albertian conception of the ‘attributivismus’ pattern of the identity of the soul as a *substratum*, I shall concentrate my attention on one of the texts in which the Master of Cologne contrasts it to an alternative model using the concept of *totum potestativum*. In their article upon totality in Albert’s *Œuvre*, Katja Krause and Henryk Anzulewicz, leaning on Pius Künzle and Dag Nikolaus Hasse (Schneider 1903; 1906, vol. 1, 35, 38–40; vol. 2, 521f.; Künzle 1956, 43–158; Park 1980, 506–8; Hasse 2008, 236f.; Müller 2009, 194–203; Hellmeier 2011, 66–9, 75f., 105f.,

117, 131f., 152f., 233f., 298, 311, 313f.; Krause, Anzulewicz 2017, 116; Mahoney 1980, 551f.), see in these two models of anthropologic identity (Albertus Magnus 2008, 4, 38; 17, 65; 27, 26; Albertus Magnus 1968, 1, 7–3; 1, 20; Anzulewicz 2012, 336; Anzulewicz 2000, 149, n. 4) a compatibility. For my part, I shall defend a reading of Albert's commentary on the first book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, highlighting the difference in the dynamics of what I consider as two distinct perspectives on the human soul. If one can speak about compatibility, it is then, in my eyes, in the same way as a cubist figure assembles on the unique plane of a painting several points of view that the spectator normally cannot see simultaneously. I propose to distinguish these perspectives on the human soul as different modes of being. They exist at the same time and concern the same subject but they describe different dynamics in which the human soul develops itself.

2.1 'Attributivismus' model and *totum potestativum*

First of all, let us show how the 'attributivismus' and the *totum potestativum* models are different perspectives on the identity of the same individual subject and, more precisely in this case, on the human soul. In 'distinction 3' of his commentary on the first book of the *Sentences* (Albertus Magnus 2015, 113, 9–22), *Albertus Theutonicus* asserts that the soul is not identical to its vegetative, sensitive and intellectual powers. Those are only its properties. Albert develops the difference between the identity of the soul as a spiritual substance and its identity as a totality of powers in the following way.

Either the faculties of the soul follow the soul considered as a spiritual substance – that is they are consequences of the soul, which is regarded as their principle – or they belong to its substance, if the soul is considered as a substance acting upon the body and upon what is external to the soul (Hasse 2008, 237f.). Only under this second perspective, the soul is understood as a *totum potestativum*, that is, as a whole susceptible of powers, which are the vegetative, sensitive and intellectual faculties of the soul. This means that the soul, as a totality of powers, achieves itself in and through its vegetative, sensitive and intellectual faculties, when these are understood as properties of the soul and not as consequences of it. Therefore, the complete power of the soul is composed by the particular powers of its faculties. That is why they are called substantial properties of the soul which would not, without them, find the fulfilment of its own possibility of being.

So, on the basis of the distinction between the logical status of 'consequence' and of 'substantial property' that is attributed to the faculties of the soul, it appears clearly that the two patterns of conceiving of the soul are incompatible: the powers of the soul are consequences of a spiritual substance, according to

the ‘attributivismus’ pattern, whereas they are substantial to the soul when conceived as a *totum potestativum*. The identity of the human soul can be described according to both patterns: the ‘attributivismus’ one and the *totum potestativum*. But each of them expresses a singular mode of being of the human soul and highlights different dynamics in which the human soul develops its own identity.

Secondly, Albert of Cologne demonstrates that neither according to the ‘attributivismus’ model nor according to the non-attributivismus pattern, the human soul can be identified only to its faculties. Let us, first, concentrate our attention on the ‘non-attributivismus’ model of the identity of the soul and show how Albert emphasises its potentiality and relationality. We will take up the name that he gives to it: a *totum potestativum*. Albert’s conception of the identity of a whole of powers, or dynamic whole, consists in describing the potentiality of a totality. Let us précis Albert’s arguments. A *totum potestativum* does not point out the nature of the soul as a spiritual substance but as an acting substance. It is, therefore, a dynamic pattern of identity. Albert argues that the identity that is proper to the ‘non-attributivismus’ model is not essential but potential. In other words, the identity of the *totum potestativum* does not describe the attribution of properties to an essence which would be in itself sufficient to define the identity of a being. He gives a theological reason for it: the soul is not essentially what it has, that is its faculties, since only God is what He has (Albertus Magnus 2015, 112, 58–60). But the identity of the *totum potestativum* intends to describe the potentiality of a totality and to stress how much the soul is present to its faculties and develops itself through them.

More precisely, when we say ‘the soul is its faculties’, for instance its senses, we attribute the *totum potestativum* as a predicate to the faculty to which the soul is present. In other words, it is true that ‘the soul is its senses’ only when it perceives. Moreover, this limitation of the identification of the soul, as a dynamic whole, to its faculties is reinforced by the different degrees of presence of the soul to its faculties. There is, namely, a hierarchical identification of the whole to its parts according to the level that each part – vegetative, sensitive or intellectual – occupies in the constitution and in the action of the soul. The soul can be either incompletely or completely present to its different faculties: the power of the soul, its *posse*, is incompletely in the inferior faculties, that is to say the vegetative and the sensitive parts of the soul, and completely in the superior ones, the intellectual part. The soul is completely present to the superior power, because the activity of the intellect always presupposes the power of the inferior parts. But even if the proposition ‘the soul is its intellect’, that is the predication of the soul to the superior part, is more adequate than its predication to the inferior parts, nevertheless, it is not a completely appropriate predication (ibid., 113, 23–33), because it is not an essential predication of an attribute to its subject, but

a potential and hierarchical predication of different powers to an active whole that develops them. Therefore, it is never possible to say properly that the soul is its faculties, because they are either consequential properties of a spiritual substance, according to the 'attributivismus' model, or powers of an active whole to which the soul is more or less completely present, according to the *totum potestativum* pattern. Moreover, according to the *totum potestativum* model, the mode of predication is only potential, and not essential.

Thirdly, from the point of view of categories, these two conceptions of identity are not compatible. They are different points of view on the same being and they define its identity according to different perspectives (ibid., 113, 36–8). The 'non-attributivismus' model introduces, thus, not only a dynamic perspective on identity but also a consideration on its potentiality, that is, on its possibility to act and to develop its powers. It is a model of identity concentrated on what a being, taken as a whole, can become through its action more than on what it is according to its essence, or nature. Yet, *posse*, or the possibility to act and to become, belongs to the category of quality, whereas *esse*, or being, pertains to the quality of substance (ibid., 112, 63). As a consequence, the 'non-attributivismus' model differs from the 'attributivismus' one also from a categorical point of view: it considers identity under the category of quality, and not of substance. The question that the *totum potestativum* raises is not, therefore, 'what is this being as a nature?' but 'which quality can a being acquire through the development of its powers?'; 'which possibilities do its faculties endow it through their action?'. Thus, we understand that, even if the 'attributivismus' and 'non-attributivismus' models are not compatible, yet, they can be understood as different categorical points of view on the identity of a being. The qualitative point of view considers the possible becoming of a being as a whole that develops itself through its powers. The substantial point of view takes a being as an individual defined by a nature, that is a genus determined by a species, and considers its properties.

For example, if we say that the powers of the soul – which are its memory, its will, its intelligence – are the soul itself (Pseudo-Augustinus 1845, 789; Alexander de Hales 1960, 64, 15–17; Bernardus Claraevallensis 1957, 57, 18f.; Albertus Magnus 2015, 113, 1–8), we identify the faculties, taken together, to the soul only as far as we consider here the soul as a totality constituted of parts endowed with powers. In no way are the faculties identified to the soul according to its essence (Albertus Magnus 2015, 113, 34–6). The faculties are not, indeed, a definition of the soul, insofar as they are not logical parts, like genus (animal) and species (rational). The identity of a *totum potestativum* is, thus, dynamic, potential, or better: virtual. 'Virtual' indicates, namely, a force (*virtus*) to develop oneself through one's own powers. But the action of the faculties does not affect the nature of the soul. The action of the faculties happens to the soul as an accident,

that is, as a contingency that could have been different. The identity of a *totum potestativum* is, therefore, dynamic: a being is considered from the point of view of its relation with what is outside of it, or different from it. The identity of the soul as a *totum potestativum* refers to how and what the soul imagines, remembers, desires, loves, understands... Such relations are constitutive of its being as a potential totality, that is, as a totality the identity of which is always defined by its tendency to develop itself through the relation with what is different from it. This kind of identity is, thus, called qualitative, in the sense of relational, and accidental, as far as it includes the contingency of the different relations that a being builds in the different circumstances of its existence in time and space.

Albert calls this type of relational and contingent identity also a qualitative identity, as opposed to a substantial or essential identity. With this distinction, Albert shows that, in these different modes of identity, the individual is always considered as a totality, that is, as a composition of parts that imply relations with each other. Moreover, he emphasises that the so-called individual is always a composition of potentiality and actuality. Therefore, with the distinctions that we will now explore, Albert extends to other modes of identity the dynamic, potential, relational aspects that he has underlined in the identity of the *totum potestativum*. Far from being an alternative secondary model, the identity that is proper to the whole of powers manifests some characteristics that could be common to other modes of identity, above all in the aspects of relationality and of potentiality.

2.2 The extension of potentiality and relationality to other models of identity

Albert exports the characteristics of potentiality and relationality that he finds in the ‘non-attributivismus’ model of the identity of the human soul to other patterns of identity concerning the human being as a whole, body and soul. We will focus on the essential and on the substantial modes of identity.

2.2.1 Essential identity

The essential identity of a being concerns what is part of its essence (Albertus Magnus 2015, 113, 38–41). At first sight, this mode of identity belongs to the ‘attributivismus’ pattern. But Albert elaborates the mode of essential identity, so as to underline its potentiality and its relationality. He shows, namely, that, under an essential point of view, identity means also totality. Here, Albert deals with the totality that he calls the absolutely first composition of a reality, for instance body

and soul for a human being. Body stands for what a human being is as a *substratum*, its *quod est*, and soul for what gives the body its form as the body of this precise individual (its *quo est*) (Schneider 1906, 393; Hasse 2008, 236f.). So body and soul are not *stricto sensu* parts of the definition of a human being, as genus and species, but they have the very logical functions of genus and species as matter and form. The function of matter is, namely, what is indeterminate and receives an identity, whereas the function of form is what gives determination to the *compositum*.

This definition of identity from an essential point of view applies also to spiritual beings, like the soul. The soul is, indeed, also a totality composed by its parts that cannot be matter and form, because matter is known from its potentiality to be moved and to change (Albertus Magnus 2015, 111, 36–40). As the soul has no matter, it is, therefore, rather constituted by *quod est* and *quo est*. *Quod est* differs from matter as the substrate of a hylemorphic compound differs from the potentiality to receive a form: in the same way as the *substratum* lies under the potentiality, *quod est* ‘lies under’ matter, as its condition of possibility (Albertus Magnus 2015, 111, 47–51; Algazel 1933, 7, 23–5; Gilbertus Porretanus 1847, 1321B; 1966, 202, 86f.; Albertus Magnus 1993b, 272, 50–273, 3). In some way, it is the condition of the possibility to become other than it already is. For this ground potentiality, according to Albert, there is no other definition than what can be predicated to what is: everything that can be attributed to a spiritual substance belongs to *quod est* as a set of all possibilities. Therefore, the soul is essentially constituted of the very ontological foundation of matter itself, that is, of the possibility to be determined, on the one hand. And, on the other hand, the soul is composed of *quo est*, that is, of being in the sense of the essence in action. *Quo est* means the actualisation of the fundamental potentiality that the soul is (Albertus Magnus 2015, 111, 51–9; Boethius 2000b, 187, 26).

Thus, the individualisation of the being of the soul comes from its properties that, in their turn, follow the *quod est*. Not only does the essential identity of a being include its potentiality to become, through its determination, but also the essential identity of a totality evolves according to its properties, that is according to the determinations that can occur to the substance. Therefore, the essential identity describes a totality that includes the possibility to be determined as the condition of its own identity. And the unity between the principle of potentiality and the principle of actuality is much more important than the unity between matter and form in a hylemorphic *compositum*. When it comes to the soul, *quod est* and *quo est* are, namely, inseparable, whereas the form of a hylemorphic *compositum* is separable from its matter. Moreover, whereas the form of matter is the form of a part of the *compositum*, *quo est* is the form of the whole (Albertus Magnus 2015, 111, 60–8; cf. Boethius 1916, 215, 16–216, 2). Therefore, the essential identity of the soul is relational and dynamic: it relies on the most intimate relationship between the condition of potentiality and the condition of actuality.

2.2.2 Substantial identity

The extension of the notions of potentiality and of relationality inside a totality applies also to the substantial identity of a being. This substantial identity (Albertus Magnus 2015, 113, 41–54), for its part, considers the being of a *compositum* inasmuch as it is composed. At first sight, this mode of identity belongs also to the ‘attributivism’ model. Let us see how Albert elaborates the substantial mode of identity of the human being as a body-soul composition to bring out its potentiality and its relationality. In such a substantial totality, there are, namely, indispensable parts that achieve the potentiality (*posse*) of the soul as motor of the body and other parts that fulfil the being of the body, insofar as it is moved by the soul. Thus, in this perspective, both parts of the *compositum* are taken as correlative. In other words, they are considered under the aspect of their mutual relationship as active and passive terms: the soul, inasmuch as it moves the body, and the body, insofar as it is moved by the soul. Not only are the parts correlative, but the whole as well cannot exist without the substantial parts that contribute to the perfection of its substance.

Nevertheless, the parts of the substantial whole do not achieve the perfection of the whole in itself, but only in its parts as considered in themselves (*secundum se*). The soul, for its part, is the perfection of the whole, whereas its substantial parts can only achieve perfection of the singular parts. In other words, they do not achieve the perfection of the soul in itself. But, in some way, they can be said to achieve the perfection of the soul inasmuch as the soul is the substance of the body and moves it. In the substantial conception of identity, the parts contribute, namely, only to an aspect of the identity of the whole. The parts cannot embrace the identity of the whole. The whole maintains its supremacy upon the parts. Only the upper part can have an influence on the totality in itself (*secundum se*). The body as such and the soul as such are not affected *per se*, in their own essence, by the other part of the composition. The relationality of the substantial totality is not reciprocal and total. The parts develop the potentiality of a specific part of the substantial whole.

Therefore, to describe the substantial identity of a compound Albert does not appeal to his distinction about the identity of the soul, that is, between the identity of a spiritual substance and the identity of an active substance. He does not either explicitly refer to the notion of *totum potestativum* in relation to substantial identity. Nevertheless, he transfers the relational, dynamic and potential conception of the identity of the soul as an active substance to the substantial identity of the human being as a *compositum* of body and soul. In the perspective of the substantial mode of identity revisited by Albert, each individual is to be considered as a totality that depends on the potentiality of its parts. Each part, depending on

its hierarchical grade, has a specific relation to the whole. Therefore, substantial identity appears as a relational, dynamic and potential conception of the identity of an individual that includes a variation according to the grades of potentiality, namely the degrees of capacity to achieve the whole or its different parts.

As a conclusion on the first step of this paper, it appears that there is another way of conceiving of the identity in Albert's *Œuvre* that is alternative to the 'attributivismus' model. This pattern is essentially dynamic, relational, orientated towards the potentiality of the individual subject, conceived of as a totality of powers. Albert calls this model *totum potestativum*, which means that the potentiality of the active subject is achieved through its powers (*ibid.*, 113, 17–19). The second point is that the characteristics of the identity of the *totum potestativum* apply under certain aspects to the other conceptions of identity. They reveal that the identity of every individual can be considered as a totality that implies relationality between its parts. The conception of those parts depends on the different points of view adopted on the identity of the individual.

Under the aspect of its essence, an individual is, namely, a composition of potentiality and determination: either of matter and form for physical beings, or of *quod est* and *quo est* for spiritual beings. Thus also, a spiritual being which is not made up of matter is a totality that is composed of possibility, which is the condition for its being determined by the actualisation of its essence. Under the aspect of its substance, an individual is composed of indispensable parts. The superior ones achieve the potentiality of the soul as a whole, the inferior ones complete the potentiality of the body. They do not separately accomplish the potentiality of the whole. Therefore, Albert extends the main characteristics of the identity model of the *totum potestativum*, that is, relationality and potentiality, to the other conceptions of identity, namely essential and substantial. He reveals that they all deal with a compound that is considered as a dynamic totality that develops and achieves its own potentiality.

3 Hierarchy or equality?

3.1 Hierarchical relationality

To develop an alternative model of identity to the 'attributivismus', Albert has recourse to the notion of *totum potestativum* developed by Boethius in his *De divisione* (Albertus Magnus 1913, 75; Boethius 1998, 38, 13–40, 1; 40, 25f.; cf. Schneider 1906, 519f.; cf. König-Pralong 2007, 391–7; cf. Hasse 2008, 243f.). On the one hand, the whole of powers is distinct from the integral whole, or quantitative

whole: for instance the totality of points constituted by a line or the totality of a body constituted by its limbs. On the other hand, the *totum potestativum* differs from the non-continuous whole in which the parts are ordered to a first principle: the pastor for the flock, the chief for the people or for the army. Lastly, the whole of powers distinguishes itself from the universal whole (Libera 1980, 529–58; 1981, 55–74), for instance the categories of horse or man for all the individuals that they comprehend. The whole of powers, for its part, is constituted and developed by its own powers.

Albert develops two main properties for the soul as *totum potestativum*. The first concerns the procession order of the faculties from the principle and the second regards the relation of inclusion. The powers to grow, to feel and to understand flow, namely, from the soul, as the principle of life and movement. The first power, the vegetative, is included in the median one, namely the sensitive power, and both of these powers are included in the latter, the intellective one, as the triangle is included in the tetragon.

The second property is relative to the respective power of action of each faculty. All that the lower powers, the vegetative and sensitive ones, can do, the superior power, namely the intellective one, can also do. Moreover, the superior power can do it in an excellent and eminent way. But Albert asserts that this relation is not convertible, in the logical sense, that is, the relation is not reversible: the lower powers cannot do what the upper can.

Let us note at once that, in the tradition of the Latin authors invoked by Albert, the problem of the inclusion of the faculties of the soul and of their powers to act is that this is not reciprocal: *a* is in *b* which is, in its turn, in *c*. For its part, *c* concentrates all the power of action that it receives from *a* and *b*. Furthermore, *c* determines in its own way the powers that it receives from *a* and *b*. But this relation does not function in the opposite way. *A* and *b* cannot do what *c* can do.

The whole of powers is a hierarchy. The whole of powers, in its parts, is so that the first part is potestatively included in the following, or the median one, and the median one in the furthest one, as Aristotle says in the second book *De anima* (Aristoteles, *De anima*, lib. 2, cap. 3, 414b28–415a18 in Thomas de Aquino 1984, 87b and cap. 6, 91ab), that the vegetative <power> is in the sensitive one, and the vegetative and the sensitive in the intellectual one, as the triangle is in the tetragone. And, for this reason also, Dionysius (Dionysius Areopagita 2012, 25, 9–11; Dionysius Areopagita 1937, vol. 2, 823f.; cf. Albertus Magnus 1993c, 80, 88–81, 2) and Boethius (Boethius 2000a, 149, 88–150, 91) say that all what the lower power can, the higher power can in a more excellent and eminent way, not the other way around.
(Albertus Magnus 1895, 408b)

In the totality of powers, like the soul, the parts stand in a relation of inclusion of the lower powers in the highest one that possesses and can do more than the lower powers can do. This type of relations does not correspond in any way to a

relation of reciprocity. In these Boethian and Dionysian perspectives that Albert takes up, the soul is a hierarchical totality without reciprocal relations between its parts. Therefore, to resolve the problem of the full reciprocity of the relations in the soul as a totality of powers, Albert needs another model. He finds it in the eleventh proposition of the *Liber de causis*.

3.2 The solution of the *Liber de causis* for the reciprocal interiority of cause and effect

At the end of the eleventh proposition of the *Liber de causis*, the Latin translation (Casteigt forthcoming) gives an example that describes the dynamics of reciprocity in cause and effect. In the example, the anonymous tractate deals with the powers of the soul as well as the first metaphysical principles, in particular Intelligence and Being. The example gradually enumerates how the sensible power of the soul is in the soul and, then, how the soul is in Intelligence, as a universal principle, and Intelligence in Being, as the upper principle, just under the unknowable and ineffable First Cause. The cause is, namely, in its effect on the mode of the effect that receives it.

And indeed, we abbreviate and say that the thing that acts (*res agens*) upon a thing on the mode of the cause is in it only on the mode according to which its cause is, as the sense <is> in the soul on an animated mode, the soul is in intelligence on an intellectual mode, intelligence <is> in being on an essential mode, the first Being <is> in Intelligence on an intellectual mode, Intelligence <is> in the soul on an animated mode, and the soul <is> in the sense on a sensible mode.

(*Liber de causis*, prop. XI (XII), in Albertus Magnus 1993a, 124, 78–82)

Unlike the non-reciprocal relations between the parts of the *totum potestativum*, the characteristic of this description is the reciprocity of the immanence of the cause in its effect, in the ascendant movement, and of the effect in the cause, in the descendant movement. How shall we understand *res agens*, so that the senses are in the soul on an animated mode and, reciprocally, the soul in the senses on a sensitive mode?

In order to account for this reciprocal immanence, Albert's strategy consists in varying the meanings of 'cause'. The senses are, namely, in the soul on the animated mode that is proper to the soul, inasmuch as they determine and achieve the soul through a sensation in act. Reciprocally, as the *substratum* that receives this determination, the soul confers its own mode to the senses. So, the senses and the soul are simultaneously causes of each other but each according to a different meaning. The senses, which come after (*posterior*) the soul, are causes in the meaning of what formally determines and achieves the soul. The soul, which

precedes (*anterior*) the senses, is a cause in the meaning of the *substratum* in which what comes after inheres on an inchoative, that is still indeterminate, mode.

Transferring the example taken out of the *Liber de causis* to the powers of the soul, each one is in the other one according to a relative rank: anterior, median and posterior grade. The relative order of the powers inside the soul conditions the reciprocity of their relations. The vegetative power of the soul is in the sensitive power on a sensitive mode, and is in the intellective one on an intellective mode. In other words, what is anterior in the development of the soul, as a whole of powers, is determined as a sensation in the senses and as an intellection in the intellect according to an integrative process in which the soul expands its activity. And both the senses and the intellect lie in the vegetative faculty of the soul on a still indeterminate mode that remains as a potentiality for the development of the soul. The senses, in their turn, as the median part of the whole, are in the vegetative power as in their *substratum* (in the sense of determinable cause) on an indeterminate mode and they are in the intellect on an intellective mode, as a sensation achieved in an intellection. The intellect is, at its turn, in the senses and in the vegetative faculty as in its *substratum* on an indeterminate mode.

4 As a conclusion

Firstly, Albert does not only conceive of the identity of the subject on an ‘attributivist’ mode that predicates attributes to a substance. He also develops an alternative pattern that he identifies with the Boethian *totum potestativum*. The features of this model offer a dynamic perspective on identity. They underline the potentiality and the relationality of the individual subject conceived of as a whole that develops itself through its powers.

Secondly, Albert highlights the potentiality and the relationality inherent to other modes of identity, such as the essential and the substantial ones. The identity of the individual is, namely, to be conceived of as a totality composed of potentiality and actuality, or of the fundamental possibility to become and of the determination of this possibility. The model of the *totum potestativum* emphasises that every individual is a totality that implies different levels of relationality: on the ground level of the condition of determination and reception of this determination, on the level of the first ontological composition of matter and form, on the level of a substance and its properties, or on the level of a whole of powers and its faculties.

Thirdly, the *totum potestativum* is a hierarchical whole in which the relations are not reciprocal. With this model, Albert cannot account for the equality of the

parts that entails their reciprocal immanence. But, following a Greek-Arabic-Latin *translatio studiorum*, that is, a transfer of texts and doctrines from Greece to the Latin medieval world through the Arabic cultural arena, he finds a model for this reciprocity of the relations between the powers of the soul in the eleventh proposition of the *Liber de causis*. Through a variation of the meanings of 'cause' – as *substratum* (determinable cause) and as determination (determining cause) – Albert explains that the lower powers of the soul are in the upper ones on the mode of the upper ones, that is as a determination, and that the upper ones are simultaneously in the lower ones, as in their *substratum*, on an indeterminate mode.

Albert the Great's *Œuvre* offers, therefore, several models to conceive of the identity of a subject. They remain incompatible points of view on the same individual. And they describe the identity of the subject under different perspectives and dynamics: the powers of the soul are consequences of the spiritual substance, according to the 'attributivismus' model, whereas they are substantial parts of the soul considered as a whole of powers, in particular. But Albert highlights, in each of the conceptions of identity that he displays, the relationality and the potentiality that each point of view on the identity of an individual implies. From a historical, geographical and, more generally, cultural point of view, it follows that the Albertian conception of the subject, as a completely relational, that is reciprocal, totality, requires not only a Greek-Latin *translatio studiorum*, but a more complex detour: from Greek through Arabic to Latin texts, cultures and ways of thinking.

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Markus Vinzent

Monism and dividualism in Meister Eckhart

1 Big Bang – monism and division

According to my former co-fellow of King's College, Cambridge, the astronomer Martin Rees, 'our universe sprouted from an initial event, the "big bang"'.¹ Not the concept of this event itself, he sees as problematic,² but the real challenge he sees in a unified interpretation of 'electric, nuclear and gravitational forces as different manifestations of a single primeval force'.³ He maintains this primeval force and the big bang, even though he moves away from the idea of a single universe to embrace the more recent concept of multiple universes, each with its own big bang, a conceptual shift, he thinks, that is as radical 'as the shift from pre-Copernican ideas to the realisation that the Earth is orbiting a typical star on the edge of the Milky Way, itself just one galaxy among countless others'.⁴ In his follow-up book, *Just Six Numbers*, Rees describes what he calls the 'especially significant' numbers, of which two 'fix the property of space', and another in particular captures 'the seeds for all cosmic structures [...] all imprinted in the Big Bang', the number on which 'the fabric of our universe depends'.⁵ Of course, as little as Rees wanted to invade the space of theologians and philosophers, so as little I'd like to tread on the grounds of astronomers and mathematicians which are extremely unfamiliar to me. Yet, it is interesting to note that while Rees sees the biggest move in his own approach as his shift away from an older universal monism, he is still wrestling with the idea of 'a single primeval force' – which he

1 Rees 1997, 1.

2 *Ibid.* 2: 'I would bet at least ten to one that there was indeed a big bang: that everything in our observable universe started as a compressed fireball'.

3 *Ibid.* 3.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Rees 1999, 3.

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does not substantially challenge, but only complements by other forces (captured in the essential numbers) that are seen as manifestations of the one primeval force, and by multiplying the idea of the product of the one force through the assumption of multiple Big Bangs and universes.

Moving back from contemporary astrophysics into past philosophy and theology, we will see that Meister Eckhart (before 1260 – 1328) had conceptualised the first principle in another revolutionary way which might be compared with the Copernican turn, but in which he remained a loner. As I will show in this contribution, he thought of the first principle not as a unique, primeval force, monistic power or single divine Godhead, but as a dividual transcendental cause. Although this idea can already be found in his known Latin works,⁶ two recent manuscript re-discoveries allow us to gain a novel insight into this view which Eckhart had presented both to his scholarly audience at Paris in Latin and again to a lay-audience in the vernacular.

In these manuscripts, as I will detail below, we find core texts, in the form of *Quaestiones* on the topic of '*relatio*', that seem to go back to a lost collection of *Quaestiones* that Eckhart presented at the University of Paris in the years 1311/1313 when, for the second time, he held the chair of theology – a post reserved for foreigners, and an honour which prior to him was only granted to Thomas Aquinas.

At the opening of the vernacular *Quaestio*, Eckhart's interlocutors are portrayed as theologians who represent the long Christian (and Western non-Christian) tradition, according to which the first principle was equally a single principle and monotheism taken in the numerical sense ('Our God is one God'; 'Do not worship another God beside me'). Consequently, the interlocutors saw in the single Godhead the ontological basis, the one God and Father, within which, according to the ecclesial tradition, the Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit were rooted, but both the generation of the trinitarian persons of Son and Spirit, and the production of this world were reserved for the Father in his generative and creative activity. The Father's divine essence, the single Godhead, was seen as transcendent and beyond generation and creation. Just as with Rees and the one primeval force, the masters of Eckhart's time could not conceive of an essentially non-monistic first principle. In this regard, Eckhart developed a contrasting model of the first principle which to him was not only a theological or philosophical tenet, but – on the basis of his assumed interrelationship between natural sciences and ethical, philosophical and theological knowledge – was also seen by him as an alternative model that explains not only the generation of the Trinity, but equally the creation of the universe.

⁶ See Wojtulewicz 2017.

2 The discovery of Eckhart's *Quaestiones* on 'relation'

Since the first edition of Eckhart's vernacular works by Franz Pfeiffer from the year 1851, we have known of a vernacular *Quaestio* by the Dominican master on 'relatio'. Yet – because Pfeiffer had taken this text out of its context and, together with other excerpts that he made from a soon later lost manuscript, placed and understood this text as one of a series of 'Sayings' ('Sprüche')⁷ which by scholars were seen as ambiguous, dubious or inauthentic material – the text had not attracted any attention. This has now changed for three reasons.

First, in 2010 I made the re-discovery of a set of four *Parisian Questions* by Meister Eckhart 'On the attributes [of God]', to which was added the summary of a further *Quaestio* unearthed by Walter Senner⁸, and which are now all published by Loris Sturlese in a supplement to the critical edition of Eckhart's works in the Kohlhammer edition⁹ with a joint German translation.¹⁰

Second, as the last two of these re-discovered *Quaestiones* (now *Quaestiones Parisienses* VIII and IX) deal with 'Relation' and 'Difference', my attention was drawn to the afore-mentioned vernacular *Quaestio* of Eckhart on 'relatio' and I asked myself how this vernacular text relates to the re-discovered Latin *Quaestiones* on the same topic of 'relation'.¹¹

Third, and most importantly, by chance and scholarly attention, the famous manuscript 'P' (dated to the 1320s) had recently re-appeared, which contains the vernacular *Quaestio* on 'relatio', and parallels the same text as preserved

7 Pfeiffer 1857, 606–14, nn. 31–48.

8 Vinzent 2012, 156–86; the previously already known and recognized *Parisian Questions* can be found in the critical edition by Bernhard Geyer in *Meister Eckhart, Die Lateinischen Werke* (hereafter *LW*), V 27–83; English translation of these previously known questions in Maurer 1974.

9 Sturlese 2011 and the added fragment of a Question, found by Pater Walter Senner, which was initially edited and translated in the mentioned article in Vinzent 2012, now published by Sturlese 2011, 488.

10 Sturlese 2015; further studies on the new *Parisian Questions* have already been published or are under way: Vinzent 2015; Vinzent 2016; Mieth 2017a; Ian Richardson, *Meister Eckhart's Parisian Question on God's omnipotence*, Eckhart: Texts and Studies (forthcoming); Jana Ilnicka, *Meister Eckhart's Parisian Questions on Relation and Difference*, Eckhart: Texts and Studies (forthcoming); Markus Vinzent, *Meister Eckhart's Parisian Question on Absolute and Directed Power*, Eckhart: Texts and Studies (forthcoming).

11 This topic has been picked up by Jana Ilnicka for her PhD thesis which received the Erfurt University Prize, 2019. For an English publication of her results see the note before.

in a Berlin manuscript (with some fragments in a Munich manuscript).¹² When Pfeiffer made his excerpts, 'P' belonged to a private collection at Giessen, Germany¹³; it was subsequently sold to the architect Hugo von Ritgen who restored the Wartburg Castle, close to Eisenach, Germany, in the late 19th century, and as a gift by the architect became one of the medieval props of von Ritgen's restoration project. Since 1909 the codex was thought to have been lost,¹⁴ but in 2015 it turned up again in the small collection of manuscripts of the Wartburg. It was Balázs J. Nemes who was able to identify the manuscript, after he came to know of its existence through Klaus Klein (Marburg).¹⁵ Late in 2014, Klein had directed Nemes towards an entry by Renate Schipke and Kurt Heydeck in the *Handschriftencensus der kleineren Sammlungen in den östlichen Bundesländern Deutschlands* from 2000.¹⁶ This notice – in which Schipke and Heydeck described and characterised Ms. 1361–50, Wartburg-Stiftung Eisenach, as a 'collection of spiritual sayings, legends and teachings of mystics, amongst whom Meister Eckhart' – had escaped the eyes of Eckhart scholarship.¹⁷ The entry was based on a description of the manuscript, made by Renate Schipke already ten years earlier in 1990, after the Berlin wall had come down and the danger of identified medieval manuscripts being snatched by Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski had gone.¹⁸ The report, however, had rested unread for a decade at the Wartburg, because in those years further restoration work of the castle, including the archive, had started and not come to an end by 2015. Still, even though Nemes had identified the manuscript, because of the building works at the castle it took a while to get access to the manuscript. Since the first inspection of the manuscript in April 2015, in collaboration between

12 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. fol. 986, 200^{vb}-201^{tb}. The Ms. germ. fol. 986 dates from the mid 15th century; Ms. germ. fol. 986 is known to Eckhart scholars since 1940, see Quint 1940, 7–10. According to Nemes, the ms. belongs to a group of mss. with mystical literature from Swabia and Alemannia, which derive from the Charterhouse Buxheim, 15th century, see Nemes 2015, 182–3, n. 15 and his description of this ms. in *Manuscripta mediaevalia* (online: <http://www.manuscriptamediaevalia.de/?xdbcddn!%22obj%2031257534%22&dmode;=-doc#|4> [last accessed 21st September 2016], with further literature). On the Muncic manuscript, see Schneider 1996, 559.

13 Pfeiffer 1857, IX, n. 15.

14 See Spamer 1909, 313, n. 3. Similar Bray 2013, 483, n. 11 and Gottschall 2013, 535.

15 See for this, and the history of the discovery of the manuscript and its provenience, Nemes 2015.

16 Schipke and Heydeck 2000, 68, n. 66.

17 *Ibid.* 'Sammlung geistlicher Sprüche, Legenden und Lehren der Mystiker, darunter Meister Eckhart' (own translation).

18 Whether he had or would have touched such manuscripts, I don't know and have not researched; see, however, Blutke 1990.

Nemes, myself and Julie Casteigt, we have been able to see the manuscript itself and photograph it. Since this time, Nemes and I have worked on the manuscript, and we were soon joined by art historian Beate Braun-Niehr. As a first result, in the beginning of the year 2016, we showed the re-discovered codex to scholars and introduced the public to it during an exhibition that Jutta Vinzent mounted: 'Performing Bodies. Space and Time in Meister Eckhart and in Performances and Video Installations by Taery Kim, 24.01.2016 – 13.03.2016, Galerie Waidpeicher, Erfurt'.¹⁹ In the same year, we also jointly presented the finding to an audience in the Library at the Stadtbibliothek Weberbach, Trier, on 25th October 2016.

The importance of 'P' had not only been seen by Pfeiffer, but also by Heinrich Denifle and Josef Koch who had identified some of the excerpts, given by Pfeiffer, as redacted translations of Eckhart's Latin, mainly exegetical, works.²⁰ Loris Sturlese, therefore, put the redactor amongst those Dominicans of Cologne who, despite the condemnation of some of Eckhart's views in the papal Bull *De agro dominico* of 1329, continued 'to intensely care for the heritage of the deceased Master for some decades'.²¹ Whether or not we are dealing with Dominican students of Eckhart from Cologne who translated Eckhart, or with Eckhart's own translation – alternatives which, as Nemes has rightly pointed out, must not be mutually exclusive – still needs to be researched, particularly as the latter part of the re-discovered codex (the vernacular *Quaestio* on 'relatio' is contained in this part) has a parallel in another manuscript, preserved in Berlin, as mentioned above. Though the full study of the Wartburg manuscript has begun, it will take a while until we will be able to present a comprehensive account of the new finding.²² In what follows, I will only focus on the short vernacular *Quaestio* on 'relatio', as it provides us with the most concise summary of Eckhart's teaching that relates to monism and dividuality and which I will read against the background of the Latin *Quaestiones* on 'Relation' and 'Difference' and Eckhart's other works, informed by the successfully submitted PhD by one of my students, Jana Ilnicka.²³

19 See http://www.erfurt.de/ef/de/erleben/veranstaltungen/ast/2016/123478.html#pk_campaign=Redirector-Webcode&pk_kwd=ef123478 (last accessed 10th April 2017); see also the exhibition catalogue: Vinzent and Wojtulewicz 2016.

20 For this and what follows see Nemes 2015, 181; Denifle 1886, 429–32 and Koch 1963, 148–9.

21 Sturlese 2007a, 131–2. See also Sturlese 2007b, 117: 'Die "Eckhartisten" arbeiteten, als ob die Bulle "In agro dominico" überhaupt nicht existiert hätte.' A survey on the production of spiritual literature in German and Latin during the first third of the 14th century is given by Schubert 2013, 256–60.

22 See for a preliminary report Vinzent 2017.

23 See Ilnicka 2018.

3 The question ‘On relation’ of the Wartburg-Stiftung Eisenach, Bibliothek, Sign. Ms. 1361–50, fol. 87^r-87^v and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. fol. 986, 200^{vb} -201^{rb}

Here is the text of this *Qaestio*, based on these two manuscripts from Wartburg and Berlin²⁴:

Eckhart, On Relation	Own translation	Structure
<p>/1 Meister Eghart und ouch ander meister sprechent /2 daz zwei ding sind in gode: wesen und widersehen /3 daz da heisset relacio:</p> <p>[Contra:] nu sprechend die meister /4 daz des vader wesen /5 den sun in der godheit niht gebird:</p> <p>[Pro:] Wan [da] der vader nach sinem \/ [m.r.: wesen] ensiht niht anders danne in sin bloßes wesen /6 und schouwet sich selber da inne /7 nah aller siner kraft /8 und da schouwet er sich blos an den sun /9 und an den heiligen geist: und sicht da mit dann einkeit sines selben wesens Wen aber der vader ein widerschou- wen und ein widersehen haben wil /10 sin selber in einer ander person /11 so ist des vader wesen in dem widersehennne geberend den sun</p>	<p><1> Meister Eckhart and other masters too state, that there are two things in God: being and reflection, that is called <i>relatio</i>.</p> <p>[The counter-argument:] Now the masters say that the Father’s being in the godhead does not give birth to the Son.</p> <p>[The argument:] <2> If according to his being the Father has in no other way insight into his bare being, and sees himself in there according to his entire power, he there sees himself bare without the Son and without the Holy Spirit, hence he sees then oneness of his very being. If, however, the Father wants to have a regard and a reflection of himself in another person, it is the Father’s being which gives birth to the Son in this reflection.</p>	<p>‘being and relation’</p> <p>bare being, oneness and sameness</p> <p>reflection is consti- tutive for persons in God</p>

²⁴ Text and translation follow the critical edition with German translation by Ilnicka 2018. Some of the following ideas are also based on her PhD.

Eckhart, On Relation	Own translation	Structure
<p>/12 und wand er im selber in dem widersehen so wol gauellet /13 und im daz widerschouwen so lustelich ist /14 und wand er alle wollust hat eweklich gehebt /15 darumbe so muost er /16 ouch dis [wist] widersehen <87v> eweklichen hauen: darumb so ist der sun ewig als der vader /2 und von dem wolgeuallen und von der minne /3 so vader unde sun ze samen havend /4 so hat der heilig geist sinen urspring:</p>	<p><3> And as he is so delighted about himself in this reflection, and the regard is so desirable for him and as he had such desire for eternity, therefore he must have this reflection, too, for eternity. The Son is, therefore, as eternal as the Father, and from the desire and love as they are enjoyed by Father and Son jointly, the Holy Spirit has its origin.</p>	<p><3> the eternity of relation</p>
<p>vnd wan disv minne zwichchen dem vader und dem sun ist eweklich gewesen: darumbe so ist der heilig geist /5 als ewig als der vader und der sun: und hand die dri person niht wan ein bloßes wesen und sind allein underscheiden an den personen: wan des vaders person ward nie des suns noch des heiligen geistes person: und alle drie \/[m.r.: sind] ein ander vremde an den personen /6 und sind doch ein in dem wesen 1 ouch < B; 3 da < B; 5 ensihet] sicht Gi2; 9 da mit dann] da niht wan Gi2; 16 ouch] < Gi2; dis] ding B; 2 von der < B; minne] inne B; 4 nun] wan; 5 niht wan] mit denn B</p>	<p>Hence, as the love between Father and Son has existed for ever, therefore, the Holy Spirit is as eternal as Father and Son. And the three persons have only one bare being and are different only with regards to the persons. The person of the Father, namely, was never that of the Son nor the person of the Holy Spirit. And all three are alien to each other with regards the persons, although these are one in being.</p>	

As the apparatus shows, there are a number of smaller text critical problems with this text, the most difficult being the understanding of ‘wan’ in 5.²⁵ As the following ‘Wen aber’ in 9 shows, the ‘wan’, too, has to be read as the start of a condition,

²⁵ The difference in line 9r between niht wan] mit dann is contentwise irrelevant, but simply a variant expression. Line 16r dis] ouch ding might indicate that ‘ouch’ has dropped out from P. In contrast, in line 2v one character in B has dropped out of ‘minne’, so that only ‘inne’ remained, a phenomenon that we can also see in other places in B, where B seems to leave out characters or even words. Irrelevant with regard to content is also the difference in line 5v niht wan] mit denn B.

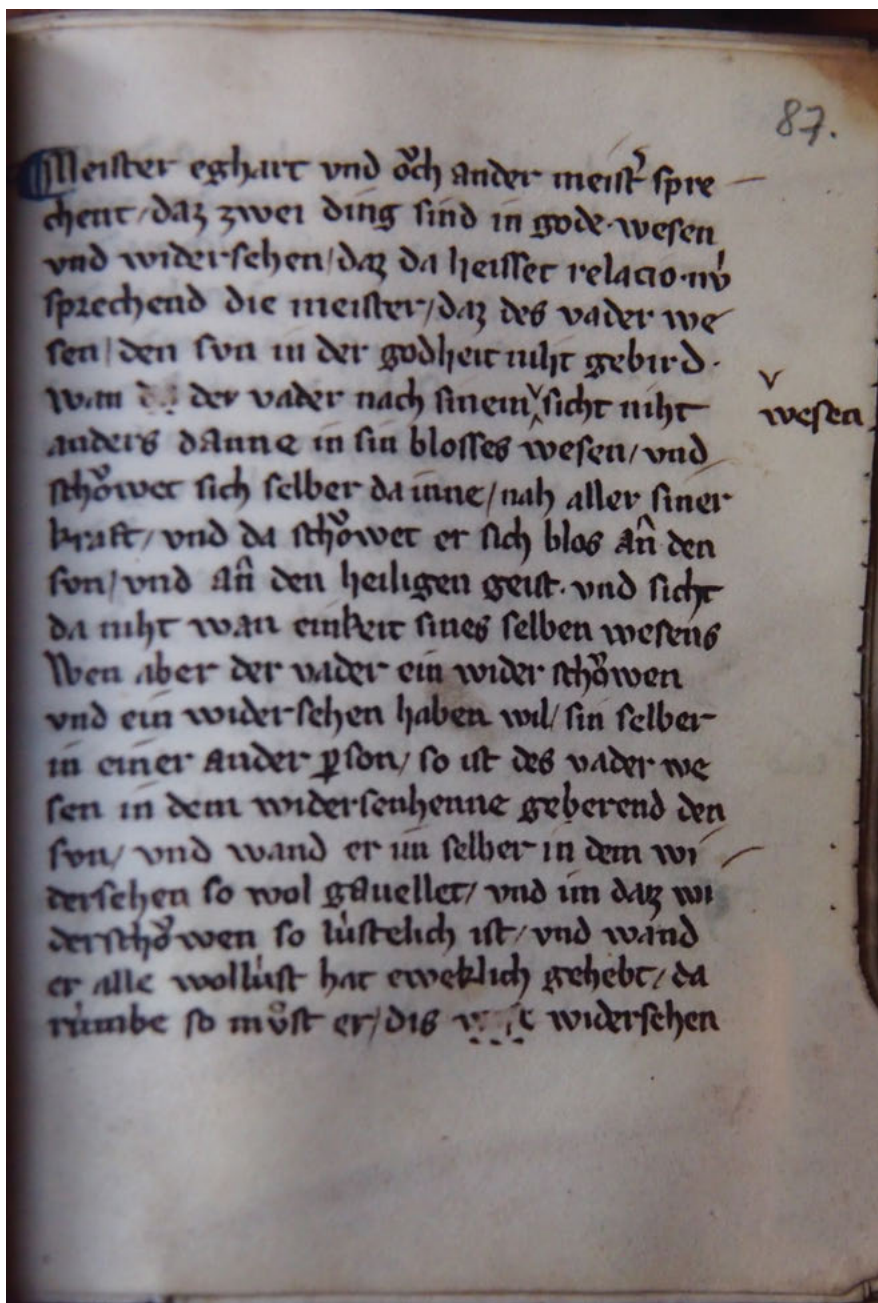


Fig. 1: Wartburg-Stiftung Eisenach, Bibliothek, Sign. Ms. 1361–50, fol. 87^r.

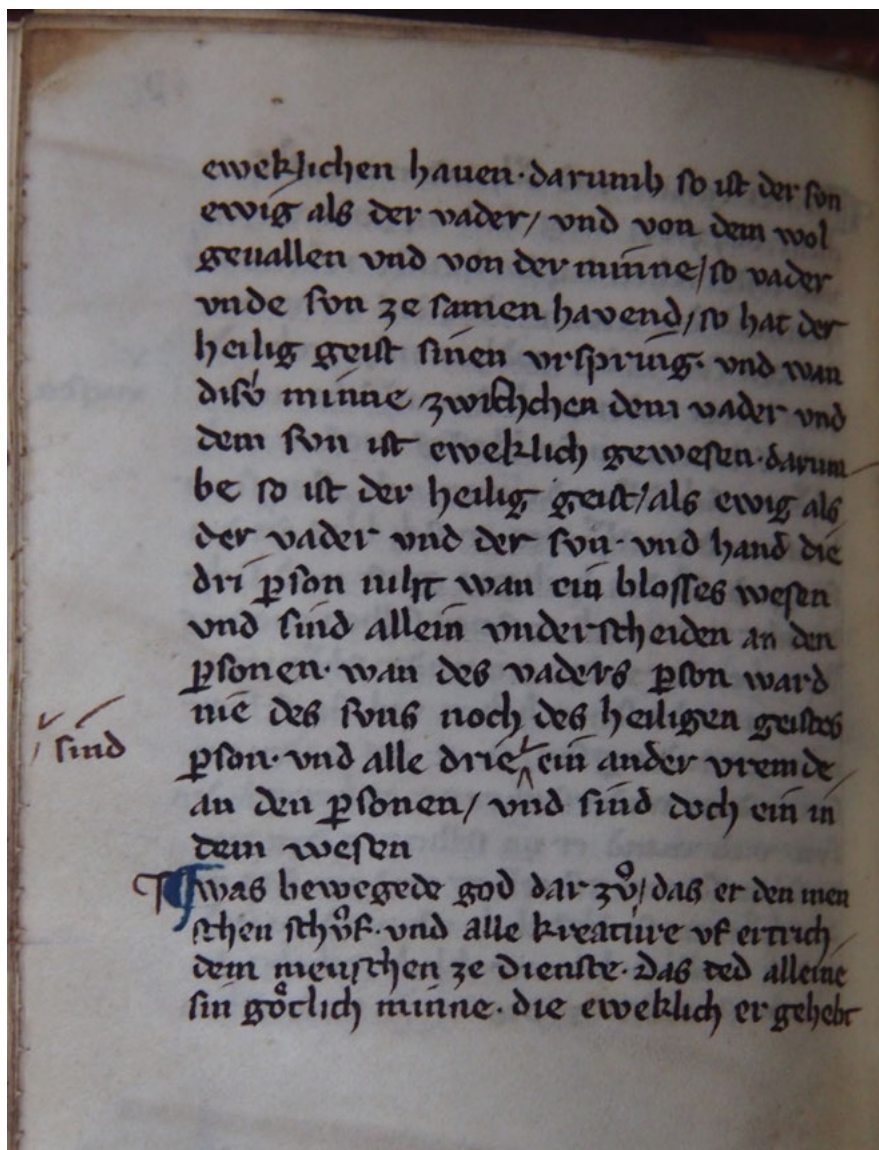
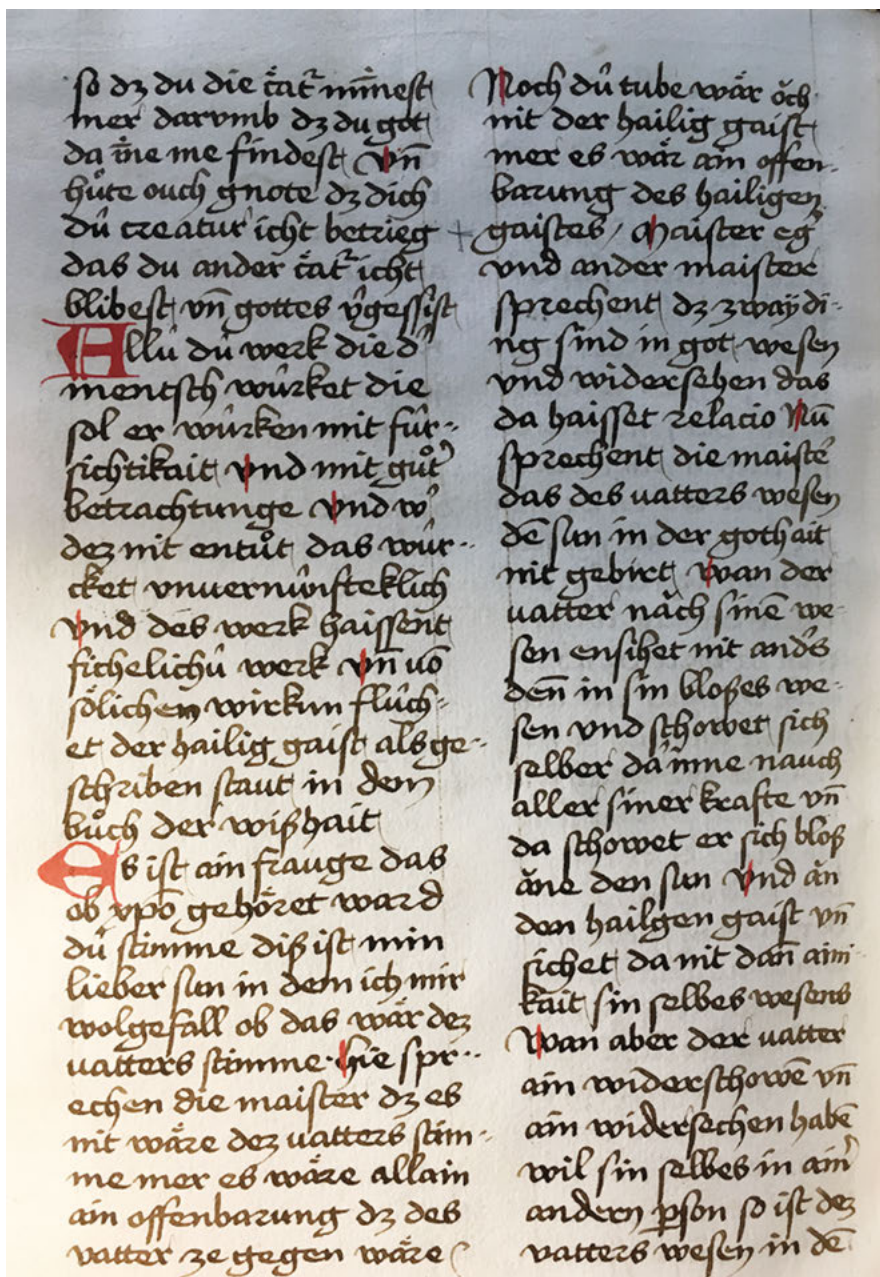


Fig. 2: Wartburg-Stiftung Eisenach, Bibliothek, Sign. Ms. 1361–50, fol. 87^v.

Fig. 3: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. fol. 986, 200^v.

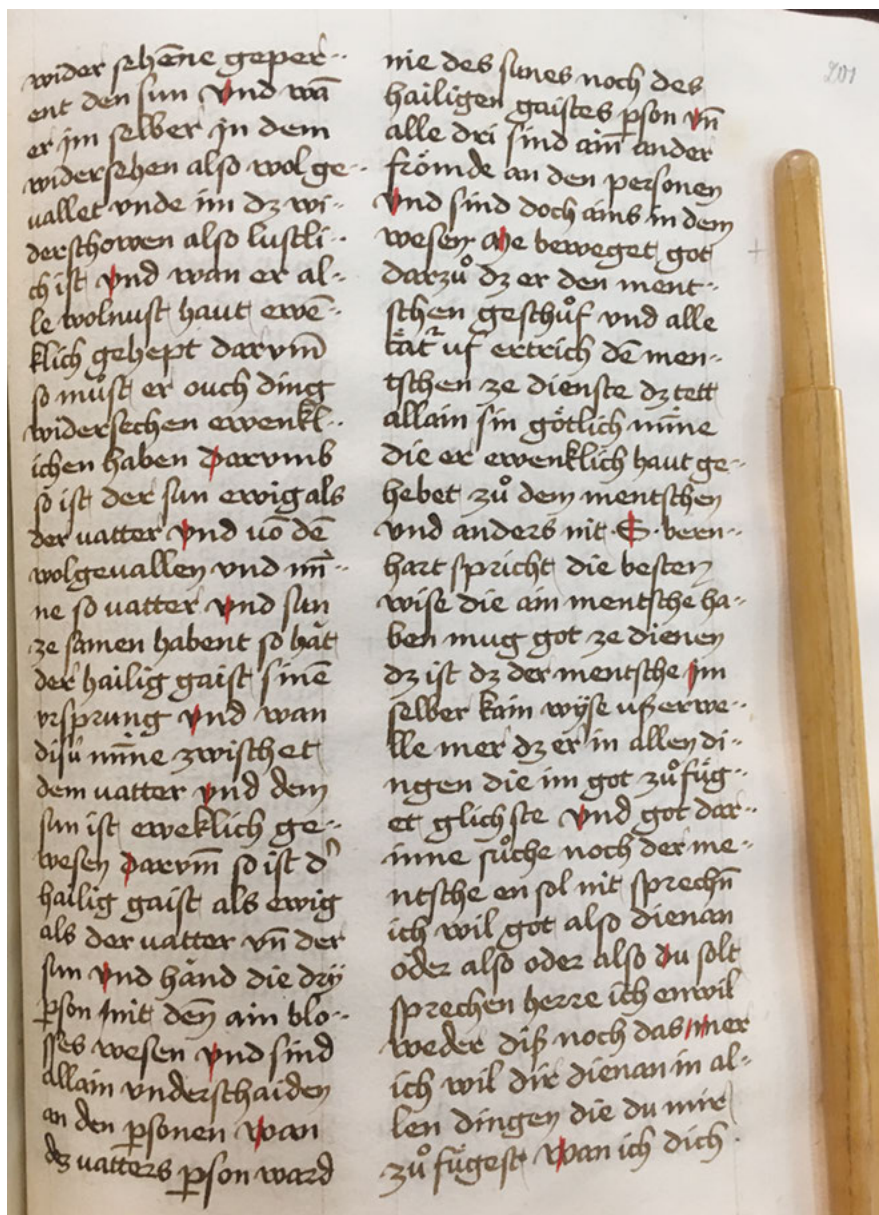


Fig. 4: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. fol. 986, 201^r.

not a cause. Only this, then, gives the text the proper structure of a *Quaestio* instead of a ‘Saying’, as it has been read in Pfeiffer (‘Saying 34’). The question opens with reference to ‘Meister Eckhart and other masters’. Eckhart and other masters agree on the position that ‘there are two things in God: being and reflection’, the latter being called ‘relatio’.²⁶ The difference, however, between those other masters and Eckhart is introduced by the counter-argument ‘now’ (‘nu’). These masters reject the idea that it was the Father’s being that gave birth to the Son in the Godhead, a view that Eckhart tries to substantiate and explicate in this question. Indeed, he has explicitly stated this view in his *Commentary on Exodus*: ‘The power to generate in the Father is in the essence rather than in paternity’,²⁷ hence God, the Father, does not generate the Son out of God as Father, but out of the essence of the Father, as God or Godhead. Unlike Bonaventure and Thomas, as I have shown elsewhere,²⁸ Eckhart does not focus on ‘fatherhood’ as the personal property of the Father; instead, fatherhood expresses the relation between Father and Son. Although the relational nature of fatherhood is an idea which can also be found in Thomas, Eckhart stresses that the Father generates the Son insofar as he is God, in his divine nature, which is the reason why God as the agent also communicates his power to generate to the Son without turning the Son into the Father. For Eckhart, the Son is not only the generated one in contrast to the ingenerated Father, he is, like the Father, the generating God.

Already in his *Sermones et Lectiones super Ecclesiastici*, homilies and lectures on *Jesus Sirach*, the Meister noted the broad theological tradition, against which he developed his revolutionary view. Just like a self-defeating understatement he starts with the admission that the ‘saints and doctors say rightly that in the Godhead the essence does not generate. Unanimously, the doctors also say that the power to generate is not an absolute power, but an essence together with

26 This position is, indeed, one of Eckhart’s views as can be seen by Eckhart, *Pr. 9* (*DW I* 147, 5–8): ‘The first [category] that has most of being from which all things take in being, that is substance, and the last [category] which has the least of being, that is called relation, this is equal to the greatest in God which has most of being’ (‘Diu êrste, diu des wesens allermeist hât, dâ alliu dinc wesen inne nement, daz ist substancie, und daz leste, daz des wesens aller minnest treit, daz heizet relatio, daz ist glich in gote dem aller grœsten, daz des wesens allermeist hât’).

27 Eckhart, *In Ex. n. 28* (*LW II* 34, 1): ‘*Potentia generandi in patre est essentia potius quam paternitas*’, and he refers to Thomas Aquinas, *S. theol.* I q. 41 a. 5: ‘*Potentia generandi significat in recto naturam divinam, sed in obliquo relationem (scilicet paternitatem)*’. The Divine essence as the power or potentiality for fatherhood of the Father – with the simple and clear difference between on the one side ‘the essence and its potentiality without personality’, and on the other the divine ‘person’ – is expressed in another complex but highly important homily which stems with all likelihood from Eckhart’s pen; see Eckhart *On Romans 11:33* in Jostes 1895, n. 19, p. 15, 28–32).

28 Vinzent 2012.

a relation.²⁹ When we compare the latter statement, we see the parallel to the opening of Eckhart's vernacular *Quaestio*.

Already earlier Eckhart had expounded the argument that there are only two categories in the Godhead, namely essence and relation, and that 'the essence as essence does not diffuse itself, because it is directed towards its inner self, not towards something else, and because it belongs to itself and is through itself, is namely always one in the Godhead'. Hence, essence and relation, as the two categories in God, make God the one who generates. But he adds that it is a 'tricky question' which of the two, the essence or the relation, comes first.³⁰ In his work on *Jesus Sirach*, he seems to agree with Bonaventure, saying that 'it seems necessary that the relation is the reason for bearing fruits and for diffusion in the Godhead .., namely the Father does not speak the Word, nor generates the Son insofar as he is essence or substance, but insofar as he is principle .., and the principle, as the term "first" indicates, implies relation of order and origin.'³¹ A close reading of this passage, however, indicates that Eckhart is already moving beyond the saints and the masters, especially Bonaventure and Thomas, because he does not assert that the Father generates the Son, insofar as he is Father, the relative to the related Son, but insofar as he is principle, implying Eckhart's own understanding of principle. Eckhart endorses this difference by adding that according to the *Liber de causis* it is not said that the first (in masculine form, *primus*) 'is rich in itself', but that the neuter first (*primum*) 'is rich in itself',³² so that it is God – and not the Father – who with regard to the relation in him generates, just as it is God in his essence, yet not in his essence *qua* essence, but in his essence with relation, who generates the Son and creates all creatures. By using the *Liber de causis*, Eckhart is correcting both Bonaventure and Thomas. In addition to this, Eckhart is then solving the mentioned tricky question in his *Commentary on John* that in the Godhead, wherein are only essence and relation, 'the power to generate [...] directly and more principally belongs to the essence rather

29 Eckhart, *In Eccl.* n. 11 (LW II 241,1–3): '*Propter quod optime dicunt sancti et doctores quod in divinis essentia non generat. Dicunt etiam doctores communiter quod potentia generandi non est absolute, sed essentia cum relatione.*'

30 Eckhart, *In Eccl.* n. 11 (LW II 241,3–4): '*Quid autem principalius, nodosa quaestio est.*'

31 Eckhart, *In Eccl.* n. 12 (LW II 241,5–242,1): '*Oportet igitur necessario quod relatio sit, ratione cuius est fecunditas et diffusio in divinis . . . pater enim non dicit verbum nec generat filium, in quantum essentia sive substantia, sed in quantum principium . . . Principium autem, sicut et li primum, relationem importat ordinis et originis.*'

32 Eckhart, *In Eccl.* n. 12 (LW II 242,1–3): '*In De causis enim dicitur: 'primum est dives per se'. 'Primum' ait, non primus, quia ratione relationis sive ordinis habet deus diffusionem sive fecunditatem tam in divinis quam in creaturis.*'

than to the relation that is paternity'.³³ Cutting a long thought process short, we can conclude that Eckhart is consciously moving away from the authority of previous masters and places the trinitarian generation, indeed, into the Godhead of the Father, into his being, though understood as a being with relation.

The same concept of a generation of the Son through the Father's essence, God and Godhead, we find in Eckhart's Latin *Parisian Question* VII. In this *Quaestio*, Eckhart addresses again the topic of power and paternity. The problem here is whether 'the Father generates through fatherhood, because', as some say, 'through it [fatherhood] he [the Father] is constituted in his being' – or whether the Father generates his Son through his divine essence, his nature, because it is not fatherhood that is the principle, but divine essence or nature. Eckhart gives his answer with reference to John Damascene – 'Generating is the work of nature' – the same reference Eckhart used in his second commentary on *Genesis*, borrowed from Thomas Aquinas.³⁴ Here, in this *Question*, however, Eckhart deduces from Damascene the same anti-Bonaventuran and anti-Thomasian solution which we have already encountered before in Eckhart: it is divine essence that is the principle and the essence makes the Father a father with his fatherhood. Not fatherhood or paternity, but God's essence, being or nature (*qua* relation, of course) is the principle of generation; paternity is the Father's property, while Father is the expression of an essential relation and a relational Godhead. Eckhart draws exactly the same conclusion as we have found in his commentaries: because the Father generates out of divine essence, God communicates the power to generate to his Son without turning the Son into the Father.³⁵

4 Being and dividualism

The present short vernacular *Quaestio*, as we will see, provides not only a short introduction, but is also a concise summary of Eckhart's teaching on God's self-constitution, hence is a lens through which we can read how he conceptualises a first principle that has to be understood not as a monistic, single primary force, but as a dynamic dividual.

³³ Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 43 (*LW* III 36,4–5): '*Potentia generandi in divinis in recto et principalius convenit essentiae quam relationi, quae est paternitas*'; *id.*, *Pr.* 103 (p. 336 Pfeiffer).

³⁴ See Eckhart, *In Gen.* II nn. 44–5; 185 (*LW* I 512,3–14; 656,11–2), where it is even applied to the generation of creatures.

³⁵ Eckhart, of course, goes even further and thinks of God communicating this power to his creation; see *Pr.* 100 (*DW* 4/1, 277,47–278,61).

First, Eckhart deals with the potential idea of the Father's 'bare being', his Godhead, which is the Father's divine being in a pre-relational sense, hence the Godhead's being prior to any trinitarian constitution of persons and, therefore, prior to any relation.

<2> If according to his being the Father has in no other way insight into his bare being, and sees himself in there according to his entire power, he there sees himself bare without the Son and without the Holy Spirit, hence he sees then oneness of his very being.

To Eckhart, a pre-relational principle ('Father'), that searches for itself, cannot lead to self-reflection, but only to a sheer seeing of oneness of bare being. As this principle is conceived not in a relational sense, but as bare pre-relational being, the Father is unable to see the Son and the Holy Spirit, but even worse, he even does not see himself. Hence he is without self-reflection, self-understanding, without self. The following conditional phrase underlines this reading of the passage, as Eckhart moves to the next thought of a Father who longs for self-reflection:

If, however, the Father wants to have a regard and a reflection of himself in another person, it is the Father's being which gives birth to the Son in this respect.

This longing of the Father to see himself in a self-reflection leads to no other 'know yourself' than to a giving 'birth to the Son in this respect'. Seeing himself means that the Father is birthing the Son. Of course, these two 'steps' are not chronological events, but purely epistemological and conceptual discernments.

This is not an easy text. The statement seems to carry two important arguments. In the first conditional clause, Eckhart assumes, from the beginning, that according to the Father's being and his Godhead as first principle he would be an entirely monistic entity, if he were not fundamentally dividual and relationally structured, longing to see himself and with himself everything else. That is why he states in a first clause that if the Father had insight into his being – if we assumed a monistic first principle – this resulted in nothing but a brutal facing of purity and bareness of being, not in self-reflection or knowledge. This is even true if we conceived that the first principle were using its entire power: the Father still would see nothing but oneness, neither himself, nor the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The 'exclusively', or better 'barely' ('blos'), picks up on the 'bare being' ('bloßes wesen'): indicating that in the reaching out by the Father for his being and for himself, the assumption of a monistic principle, is futile. This explains that neither the Father's seeing into his pure and bare being, nor his looking for himself gives him a satisfactory self-reflection. He only sees a bare being. This interpretation, then, fits the concluding section that the Father 'does not see

anything but oneness of his very being'. Any introspection of the Father according to his Godhead and into his being, and even his essentially non-monistic reaching out for himself, ends not in a self-disclosure, self-discovery, or self-consciousness, as we would put it in contemporary terms. All that the Father sees is oneness; he does neither see himself as Father, nor does he see himself at all as self, but all he sees is oneness and sameness of his being, not even unity. As we will see in the next paragraph – such oneness and sameness of the Father's being excludes him being a person, and equally excludes the Son and Holy Spirit being persons. As a result, in such oneness and sameness there would be no 'relation', but only pure substance.

As a consequence of the rejection of such a monistic essentiality of the first principle, Eckhart develops the idea of the Father's longing.

As indicated, though Eckhart speaks of three, we are not able to call the three a Trinity of selves, as even the Father has no self as long as he is only looking at himself and seeking himself. Turning to him as Father, he is more being than Father, more Godhead than God. His act of seeing does not make him an agent. Neither, however, is being itself an agency. Being does not see being, and this is why Eckhart speaks of the Father as the one who has to reach out not for himself and his being, but for 'a regard and a reflection of himself in another person'.

Of course, one may ask at this point, why would the Father – who is all being, pure being, bare being – wish to be anything else? Can one be more than being? What seems tautological, paradoxical or perhaps even nonsensical, Eckhart has discussed in another text, not much easier than the opening of this present *Quaestio*. In his *Predigt 67* Eckhart describes spiritual nature, i.e. the nature of angels and of the human soul, and he speaks about their essential oneness with God:

In all things spiritual one finds that the one is in the other as one and undivided. Where the soul is in her bare nature, detached and separated from all creatures, she would have in her nature, by nature, all the perfection and all the joy and delight that all the angels have without³⁶ number and without multitude by nature: I have them fully with all the perfection and with all their joy and all their happiness, as they themselves have them in themselves; and everything I have in me distinctly, as I have myself in myself, irrespective of another, because no spirit excludes [Sturlese: includes] the other. The angel is not included in the soul; therefore it gives itself entirely to each soul, without hindrance from another and God Himself. Not only by nature, indeed: in nature, my soul rejoices in all the joy and all happiness, which God Himself rejoices in His divine nature, may He like or dislike it; because there, there is nothing but one, and where there is one, there is everything, and

³⁶ Quint and Sturlese here read: 'with'.

where there is everything, there is one. This has some truth. Where the soul is, there is God, and where God is, there is the soul. And if I told you that this were not so, I would say the wrong thing.³⁷

Being ‘in the other as one and undivided’, in ‘bare nature’, but ‘detached’ and ‘separated from all creatures’, all spiritual things are one, which is God’s oneness. The spirituals’ oneness has to be conceptualised just like God’s oneness, as a full *communication*. As ‘communication’ already indicates – and the soul’s joy and happiness support this – this is an exalted state where there is union between the soul and God. And yet, as Eckhart will add, it is not the highest state that the soul can achieve. There is more than being one with God, there is more than joy and happiness for the soul. Although detached from all creatures, the soul in her communication with God still enjoys herself as self.

Now listen to me! There, above, she first grasps the pure *absolūciō* of the free being, that there is without a ‘there’, where she does neither take nor give; she is the bare beingness which is deprived of any being and all beingness. There she grasps God nakedly according to the ground, where He is beyond all being. If there still were being, she would take being into being; but there is nothing but one ground. This is the supreme perfection of the Spirit, to which one can get in this life in the way of the Spirit.

But this is not the greatest perfection that we shall ever possess with body and with soul, that the outer person will be fully held in having a substantiated personal being.³⁸

With his ‘now listen to me!’ Eckhart often introduces one of his novel ideas (*‘nova et rara’*). Speaking about the soul, he mentions the pure detachment of the free being, giving us one of the rare Latin equivalents for this core notion of his: *absolutio*. It is a state of the soul where she is even beyond unity with God, beyond joy and happiness, in a state where she ‘neither take[s] nor give[s]’. As in our *Quaestio*, this state is called ‘bare beingness’ (*‘blôze isticheit’*).

In his commentary on this *Predigt 67*, one of the most difficult and equally most fascinating texts of Eckhart, Dietmar Mieth has pointed out³⁹ that in this text the ‘higher’ being, the essential oneness with God, is not called the ‘best’ being. This differentiation makes one wonder: how can one amplify or intensify the ‘higher’ being? And what could be better than being one with God? What else than the essential oneness could be better for God as for the person, and what else could be the highest aim for both? Thus, again and again this highest aim was invoked by the neoplatonic teachers of the *redditio* and by the Christian fathers

³⁷ *Predigt 67* (DW III 129–30) (own trans.).

³⁸ *Ibid.* 133–4.

³⁹ Mieth 2017b.

in the teaching of the *Visio beatifica*. In his homily, Meister Eckhart explains that the pure spiritual being of angels might be higher than the bodily-spiritual being of humans, because the angel through its pure spirituality is unlimited and united with the divine being; however, so Eckhart, the personal being of human beings is better, even ‘the best perfection’, not only for human beings, but even for God himself. Why is this? God is only ‘self’, when he is a person, and this is precisely the kind of being that God chooses for himself. Personality, being with a partner, being Father with a Son, with the Spirit, with the creatures, being of the god-human nature of Christ, being self as non-monistic principle, being as principally dividual is the highest form of being. This self, as we will see, is the foundation both for God as it is for humans. In his vernacular Question, Eckhart continues:

<3> And as he is so delighted about himself in this reflection, and the regard is so desirable for him and as he had such desire for eternity, therefore he must have this reflection, too, for eternity. The Son is, therefore, as eternal as the Father, and from the desire and love as they are enjoyed by Father and Son jointly, the Holy Spirit has its origin. Hence, as the love between Father and Son has existed for ever, therefore, the Holy Spirit is as eternal as Father and Son. And the three persons have only one bare being and are different only with regards to the persons.

Eckhart highlights the joy and delight about this highest state of being ‘in this reflection’, whereby ‘reflection’ is the translation of ‘widersehnenne’, which could also be rendered as self-reflection, or self-regard (‘widerschouwen’). The emotional terms used here (delight, desirable, desire, love) indicate that Eckhart is not only writing about a purely intellectual or ontological level of epistemology, but that it is a fully embodied view of being and self. The first principle’s will – *pars pro toto* for any longing for self – only results in satisfaction and a full realisation of ‘self’, if such self – from the first principle to the last principled – is conceived of as dividual: as a self that only in the birthing of other selves can become what is its highest being, namely self. Self, as understood by Eckhart, is only a dynamically productive self by birthing the other not as a dependent, hierarchically subjugated other, but as a full and own self which in return becomes the birthing self of the principle self. Hence, the such conceived and birthed self is itself just like the first principle itself: a first, conceiving and birthing principle. Within this dynamically productive process of self-becoming there is no hierarchy between the selves. They are only selves as mutually birthing selves which, if we compare Eckhart’s view to concepts of self-production in, for example, Idealism, are not evolutionary, nor teleologically or hierarchically conceived. To Eckhart there would be no ‘single primeval force’ that powered the big bang or any big bang, but the primeval force would be itself the result of a powering big bang or rather of powerful forces and big bangs.

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Antje Linkenbach

The empathic subject and the question of dividuality

1 Introduction

Emotions and their history have recently become the subject of intense inquiry and research. Studies try to trace the role of emotions in philosophy, theatre, literature, social and cognitive sciences from a historical perspective. The focus hereby lies on the Western hemisphere and on the modern period (18th century until present).¹

In her study of the history of concepts and debates on emotions since 1700, Ute Frevert asks about the relationship between *individualisation* – understood as progressive emancipation of the individual from religious, social and occupational bonds and commitments – and the discussion of the nature of *emotions* (Frevert 2014, 5f.). She argues that emotions or feelings document a specific quality of the individual and therefore are assigned a special dignity and value in modern society. Emotions connect human beings to one another, but also to nature and to objects. Frevert strongly highlights the social role of emotions: grounded in reciprocity, they facilitate social bonding and further social integration among human beings.

Taken to its logical end, Frevert's statement of the social quality of emotions allows drawing the conclusion that emotions might influence processes of individualisation in such ways that they probably counteract (mitigate, weaken) individual attempts of disentanglement, of creating impermeable boundaries between oneself and the outer as well as social world. Or, reformulating the argument in the form of a question and with reference to Charles Taylor (2007): do we have to take emotions into consideration when we ask about the relationship between a 'porous' and 'vulnerable' Self and a 'buffered' or 'bounded' Self?

In this contribution I am not going to look into particular emotions; my purpose is rather to focus on *empathy*, often described as emotional competence or emotional intelligence and referring to the capability of a person to experience and understand other people's sentiments. According to recent neuro-scientific

1 In Germany research is concentrated at the 'Center for the History of Emotions', which is part of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin; geographically the Center focuses on Europe, North America and South Asia. For a historical account of research on emotions in Europe in the last three centuries see Frevert et al. 2014. See also Landweer, Renz 2008.

and philosophical research, empathy has an emotional and a cognitive dimension. Empathy ‘can be defined as a multidimensional process of recognising, understanding and feeling the sentiments of other persons and thus includes cognitive (recognition and understanding) as well as emotional (feeling) aspects’ (Schwenck et al. 2011, 265; transl. AL).²

Similarly to the interest in emotions, the notion and concept of empathy has gained scholarly attention across disciplines and the rise of its significance in European intellectual history, literature and public discourse since the 17th century has been well documented. Such increased attentiveness may indicate that empathy, by revealing the relationality and sociality of human beings, might also act as an obstacle to radical individualisation, based on the imaginary of a detached and self-contained individual. In other words and using another concept: empathy possibly triggers and supports *dividualisation*³; it possibly indicates that individuals are partible and porous instead of bounded, that they are permeated, deeply affected and marked by the outside world – and the outside world consists of fellow beings, objects and ‘not unquestionably plausible’ agents or authorities as for example the transcendent, the divine (Rüpke 2015).

This article will discuss empathy in its particular manifestation of co-feeling with the *pain and suffering* of fellow beings. The text is organised into six sections. In the first section and as a starting point I present core ideas of the ‘anthropology of violence’ in order to show that in the context of human suffering empathy is closely linked to ideas of the communicability of pain, of healing and morality. Pursuing a socio-historical perspective, section 2 aims to illustrate the historical shift from a theological to a secular understanding of suffering which also, on the one hand, gave rise to individualisation, and on the other to an increased importance of morality and sociality understood as a result of human praxis. The next three sections focus on conceptual approaches: section 3 traces the conceptual forerunners of empathy and discusses ‘sympathy’ and ‘imagination’ in the intellectual landscape of the 17th and 18th centuries, followed by (in section 4) reflections on the relationship between empathy, language and understanding as

² German original: Empathie ‘kann definiert werden als ein multidimensionaler Prozess des Erkennens, Verstehens und Nachempfindens der Gefühle anderer Personen und beinhaltet damit sowohl kognitive (Erkennen und Verstehen) als auch emotionale (Nachempfinden) Aspekte’ (Schwenck et al. 2011, 265).

³ For the concept of *dividualisation* see the introduction to Part 2 of this publication and the concluding discussion of this article. For now it is sufficient to recollect that for the purposes of this article (as well as for the purposes of all other contributions to Part 2) *dividualisation* is not used in the strict sense as it is defined in New Melanesian Ethnography, but as an umbrella term which can encompass all those forms of the individual that do not subscribe to the bounded possessive individual of the Western discourse.

a cornerstone for a desirable moral and social life; this section also touches upon the difference between empathic identification and unification (assimilation). Part 5 refers to contemporary approaches to empathy (neurosciences, phenomenological philosophy). Especially the philosophical approach demands integrating different levels of empathic occurrences (cognitive, expressive, bodily, hermeneutic) in a model of empathy, thus claiming empathic capabilities for all human beings. In the final section (6) I will argue that, grounded in resonance and relationality, empathy seems to lend itself to the experiment of linking it to the idea and concept of *dividuality*.

2 Point of departure: understanding suffering and pain in the ‘anthropology of violence’

Anthropology of violence as a distinctive area of research is strongly connected with the name of Veena Das, anthropologist and sociologist from India, now based in the United States.⁴ Already by the late 1980s and early 1990s she had laid the theoretical foundations for the new anthropological approach to understanding violence, suffering and pain as a social phenomenon (Das 1987; 1990; 1995).⁵

Violence is perceived as *meaningful social action* that cannot be reduced to its instrumental aspect; it equally contains expressive and symbolic dimensions, which even may marginalise instrumentality. For Das such a perspective presupposes a particular understanding of the *human body*, which has to be considered as space or *territory* for expressive and symbolic action. The body as territory can also function as *memory* through the inscription of pain – an insight gained from the works of Pierre Clastres and Friedrich Nietzsche. Clastres refers to rites-de-passage in so-called primitive societies. Here social membership is inscribed upon the

4 In the United States, Veena Das (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore) started collaborating with scholars from the disciplines of social medicine, psychiatry and medical anthropology (among others Arthur Kleinmann, Harvard University, USA; Margaret Lock, McGill University, Canada). A number of seminal publications established the anthropology of violence as an internationally acknowledged field of research.

5 The field of anthropology of violence focuses on the social aspects of human suffering. They understand what they call ‘social suffering’ as ‘an assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social force inflicts on human experience. Social suffering results from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people, and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems’ (Das, Kleinman, Lock 1996, XI). Authors focus, for example, on the Holocaust, the Bhopal gas tragedy, the Indian Partition, South African Apartheid.

body through torture and pain – the price of belonging – and the wounds left on the body preclude forgetting. But whereas for Clastres the ritual equalises all participants as members in a moral community, Nietzsche sees the relation between society and the individual as analogous to that of creditor and debtor. Sociality is based on a contract made by the debtor with the creditor, and in case the debtor would fail to repay, he pledges to submit something that he possesses – his body, wife, freedom or even his life. Here, infliction of pain on a person is seen as legitimate, if this person has caused injury by failing in his obligation; and the infliction of pain creates memory, which is directed to the future. Following Clastres' and Nietzsche's interpretation, Das' research on violent acts (rape, abduction and even murder) against women during the Partition riots, which accompanied the foundation of the states of India and Pakistan in 1947, evokes the bodies of women – in the context of gendered ideologies – as being territory and memory, and thus functioning as 'signs on which the violent dialogue of men was conducted' (Das 1995, 186).

In contrast to sociological research on violence, which tended to objectify and victimise the affected persons, and which 'privatised' their suffering and thus denied them the ability to communicate pain, the new anthropological approach attempted to give space to the 'voice' of the people concerned.⁶ Here it is the anthropologist (the researcher) who takes the role of a witness and a *listener*, and by accepting the subject in the role of the speaker, establishes a dialogic relationship. After the riots which followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi in Delhi in 1984, a group of anthropologists and sociologists decided to engage in rehabilitation work. They concentrated not only on material help but tried to create a moral space for the expression of grief, guilt, pain, and mourning. The researchers argued that the women and children of males who were killed in the riots had a great need to tell their stories again and again. This is captured in a phrase uttered by one of the women and used by Das as a heading of one of her articles: 'It is our work to cry and your work to listen' (Das 1990).

The need to establish a culture of listening and a therapeutic space in the context of research on violence prompted the involved scholars to reflect on the problem of the *communicability* and the *inalienability* of pain. Relating to Ludwig Wittgenstein and his so-called private language argument,⁷ Veena Das formulates two central questions:

⁶ Research on violence in German sociology in the 1990s can serve as an example; see the volume *Soziologie der Gewalt* (1997), here especially the contributions of Trutz von Trotha, Birgitta Nedelmann, Wolfgang Sofsky.

⁷ Das refers especially to Wittgenstein's *Blue and Brown Books* (German ed. 1984) and his *Philosophical Investigations* (1958). For reflections on the private language argument see e.g. Schroeder 1998; 2007.

When we talk about the communicability of pain, we ask whether it is possible to communicate one's experience of pain to another person. In other words, is knowledge of private objects such as pain only possible for the individual subject, or is it communicable? The second question, about the inalienability of pain, is to ask what it means to "have" a pain.

(Das 1995, 194)

With Wittgenstein she then argues that the statement 'I am in pain' is not simply declarative or descriptive of a purely personal experience (sensation), but it is a (moral) complaint and an invitation to *share*. It addresses other persons and therefore marks not the end, but the *beginning* of a language game.

While it seems that pain is communicable, it might still be inalienable. Are my pains only those which are felt in my body or can I feel pain in the body of others? Veena Das extrapolates from Wittgenstein's texts that, at the level of philosophical grammar, he denies an individual ownership in pain: my pains are those to which I give expression, and a person's expression (of pain) *may* indicate that the pain is located outside his or her body:

In order to see that it is conceivable that one person should have pain in another person's body, one must examine what sorts of facts we call criteria for a pain being in a certain place. [...] Suppose I feel a pain which on the evidence of the pain alone, e.g., with closed eyes, I should call a pain in my left hand. Someone asks me to touch the painful spot with my right hand. I do so and looking round perceive that I am touching my neighbour's hand.

(Wittgenstein 1958, 49; quoted in Das 1995, 195)

Veena Das emphasises that Wittgenstein's 'brilliant formulation that my pain may be located in another's body, and that the pain of the other may be experienced in my body' indicates that there is 'no individual ownership in pain' (Das 1995, 195). The possibility of sharing pain has a clear moral significance as it allows generating compassion and concern. It also may generate the wish to ease the other person's suffering and thus create a therapeutic space. Das invokes Drew Leder, an American philosopher, who demands 'forming one body' with the sufferer:

[...] one-body-compassion for my sick friend leads me to do what I can for her: hold her hand, offer words of comfort, bring her food, fix her bedclothes. I give over my motoric possibilities to be guided by her desires. If she is thirsty, my hands fetch her drink. If she is weak, my limbs supply her strength. We act as if we were one functioning body, her "I can" supplemented by my abilities, her wishes fulfilled by my work.

(Leder 1990, 163; quoted in Das 1995, 195)

A central concern of the anthropologists following the new approach to understanding violence and suffering is 'healing'. Drew Leder hints at the importance of healing when he states that lending one's abilities to the sufferer means also to bring relief to this person. Suffering, he says, 'is the experience of isolation', it 'disrupts communion with the natural and the social world' and thus the

one-body experience can act as a healing force (Leder 1990, 161). Listening to narratives of violence, lending one's body to those in pain, all this might allow the affected person(s) to heal, to become able to get back to ordinary life. Though the ordinary will always remain imbued by the memory of the severe disruptions that happened, 'descent into everyday life' (Das 2007, 15) seems to be the only way of repairing and 'remaking a world' after trauma.⁸

The anthropology of violence emphasises the possibility of communicating and sharing pain even under conditions of deep social disruption, and stresses the healing force of both. It thus reveals a particular social and moral quality of the human being, namely empathy: the emotional capability to feel with the other, to get marked by (the pain of) the other and even feel compelled to lend (part of) one's body to ease this pain. Empathy apparently presupposes vulnerability and thus a porous, partible body-mind entity. At this point it seems fruitful to relate the anthropological discussion with the broader cross-disciplinary debate on *empathy*,⁹ which has proliferated in recent decades in the disciplines of history, philosophy, social and cognitive sciences.

3 Human suffering and the birth of fellow feeling

While human emotions are anchored in the biological nature of human beings, the way emotions are realised and socially evaluated, and are the subject of language and reflection, is dependent on time and cultural context. The cultural grammar of emotions as well as theories of emotions are historically contingent (Frevert, 2014; Wilkinson, Kleinman 2016). On this assumption, any statement about empathy – here understood as the emotional competence to relate to the suffering of others – needs to be historically located and contextualised. First and foremost one has to take into consideration that there might be variations in the way people relate to and comprehend human suffering in the course of history. For the purpose of this paper I want to relate to the already referenced study of Wilkinson and Kleinman and, following their analysis of relevant scholarly work from the Western context,¹⁰ briefly inquire about the socio-historical circumstances

8 See the title of a publication edited by Veena Das and others (2001).

9 Empathy refers to the Greek word *pathos*, which means to suffer, to endure. The word is a neologism invented by E. B. Titchener in 1909; he used 'empathy' to translate the German word *Einfühlung*, common in the German-speaking world in hermeneutics, aesthetics and psychology.

10 I am aware that in other cultural and religious contexts the meaning of suffering, the role of emotions and empathy have been and are differently interpreted.

under which the meaning of human suffering becomes interpreted as an explicitly social condition, which demands moral commitment and prompts empathy. This is to ask about the origins and dynamics of ‘moral individualism’, that is the disposition to show pity and sympathise with those who suffer (Wilkinson, Kleinman 2016, 26f.).¹¹

Understanding human suffering in social terms presupposes a radical shift in the relation between human beings and the transcendental (or god). It requires, so Wilkinson and Kleinman, a departure from a theological interpretation. In the European Middle Ages and early modernity, devoted to the tradition of Christianity, a consensus about the cause and meaning of human suffering prevailed. Suffering was often understood as sent by God, not only as punishment for wrongdoing but also to redeem his creation from sin. Hardship and pain, which people experienced in various forms, like earthquakes, floods, famine, and diseases, was invested with moral and divine meaning. Especially in Protestant cultures, with their emphasis on predestination and attainment of salvation solely through God’s grace, the ‘doctrines of Providence’ had the greatest impact on public and personal affairs. The belief in the rightness of God’s judgement, the meaningfulness of his signs, was highest in the 16th and 17th centuries; and it went along with an impulse in the direction of individualisation. In order to rightly interpret and understand God’s ways, each individual had ‘to examine his conscience, motivations, and actions in light of biblical teachings on the means to [...] salvation’ (ibid., 32).

In the second half of the 17th century, providentialism increasingly lost its explanatory power. Intellectuals and educated circles, upwardly mobile groups and political movements worked against what they considered superstition and irrational belief. Also amongst lower classes scepticism about the promises of reward in the next world for patiently enduring the evils of the present was not unusual. Wilkinson and Kleinman support this argument by invoking the scholarly works of Ann Thompson (2003) and Jennifer Herdt (2001). Thompson, who has analysed sermons and Christian writings from the 17th century, argues that the post-Reformation (Puritan) way of interpreting suffering was replaced by the conviction that God’s ways are beyond understanding. Herdt concludes from her research, on Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth and his influence on other Latitudinarians (17th century English theologians from the University of Cambridge), that new theological emphasis is laid on the idea that God feels with those in pain

¹¹ Other scholars have also attempted to trace the history of empathy, for example Jeremy Rifkin (2009), who gives a sweeping account about empathy in the world’s civilisations up until today, and Lynn Hunt (2007), who traces empathy as a precondition for the invention of human rights.

and suffers along with them. In the figure of Christ as the incarnated God, the creator himself relates to human beings with compassion, and in consequence God is seen as more responsive to, but less responsible for human suffering. Herdt further argues that the work of the Latitudinarians marked a transitional phase in European intellectual history. Divine passibility (God's capability to respond emotionally to his creation) promoted secularising tendencies within sentimental ethics in the culture of Enlightenment. It was the philosopher Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) who was the first to take up the humanitarian interpretation of Christianity and advance the idea that human beings are distinguished by a God-given 'moral sense', and thus by the capacity for a morally grounded sentiment of fellow feeling.

By the end of the early 19th century the attitude towards human suffering had undergone a radical transformation. Suffering had become increasingly morally unacceptable and was criticised as something that has a mundane, secular cause. Social circumstances, conditional for these causes, could and should be changed. People responded to public execution of punishment with disgust and started campaigning against such spectacles (Hunt 2007). In literature and theatre, sentimental novels and plays proliferated and the audience celebrated their shared humanity (Hunt 2007; Mullan 1988). While the new sensibilities and manifestations of compassion were *de facto* recent or 'modern' phenomena, they were considered as expressions of 'natural instinct' (Wilkinson, Kleinman 2016, 39). In their capacity as natural moral feelings they enabled a new imaginary of sociality and moral conduct.

Two main reasons seem to account for the cultural constitution of the compassionate orientation of human beings in the 18th and 19th centuries (*ibid.*, 43f.): the process of civilisation (as outlined, *eg.*, by Norbert Elias), and/or experiences of individualisation in the wake of the emerging capitalist economy. In the first case, compassion is seen as a by-product of internalised self-restraint and sublimation; in the second, it is assumed that the involvement of individualised people in market relations created new bonds and moral responsibilities. Capitalist market structures also are considered seminal for the emergence of a new middle class for which sentimentalism became a form of mass entertainment. The demand for 'partaking in the pleasure of tears' led to a 'cultural manufacture of fellow-feeling' and also laid the foundation for a profitable business (*ibid.*, 44).

In order to sum up the transformation of European ideas on human suffering since the Christian Middle Ages, which are interlinked with changes in emotional conditions, we have to highlight three aspects: (1) a shift from a theological to a secular interpretation of the causes of suffering; (2) recognition that the conditions of life are a result of human praxis and therefore subject to change; (3) an ongoing trend to individualisation and the acceptance of social and moral

responsibility for fellow human beings, expressed in a compassionate relationship to the other. To put it in the words of Wilkinson and Kleinman:

Social life is emphatically portrayed as *moral experience*; and it is further assumed that by moral feeling we stand to acquire a vital part of our knowledge of society. On these grounds, it is widely accepted that social dispositions are manifested in the moral outrage experienced in the face of human suffering and then when touched by the miseries of others we are made consciously alert to social bonds. At its origins, the critical impulse that brings debate to the human social condition as such is allied to the conviction that *social life is animated by our capacity to sympathize morally with the suffering of others*.

(*ibid.*, 46; second accentuation AL)

4 Sympathetic imagination as social and moral force

Two eminent thinkers of the 18th century Scottish Enlightenment, David Hume (1711–1776) and Adam Smith (1723–1790), elaborately reflect on the moral sentiment of co-feeling as constitutive for sociality.¹² In the centre of these reflections is the notion of ‘sympathy’.

In his main work, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume challenges the priority of reason as a motive for social action and gives passions a prominent place in considerations about the human constitution and human society. Passions (or sentiment, feelings) are not expressions of private desires or interests, they are rather directed towards fellow human beings and ‘are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts’ (Hume 2001, 386). Passions advance communication among fellow human beings; the movement of passions, however, is enabled by ‘sympathy’, a ‘remarkable’ quality of human nature, both in itself and in its consequences (*ibid.*, 206).

Interpreters of David Hume’s work emphasise that he understands sympathy as ‘a psychological mechanism that explains how we come to feel what others are feeling. It is not itself a feeling or sentiment [...]’ (Morris, Brown 2014, section 7.2). The mechanism of sympathy brings a person from the ‘idea of what someone is feeling to actually experiencing the feeling’ (*ibid.*); and for that four steps are needed: first, to have an idea of the other’s feeling; second, to become aware of the resemblance, the associative relation between me and the other (including

¹² For the reception on Hume and Smith I refer primarily to Mullan (1988), Haakonssen (2002), Morris and Brown (2014), Agosta, undated).

the awareness that I feel closer to those who are near to me in time, space, and through family relationships); third, to become aware of myself; and finally, the perception of the other is transmitted by force and vivacity to my perception. Hume summarises: '[...] sympathy [...] is nothing but the conversion of an idea into an impression by the force of *imagination*' (Hume 2001, 273; emphasis AL).

Adam Smith integrates the theory of imagination, developed by Hume, as a central element of his work on moral sentiments. For Hume and for Smith, so Knud Haakonssen, the imagination is a mental faculty, which spontaneously searches for order, coherence and agreement in the world and so enables people to 'create a distinctively human sphere within the natural world' (Haakonssen 2002, xii). Haakonssen distinguishes two forms of imagination in Smith's work: 'theoretical' imagination, directed towards things and events, and 'practical' imagination, concerned with persons as agents. This latter form of imagination is what Smith calls sympathy and what he considers crucial for human morality. It is a mechanism or process to reach out to other people, to understand the other's point of view and prepare moral assessments – it is not the assessment itself.¹³ Smith describes this process vividly:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. [...] It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion [...].

(Smith 2002, 11f.)

Through sympathy as an act of imagination a person comes to understand other people's feelings. However, this is for Smith a mutual process, because in the same way as the other as a moral being is a creation of 'my' imagination, I am as

¹³ 'Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever' (Smith 2002, 13). Smith, however, is not always consistent in his use of the term and sometimes seems to use sympathy as synonymous with compassion.

well an act of ‘his/her’ imagination. Moreover, in this act of imagination lies an even greater significance: while people interact, they learn to see their *own* sentiments and feelings with the eyes of others:

The central point is that we only become aware of ourselves [...] through our relationship to others. When we observe others, we notice that they observe us, and one of the most urgently felt needs for sympathetic understanding is to appreciate how they see us. [...] Our understanding of how others see us [...] shapes our view of who we are and how we stand in [...] relationships in life. (Haakonssen 2002, xv)

Haakonssen is convinced that Adam Smith was very much aware of the fact that the human being in its personal and moral existence is constituted by social relationships and mutual interaction with (significant) others: ‘[...] one only learns to see oneself as a person and as a member of a moral universe of agents through sympathy with other’s view of one’s identity and situation in the world’ (ibid.).¹⁴ Human beings are social beings and they can only act in the world on the basis of sympathetically imagining the others’ expectations: persons anticipate the assessment of themselves by others and adjust their own behaviour in a social setting according to the need of agreement or conformity, or to avoid conflict. With that, human social beings ‘internalize the external spectator and respond to this figure of the sympathetic imagination’ (ibid.).

Besides grounding social life in interaction, Adam Smith also lays the foundation for a social rationale of morality, thereby dismissing the idea of a universal morality as well as ascribing it to the authority of conscience and thus finally to God. Like other ‘conventions’ morality is a result of adaptation to the respective circumstances humans live in and is thus historically and socio-culturally contingent.¹⁵ To establish the social basis of morality Smith imagines the ideal of an ‘impartial spectator’, ‘the man within the breast’ (Smith 2002, 182), who judges (similarly to a third person) without bias and serves as a ‘moral compass’ (Hunt 2007, 65). This imagination, Haakonssen emphasises, is itself an act of mutual sympathy, as we try to understand the way the ideal impartial spectator – not limited by prejudice, ignorance and so on – would sympathise with us and so appraise us (Haakonssen 2002, xv).

¹⁴ The insight that taking the role or the perspective of the other is paramount for the development of the human personality was developed by G. H. Mead and became central for the pragmatist approach to philosophy, sociology and social psychology.

¹⁵ Haakonssen argues that setting aside the ‘ancient divide over the issue of nature versus artifice in morality’ is Smith’s most original contribution to moral philosophy. According to Smith artifice is natural to humankind and there is ‘no condition in which people do not generate moral, aesthetic and other conventions’ (Haakonssen 2002, xii).

Arguing that the capability of imagining an impartial spectator presupposes involvement in self-reflexive mutual social interaction also means presupposing an autonomous Self. Lynn Hunt puts it bluntly, saying that autonomy¹⁶ and sympathy go together for Smith (Hunt 2007, 65). Smith's approach to human sentiment and sympathetic imagination therefore qualifies as a pioneering statement about the constitution of morality, sociality and personhood under conditions of modernity.

5 Sympathy, language and understanding

The 18th century emphasis on sympathy and the natural sociability of humanity coincides with an emerging interest in language as a main means of communication.¹⁷ Hans Aarsleff (2006) gives an account of the main debates in the philosophy of language in the 17th and 18th centuries and reconstructs the 'rise of rhetorical expressivism' – the development from a cognitive to an emotive theory of meaning. Aarsleff emphasises the innovative shift that happened in the 18th century: for the first time language was seen as a basic social institution and, as a historical phenomenon, was analysed in historical terms.¹⁸ Aarsleff considers the work of Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, especially the *Essai sur l'origines des connaissances humaines* (1746), as pivotal for the understanding of speech and knowledge as 'aspects of our natural history'. Condillac's significant contribution lies in two main arguments: against the Cartesian view that knowledge originates in the mental life of a silent, isolated individual, he claims that meaning arises in dialogue, and discursivity as a condition of knowledge is a function of public speech. He further argues that language owes its origin to 'a combination of instinctually affective communication and reflectively conceived artificial signs'¹⁹ (Aarsleff 2006, 451). Condillac thus established the idea that language, as

16 Autonomy in this context refers to an ontogenetically fully developed, morally accountable, self-reflexive person (in the sense of Lawrence Kohlberg's post-conventional morality), and *not* a de-contextualised, a-social and self-contained individual, assuming him/herself as a privileged locus of action and reason.

17 I thank Knud Haakonssen for having drawn my attention to reflections on language in the 17th and 18th century and their relevance for the discussion on empathy.

18 See Haakonssen 2016; Haakonssen has edited a volume honouring Hans Aarsleff and his seminal work on language as part of a contextualist intellectual history.

19 Condorcet differentiates between *accidental signs* (signs that trigger an unexpected recall), *natural signs* (cries that nature has established for the sentiments of joy, fear, pain etc.), and *instituted signs* (those we ourselves have chosen; they have an arbitrary relation to our ideas); see Aarsleff 2006, 460.

a system of signs, cannot be private, but results from social intercourse, and the ‘language of action’ (emotive expressions, natural sociability and sympathy) provides a proto-language. For Condillac, so Aarsleff, ‘the essence of humanity is the activity of the mind that is generated when thinking is cycled into action by signs and their use in dialogue. Without language, there is no humanity’ (ibid., 463f.).

Aarsleff makes a valid argument by indicating the similarities between the work of Condillac and that of the later Wittgenstein. He highlights that both scholars argue against the Cartesian dualism of body and mind, oppose the view of language as emerging from the privacy of an individual mind and stress its ultimate grounding in sociality, and they see in action the beginning of language: ‘The language of action initiates a game that occurs within a form of life, and, like a game the language of action carries no implication that it is guided by reason’ (ibid., 468).

The analogy between Wittgenstein’s theory of language and that of 18th century scholars leads me back to the anthropology of violence and the reflections on the communicability of pain. Considering the fact that languages come from and still carry some marks from the expressive language of action, already the cry of pain is a sign that addresses somebody and awaits a response. It means moving out of isolation, locating my pain in the body of another person who then experiences my pain in her/his body. The cry of pain is an appeal to the other, a plea to communicate, the beginning of a language game (as mentioned above). The centrality of language as facilitating communication even in suffering, and with that consolidating social bonds and sympathetic relationships, has been strongly emphasised by Veena Das, and it is worth quoting her again:

In this movement between bodies, the sentence “I am in pain” becomes the conduit through which I may move out of the inexpressible privacy and suffocation of my pain. [...] Pain in this rendering is not that inexpressible something that destroys communication or marks an exit from one’s existence in language. Instead, it makes a claim on the other – asking for acknowledgement that may be given or denied. In either case, it is not a referential statement that is pointing to an inner object. (Das 2007, 40)

The reflections on the communicability of pain and the centrality of language in this process carry the implicit assumption of *understanding* not only as a cognitive phenomenon but also as function of experience. The willingness to let the suffering of the other happen to me, capture, take hold of me, means to share the other’s pain and – even if not fully – experience the other as somebody in pain. I, as an individual person can experience and so understand the sentiments of another individual, the You, because of our common sociality and linguistic faculty.

In the context of his reception of Condillac’s *Essai*, Denis Diderot presents some further thoughts on the question of the relationship between language and

individuality. He asks: What happens to individuality in the process of communication? Diderot's answer evokes the poverty and insufficiency of language, which he considers unable to grasp the richness and multitude of personal feelings, and he states that in a successful communication we have to surrender part of our individuality, with the consequence that 'we never precisely understand, we are never precisely understood' (Diderot, in Aarsleff 2006, 471).²⁰

Diderot seems to bring forward two different but interrelated arguments: firstly, he addresses the impossibility of fully partaking in the sentiments of another person (because of the richness of the other's personal feelings and the lack of linguistic means to express them) and so points to the *limits of communication and understanding*. Secondly, he emphasises the *limits of individualisation* and with that hints at the impossibility of becoming (and being) a totally bounded and in every respect self-sufficient and self-determined subject. Communication (sociality) uncompromisingly requires sacrificing part of one's individuality and so *dividing* oneself, and at the same time communication (sociality) is never encompassing, absorbing the individual (being much more than what is transmittable in language and communication). It is the dialectics of the relationship between individuality and sociality that is here at stake, historically and culturally contingent and demanding specific research.

The reflections on communication and understanding have an additional dimension: they can throw light on the difference between sympathetic imagination perceived as either based on *relationality* between individuals, or thought about as *identification*, or *unification*. For this purpose we have to turn first to Martin Buber (1970) and then to Karl F. Morrison (1988).

'Man becomes an I through a You' writes Buber (1970, 82), and he explains:

The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one's whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You. All actual life is encounter. (ibid., 62)

Buber's message is explicit: without intersubjectivity there is no Self, and only an inter-subjectively constituted relational Self has the capacity for sympathetic imagination and can reach out to others.²¹ In the course of his argument

²⁰ Individuality remains in the way we speak (the accent), but not what (the words, the language) we speak (Aarsleff 2006, 471f.).

²¹ Dan Zahavi (2012) understands the inter-subjectively constituted or 'interpersonal' Self as the core or minimal self: 'a self, whose self-experience is constitutively dependent upon others, i.e., whose self-experience is mediated through others'. This core self is complemented by the narrative self, thus forming the 'complex Self'.

it becomes evident that he makes a clear distinction between I and You being in relation, and I and You being in a process or state of unification or identification, which shows itself particularly in religious contexts. Buber opposes religious ideas that either see God as merging into the Self by stripping the latter of all subjectivity (unification), or imagine the Self as the divine, the ‘One that thinks and is’ (identification). To explain the first case Buber refers to Christian thinking and especially to the works of Meister Eckhart²²; for the second case he takes examples from Indian religions – the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha. The problem for Buber is that both forms of religious imagination ‘annul relationships’ (ibid., 132), ultimately conditional for the formation of the human subject as a separate and ‘whole being’ and thus for his capability to encounter others.

The historian Karl F. Morrison looks for identification processes – processes where relationships merge into identity – in Western literature, theology and art. His investigation identifies four forms in which processes of assimilation/identification occur: cosmological, sacramental, metaphysical and epistemological.²³ The goal of all mimetic processes, so Morrison, was self-extinction – ‘to reduce the symmetry of “I” and “you” through stages of diminishing likeness and increasing identity’ (Morrison 1988, 32). Morrison argues that the desire to assimilate or identify with a (human or trans-human) counterpart is grounded in the longing to fully *understand* the other. He therefore introduces the concept of the ‘hermeneutic gap’ to explain the human desire to move from the symmetric relationship between ‘I and You’ to the ‘I am You’.

While both sympathetic imagination and identification (or unification) go beyond cognitive (spiritual, intellectual) ways of sharing meaning and include bodily and sensual forms of reaching out to the other, they also display a fundamental difference: sympathetic imagination, as a necessary moment in the encounter of relational Selves, gives evidence of the *social foundation and the moral potential of the human being*. As Leder remarks with reference to Max Scheler, ‘to experience true sympathy for others (*Mitgefühl*), it is necessary to retain a sense of their otherness’ (Leder 1990, 162); the moment ‘our identities

²² It should be emphasised that Buber’s interpretation of Meister Eckhart is not uncontested; see the contribution of Markus Vinzent in Part 2 of this publication.

²³ He traces the cosmological identity of God and the world from Vedic to European / Mediterranean text and his examples show the entanglement of thoughts and histories; sacramental communion shows in his opinion for example in ancient mystery cults and Christian sacraments; references to metaphysical unity can be discovered in Greek philosophical ideas about identity of parts and the whole, the continuous process of generation and the immanence of god in the world. Epistemological identification seems to be reflected in likeness between knower and known, lover and beloved, and in theatre and art, between actor and character (impersonation), artist and work, beholder and work.

blur, I can no longer speak of concerned relation' (ibid.). In contrast, the blurring of identities or total identification seems to *marginalise sociality and moral commitment*. Instead, it takes into account the desires of the 'I' to complement one's own Self or lose one's Self in order to achieve a state of absorption, an imagined, idealised unity – be it with the divine, the species, or the cosmos. Identification is often based on a feeling of deficit and/or estrangement. It aims at completion or absorption; it aims at one-ness with the other and means the end of sociality, morality and communication.

6 Empathic occurrences: relationality, resonance, and articulation

In recent decades, research on empathy proliferated in the fields of biological and cognitive sciences, as well as in social sciences and in philosophy. Especially the neurosciences engage in extensive investigations about the neural correlates of empathy and study brain activities particularly in those brain areas considered relevant for intersubjective performances.²⁴ The new insights and explanations about the biologically grounded human capacity for and mechanisms of empathy led Fritz Breithaupt, scholar of cultural studies and cognitive sciences, to the conclusion:

The cognitive sciences not only provide astonishing insights into the mechanisms of empathy, but also show us that people cannot help but empathise with others. Evidently, much of our capacity for understanding one another on an intellectual and emotional level stems from our inherent ability for mimicry, along with fundamental neuronal possibilities that allow us to experience the observed behaviour of others as our own actions.

(Breithaupt 2009, 8; transl. AL)²⁵

24 Research on the empathic capacity of humans is located within the wider field of the search for 'neural correlates of consciousness', which tries to understand the 'nexus between the virtuality of an external existence and the internal dynamics of biological information-processing' (Metzinger 2000, 3). For an overview see the compilation of Metzinger (2000); for neuroscientific and medical research regarding empathy see Watt and Panksepp 2016; Hein 2011; 2016. Primatologist Frans de Waal (2012) traces the evolutionary history of empathy by discussing research on empathy among animals, especially monkeys and apes; a controversial debate developed around the discovery of mirror neurons, labelled as 'the most hyped concept in neuroscience' (Kilner, Lemon 2013).

25 'Die Kognitionswissenschaften geben uns nicht nur erstaunliche Aufschlüsse über die Mechanismen von Empathie, sondern zeigen auch, dass Menschen wohl gar nicht anders können als mit anderen mitzufühlen. Die Fähigkeit des intellektuellen und emotionalen Verstehens von

In line with this argument, Douglas Watt and Jaak Panksepp (2016) analyse a range of definitions of empathy and identify three basic components in all of them: ‘feeling what someone is feeling’ (affective resonance/contagion); ‘knowing what someone is feeling’; and ‘having some intent to mitigate suffering’ (Watt, Panksepp 2016, 11). Empathy, which they define as a ‘prosocial process essential for the mitigation of suffering’ (ibid., 3) thus refers to affective as well as to higher cognitive processes and indicates the human capacity for moral concern.

While approaches from cognitive sciences so far seem to focus on the affective and cognitive capacity developed by and existing in an (isolated) individual human being (who only in a second step enters into a relationship and reaches out to fellow human beings), philosophical approaches influenced by pragmatism start from the assumption that the cognitive capacities of an individual are already intersubjectively constituted. Thiemo Breyer (2015) presents an elaborate attempt in this regard and discusses empathy from a philosophical-anthropological-phenomenological perspective, building on a basic and necessary embodiment of human relationships to the world, to others and to oneself.

Breyer starts by criticising approaches from cognitive sciences for being reductionist, as they seem to understand human empathic capacity basically as a result of sub-personal (neuronal) activities or higher cognitive processes. Empathy, so his argument, happens here in the self-contained system of the observer and he pleads for an alternative interpretation, which builds on the paradigm of embodied cognitive science²⁶ and the idea that empathy occurs in the open space of bodily encounter and social and linguistic interaction between Self and Other.

Taking the specific manner, in which intentional states are connected in the context of secondary personal episodes of reciprocal reference of I and You as a starting point, one then has to ask the epistemological question regarding the psyche of the stranger the other way

anderen beruht offenbar zu einem nicht unerheblichen Teil auf angeborenen Fähigkeiten zur Mimikri und auf basalen neuronalen Möglichkeiten, die uns das bei anderen beobachtete Verhalten wie das eigene Handeln erleben lassen’ (Breithaupt 2009, 8).

26 Breyer refers to the paradigm of *4E Cognition* (2015, 30). He argues that *4E Cognition* has become the label for philosophical approaches focussing on embodiment. The human mind is, first of all, embodied; in its embodied condition it is also extended, embedded and enactive. *Embodied* relates to the nexus between cognitive states and the particularities of the body they inhabit. *Extended* indicate that processes of the mind reach into the sensory system and the motoric functions; senses are not passive receptors of outer influences but are also shaped by cognitive factors. It also points to the instrumental use of auxiliary tools, for example when calculating. *Embedded* relates to the fact that cognition happens in spacial, instrumental and cultural contexts. *Enactive* highlights the fact that the human organism creates its world in a process of actively structuring it.

around: “how am I able to make a meaningful distinction between my own state of mind and being and yours?” This question is different from the one that has usually been asked in the “Theory of Mind,” namely “How can I access your states of thought and being from my own outside perspective?”. (Breyer 2015, 47; transl. AL)²⁷

Breyer presents a complex model of empathy, which builds on relationality and starts from the realities of an intersubjective encounter (ibid., 48ff.). Empathy thus develops through various levels of empathic occurrences: bodily resonance (*leibliche Resonanz*), understanding of expressions (*Ausdrucksverstehen*) and understanding of the alien Other (*Fremdverstehen*).

The human being is never in a cognitively neutral state, but has always to cope with transitions from one mood to the next. The emotional atmosphere is a medium through which the world appears to human beings and through which they also experience others. However, the atmospheric space of encounter (*Begegnungsraum*) and the atmospheric conditions are always (already) intersubjectively shaped. It is the human body that functions as soundboard for atmospheric conditions by translating the space-tuned phenomena into self-resonance,²⁸ and this *elementary capacity to resonate is the precondition of empathy*.²⁹ Breyer conceptualises a common, an empathic space that is formed by the two partners of an intersubjective encounter:

The other co-designs the empathetic space by allowing me to develop a deeper understanding of his/her circumstances. This means that the other, him/herself, provides me with the supporting structures and elements that give rise to my empathic relationship. Emotions do not linger or erupt in the physical interior of an isolated subject, but reach out into the atmospheric space, which can hold multiple subjects and, thus, enables processes of empathy. (ibid., 50; transl. AL)³⁰

27 ‘Von der spezifischen Art des Zusammenhangs von intentionalen Zuständen in den zweitpersonalen Episoden der reziproken Verwiesenheit von Ich und Du aus gesehen, stellt sich nämlich die epistemologische Frage nach dem Fremdpsychischen anders herum: “Wie kann ich zwischen meinem und deinen Zuständen überhaupt sinnvoll unterscheiden?” – nicht wie in der *Theory of Mind* üblich: “Wie komme ich von meiner Perspektive aus an Deine Zustände von außen heran?”’ (Breyer 2015, 47).

28 ‘Der Leib fungiert [...] als Resonanzboden für Stimmungen, indem er “die stimmungsräumlichen Phänomene in seine Eigenresonanz” überträgt’ (Breyer 2015, 49).

29 Hartmut Rosa tries to make research on empathy fruitful for his theory of resonance (Rosa 2016, ch. V).

30 ‘Der Andere gestaltet [...] den empathischen Raum mit, in dem ich ein Verstehen seiner Zustände entwickeln kann, das heißt er selbst stellt unterstützende Elemente für meinen Empathiebezug bereit. Gefühle spielen sich [...] nicht im psychischen Innenraum eines vereinzelt Subjekts ab, sondern greifen in den Stimmungsraum aus, der mehrere Subjekte umfassen und so empathische Prozesse ermöglichen kann’ (Breyer 2015, 50).

From the primary level of bodily resonance, that is allowing oneself to be affected (*pathisches Sich-affizieren-Lassen*; *ibid.*, 49), one reaches the next level of empathy, where the significance of specific expressions can be understood (*Audrucksverstehen*). These expressions may be universal (based on instinct and affect; conditions like pain, fear, anger); social (socially shaped according to particular norms; ideas of shame, honour, pride); or cultural (conventionalised forms of bodily communication – like gestures – which require learning processes for understanding). The third level, understanding the alien other (*Fremdverstehen*), with the basic modi of simulation, inference, and theorisation, requires from the subject the ability of changing perspective and recourse to a pool of acquired knowledge. This form of understanding is directed towards comprehending the specific mental state of the other, its context, or the possible further consequences.

Flexibility of perspectives is an important criterion for higher-level types of imaginative empathy and Breyer identifies two different ways of changing perspective (*ibid.*, 169ff.). The first is egocentric transposition – to try to find out how I would feel in the place of the other; the second – allocentric transposition – is to enter the internal world of the other and try to explore how the other is feeling. However, both forms of change in perspective are limited and do not allow one to really experience the emotional state or the sentiments of the other. Instead of the imaginative empathy (evoked previously by Adam Smith) Breyer introduces *interpersonal empathy* as an even higher form of empathising: here the other is conceptualised as a person equipped with agency, who is actively involved in the shaping of the empathic situation and its interpretation. The paradigmatic site for such an encounter, in which the limits and possibilities of empathic feeling and understanding are negotiated and communicatively processed, is the *dialogue* (*das Gespräch*). Language seems therefore a precondition for higher-level empathic communication.

To underline the significance of the interconnection between the corporeal and the linguistic functions in human interaction, Breyer refers to the pragmatist philosopher Matthias Jung and his integrative anthropology based on the concept of articulation (*Artikulation*), which he defines as

the basic anthropological fact that people explain their own life circumstances and directions to others by articulating motoric impulses and lived qualities, or in other words, transforming structured schemata of action and syntactically organised chains of symbols [...]. When human beings articulate themselves, they generate meaningful structures by realising specific physical – or in the most fundamental sense physiological – patterns.

(Jung 2009, 12f.; transl. AL)³¹

³¹ In the German original: ‘die anthropologisch basale Tatsache, dass Menschen ihre Lebensvollzüge für sich und andere verständlich machen, indem sie erlebte Qualitäten und motorische Impulse artikulieren, sie also in gegliederte Handlungsabläufe und syntaktisch strukturierte

Jung's theory of human articulation accentuates the essential role of embodied *communication* in human existence. Due to its expressivity and the possibility for articulation of meaning the human body is designed for communication. Communication encompasses a continuity of indicative-receptive experience, bodily-physical expression and propositional judgements (see also Breyer 2015, 57ff.). Focussing on the interrelation of body, expressivity and language – or, with other words, of somatics and semantics –, Jung identifies five functions of the body for linguistic (phonetic) articulation (ibid., 59ff.): *Facilitating communication (mitteilungsermöglichend)* – phonetically, mimically, with gestures; *linguistic (sprachlich)* – embodied language, speech; *para-linguistic (sprachbegleitend)* – bodily articulations like gestures, mimicry; *replacing language/speech (spracher-setzend)* – autopoietic function, bodily expressions (cry of pain, blushing); *limiting language/speech (sprachbegrenzend)* – psychosomatic factors, stuttering.

The foregoing brief discussion of the most recent phenomenological approaches to empathy strongly highlights the *nexus between empathy, corporeality, inter-subjectivity and language*. Now it is time to ask whether such an approach might influence and probably alter the conception of the (modern) individual.

7 Empathy, dividuality and the (modern) individual: concluding reflections

Showing empathy, for example with a person in pain, requires recognition of the other as other, or, with the words of Martha Nussbaum, to be aware 'of one's own qualitative difference from the sufferer' (Nussbaum 2001, 328; cited in Breyer 2015, 208). Breyer concludes that the empathic subject exposes a twofold attention (*attentionale Spaltung oder Dopplung*), as it focuses on the other as other, while simultaneously being aware of the difference between one's own

Symbolketten transformieren. [...] Wenn Menschen sich artikulieren, erzeugen sie sinnhafte Strukturen, *indem* sie jeweils bestimmte physische – in den basalen Formen physiologische – Muster realisieren' (Jung 2009, 12f.).

Jung claims that his theory of articulation differs substantially from alternative approaches in philosophical anthropology: it emphasises the difference between the human species and other living beings (holism of difference) by simultaneously insisting on evolutionary continuity; it evenly emphasises the intrinsic embodiment of mind (Geist) and its categorical difference to animal intelligence; and it postulates primacy of the sign in contrast to ideas (Gedanken) (ibid., 20).

experience and that of the other.³² Only an autonomous subject,³³ endowed with affective, cognitive as well as social and moral capacities, is in command of such twofold attention.

It seems plausible to say that empathy presupposes some sort of partibility or divisibility as an important attribute of the individual. While I am fully aware of myself, I can also reach out to the other and let myself be affected or marked by her or him, so that for example the other's pain can be located in *my* body and so can wound *me*. Empathy also means vulnerability, it signifies the fragility of individual boundaries and thus a certain porosity or permeability of the Self. Such an understanding of the Self may help to give a more precise account of the nexus between empathy, corporeality, inter-subjectivity and language: empathic relations are, firstly, mediated by a space of encounter, in which porous beings, on the one hand, express themselves by *emitting* expressive and semantic signs (emotions, feelings, speech, paralinguistic expressions), and, on the other hand, *imbibe* those of the others. Secondly, communication happens through bodily-physical *and* linguistic forms of articulation, presupposing an individual, autonomous, but partible and permeable Self (i.e. without rigid boundaries). Thirdly, such communication includes receptivity with regard to others, listening, experiencing and understanding the multiple forms of expression and speech, thus allowing empathic understanding even if language fails. Fourthly, and in the case of suffering and pain, empathy as moral capacity enables mitigating the suffering of others and initiating processes of healing by lending one's body to the other, listening and creating a therapeutic space.

Having moved quite far in questioning the idea of a self-contained, bounded individual, it might be rewarding to explore in which way the concept of *dividuality*, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, can have some interpretative relevance in the debate on empathy.³⁴

³² In German: 'bei der sich das Selbst einmal auf den Anderen als Anderen und einmal auf die Tatsache der Differenz zwischen fremdem und eigenen Erleben richtet' (Breyer 2015, 208).

³³ Judith Butler pleads for a notion of autonomy that takes into account the relationality and sociality of human beings. 'Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life; only later, and with some uncertainty, do I lay claim to my body as my own, if, in fact, I ever do [...]. [I]f I build a notion of "autonomy" on the basis of the denial of this sphere of a primary and unwilling physical proximity with others, then am I denying the social conditions of my embodiment in the name of autonomy?' (Butler 2004, 26). In other words: 'If I am struggling for autonomy, do I not need to be struggling for something else as well, a conception of myself as invariably in community, impressed upon by others, impinging upon them as well, and in ways that are not fully in my control or clearly predictable?' (ibid., 27). See also fn 14 of this paper.

³⁴ I limit myself to basic comments with regard to the concept of dividuality. Dividuality as well as its possible proximity to Charles Taylor's concept of Self is discussed in more detail in the introduction to Part 2 of the publication.

More recently, the concept of dividuality gained considerable significance in the discipline of anthropology through the work of Marilyn Strathern on gender in Melanesia (1988), although it was earlier introduced into the anthropological discourse by McKim Marriott in his study on Hindu transactions (1976). Strathern wanted to highlight and conceptualise the difference between the (ideal of the) Western individual and her understanding of Melanesian personhood. While in the Western context relations are considered external to the clearly bounded individual, in Melanesia, however, relations are seen as being within, or incorporated in the individual: 'Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived' (Strathern 1988, 13). Dividuality thus refers to the fact that Melanesian persons are multi-authored and composite beings: they are the product of gifts, divine or human substances; they are 'constituted of the detached parts/relationships of other persons through prior agentive elicitations and exchanges' (Mosko 2010, 215). A singular person (an individual) can be imagined as dividual, or, as Strathern frames it, 'as a social microcosmos' (Strathern 1988,13).

The way 'dividuality' is used in the work of Marilyn Strathern has two major shortcomings. First of all, Strathern's conception of dividuality postulates a container idea of the person, in which objects and relations deriving from others are incorporated in the sense of distinct substances and added to the original substances of the person. In contrast, we have to consider these influences not as self-contained substances, but as permeable, merging and mingling with each other and with the existing qualities of a person, thus giving rise to a unique entangled personhood with a distinct agentive potential. Secondly, Marilyn Strathern's approach to conceptualising dividual personhood reproduces a dichotomy between Western and non-Western, modern and pre-modern contexts. Scholars from the same discipline and with the same regional focus question such polarisation. Mark Mosko (2013) argues that people from north Mekeo (PNG) reproduce dividual patterns even in the contemporary (modern) context of local capitalist market economy. He also shows that Christianity – a 'highly significant context of Western culture' – is premised on personal participation, and he refers to the relations between Christians, and between them and their deity (Mosko 2010). For Edward LiPuma 'all societies encode relational, dividual aspects of personhood', and 'persons emerge precisely from that tension between dividual and individual aspects/relations' (LiPuma 1998, 57). The idea of dividuality thus transcends the anthropological context and can help us to understand aspects of modern Western personhood as well. Analysis and description of dividuality, and the relation between dividual and individual dimensions of a person, however, must take into consideration the realities of the particular life worlds of human beings and not the imaginaries in which they are grounded.

To support the idea of the co-existence of dividual and individual aspects of a person it seems useful recalling Charles Taylor's reflections on the Self and his idea of the 'porous' and the 'buffered' Self (Taylor 2007). In the course of human history human beings undergo significant transformations in their relationship to the outer world, but also to the subjective and the social world (see introduction to Part 2 of this publication). Taylor describes persons of the European medieval ages as 'porous', in this way expressing that a person (a Self) is vulnerable, open to spirits, demons, and cosmic forces (Taylor 2007, 38), which all can and do exert influence. These forces, so Taylor, 'can take us over' (ibid., 34), they can 'penetrate' us (ibid., 35). In contrast, the 'bounded' self of the modern, contemporary Western world has built a boundary between the inner and outer worlds, between human mind/human agency and objects or things. This boundary is essential, it works as a buffer, 'such that the things beyond don't need "to get to me" [...]' (ibid., 38), and the Self can see itself as largely invulnerable. Yet, while Taylor seems to be convinced of the effectiveness of the inner-outer boundary under modern conditions, he has to admit that even the modern buffered individual has porous internal spaces in which sociality and emotions can take root.

For a more adequate conceptualisation of the Self (of personhood) in historical perspective, which takes into account the interdependence of dividual and individual aspects, one has to push Taylor's approach a bit further. Charles Taylor constructs the porous and the buffered self as a dichotomy, representing historical stages of selfhood within the Western world (enchanted vs. disenchanted, engaged vs. disengaged). It is precisely this dichotomy which one has to put into question, not only in the light of the phenomenon of social relationality and empathy, but also in the light of contemporary forms of relating to the outer world, like spiritual embodiment, Christian self-sacrifice or the reception of art work (as discussed in the contributions of A. Malik, Ch. Dureau and J. Vincent in this publication).

In this article I have argued that the empathic subject can take on the suffering and pain of others; it is partible and vulnerable, its boundaries are fuzzy, permeable or porous. This means that in the reality of life, even under conditions of modernity and despite the dominant imaginary of the self-contained individual, dividual aspects or qualities are important features of the Self, of the person as a social, moral being. I therefore suggest understanding porousness and boundedness as qualitative markers on a socio-historical scale or continuum, which takes into consideration *social realities* as well as *ideological constructions* of personhood. Persons are never only porous dividuals, nor unambiguously buffered individuals, they neither dissolve in the social nor are they immune against social relationships. The idea of a scale or continuum would allow not only acknowledging the *co-existence* of relational/dividual and individual aspects of the human

Self in society, but notably engaging in socio-historical studies of their relation in theory and praxis. We need to explore ideas and realities of permeability and partibility on the one hand, of closeness and boundedness on the other, in particular historical constellations, socio-cultural contexts and situations.

The example of empathic relationships towards the suffering subject illustrates that a human being – from its beginning relationally and communicatively constituted – is a partible and permeable being – vulnerable, marked by and receptive to the suffering of other. Even in the social fabric of modern societies, a social subject encounters areas of life in which openness and permeability is desirable and empathy or emotional competence are counteracting processes of unleashed individualisation. This is however not to deny that a society consists of multiple other areas in which a person must act and behave in a more self-contained way.³⁵ In sum: for a human subject to lead a successful social life in a particular socio-cultural and historical context and to act according to situational challenges, it has to be *partible and permeable* (porous), but it must also have the ability of containment (boundedness). A social subject needs to be *dividual* and individual, or better, it has to be an *In/Dividual*.

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³⁵ The two main works of Adam Smith, the *Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations*, can be read as explorations in the partibility of the subject.

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Arthur Bueno

Simmel and the forms of in-dividuality

1 Introduction

The work of Georg Simmel is widely known for the case it makes for a strong connection between modernity and individualisation (see Frisby 1984/2002, 63–80; Lichtblau 1997, 25–38, 83–98; Honneth 2002; Rosa, Strecker, Kottmann 2007, 92–113). In his sociological theory as in *The Philosophy of Money*, in his writings on intellectual history as in his aesthetic and metaphysical essays, a perspective on modern culture is advanced according to which the latter is distinguished from other historical epochs by a peculiar accentuation of individuality. The process of individualisation is generally understood as a progressive release of the individual from forms of community, such as those often identified with the European Middle Ages,¹ that inhibited the development of personal freedom: against dissolution within an encompassing whole, modern individuals sought to detach themselves from levelling social bonds by strongly affirming their own boundaries, their ‘self-responsibility’ and ‘self-contained singularity’ (Simmel 2004 [1918], 249; see also Simmel 1989 [1890]).² Characteristic of this view is the assumption that the historical foregrounding of individuality is an inherently conflictual process. The emergence of the modern individual is thereby regarded not only as the outcome of struggles against previous forms of social organisation, but also as bringing forward new tensions of its own. Although Simmel argued at times that these conflicts have their ultimate foundation in a trans-historical antagonism between the

1 Being aware of the problematic aspects of such account of the medieval period, Simmel preferred to ‘leave undecided whether the Middle Ages actually lacked in such a degree the features of individuality’ and rather stress the latter’s ‘fundamental accentuation’ from the Renaissance onwards (Simmel 2004 [1918], 249).

2 Simmel’s writings are referenced in this text according to their English translations, whenever these are available. All quotations were compared with the German originals (as published in the *Georg Simmel Gesamtausgabe*) and often modified for the sake of precision. Where an English version was not available, the translation is mine.

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individual and society (Simmel 2007 [1917]; 1950 [1917]), equally crucial to his perspective is the claim that precisely in modernity this opposition achieved its zenith.

It is for no other reason that he so often presented the forms taken by the modern individual in dualistic terms, the most notable of which is the opposition between 18th-century quantitative and 19th-century qualitative individualisms (Simmel 1995 [1901–02]; 2002 [1903]); 1997 [1904/1918], 215–26; 2003 [1912/1918], 151–78; 1950 [1917]; 2004 [1918]). In the latter distinction, in fact a contrast is developed that can be seen to permeate the entirety of Simmel's oeuvre. Such antithesis was already central to his writings even before its explicit articulation as two kinds of individualism – as attested by his essays on money published in the 1880s and 1890s, in which the modern economy was seen to rely on the predominance of quantitative over qualitative dimensions of experience (Simmel 2013 [1889]; 2013 [1896]; see also 2011 [1900–07]). Moreover, Simmel subsequently developed a series of other oppositions that, despite their different analytical backgrounds and spatiotemporal settings, display a homologous structure. In his sociological theory, he advocated for a corresponding differentiation between social and extra-social dimensions of the individual (Simmel 2009 [1908]); his analysis of modern urban and economic life similarly relied on a contrast between intellectual and sensible individualities (Simmel 2002 [1903]); and his late aesthetic and metaphysical essays brought forward a congruent distinction between Romanic and Germanic individualisms (Simmel 2005 [1916]; 2007 [1917]; 2007 [1918]).³

Less visible, however, is the fact that these analyses present not only different figures of *in*-dividuality, with its accentuated sense of independence and self-sufficiency, but also distinct modes of *in*-dividuality marked by an openness to being permeated by something other than oneself. In fact, when one follows the thread of these dualisms in Simmel's work it becomes clear that, despite an initial focus on the boundedness of the *in*-dividual, forms of *in*-dividual porosity come to acquire over time an increasingly significant role. This has decisive consequences not only for the interpretation of his oeuvre but also, as I will argue, for a general assessment of modern life. After all, if the latter can be seen as characterised by an accentuation of particular kinds of *in*-dividuality, it is equally true that different figures of *in*-dividuality have surfaced in connection with, and as

³ Despite the differences one can identify in Simmel's work concerning the notions of *individuality* (i.e. the actual form taken by the individual), *individualisation* (i.e. the social process by means of which individuality is accentuated), and *individualism* (i.e. an ideal that might guide this process), these terms are often employed in a combined or interchangeable manner.

a reaction to, this process. The internal rifts of the modern in-dividual,⁴ as they can be reconstructed from Simmel's work, point thereby to a core aspect of the conflicts of modernity.

2 Quantitative and qualitative in-dividualisms

The distinction between two modern forms of individualism was formulated by Simmel at several moments of his intellectual trajectory (Simmel 1995 [1901–02]; 2002 [1903]; 1950 [1917]; see also 1997 [1904/1918], 215–26; 2003 [1912/1918], 151–78). Each of these texts presents a different point of departure: in 1901, the *political-ideal* starting point arises from the internal contradictions of the ideal of freedom and equality that animated the French Revolution, and which was seen to provide an adequate expression of that historical situation; in 1903, the *historical-cultural* starting point is the modern individual's struggle to preserve its existence against the threat of being swallowed up in a social-technological mechanism; in 1917, the *social-philosophical* point of departure is the fundamental and insoluble antagonism between social and individual life, that becomes especially acute in modernity. Despite these differences, in all such instances modern forms of individualism are grasped as reactions to, and expressions of, the conflicts manifested in European societies since the 18th century. To examine the tensions between and within these ideals amounts, therefore, to probing into some of the main oppositions of modern life: 'The external and internal history of our time takes its course within the struggle and in the changing entanglements of these two ways of defining the individual's role in the whole of society' (Simmel 2012 [1903], 31).

It was, then, as a reaction to the dominant social configuration that a new concept of individuality emerged in 18th-century Europe. In this period, says Simmel, 'individual forces found themselves in the most unbearable antagonism to their social and historical commitments and formations'. Prevalent institutions then appeared as outdated and unfairly constraining, 'as slave shackles under which one could no longer breathe' (Simmel 1995 [1901–02], 50). It was in this context that a *negative* ideal of individual freedom emerged whose premise was a wide-ranging refusal of dominant forms of social organisation. Corporatist and ecclesiastical ties were then considered mainly responsible for coercive and unjust relations among

4 Pyyhtinen (2010, 140–4) has previously argued for the presence of an 'in-dividual' in Simmel's writings. As used here, the expression has a different (and complementary) meaning: it does not refer primarily to the duality indivisible/divisible, but rather to the opposition closed/open, or atomised/permeable.

people, so that, as Simmel emphasises, ‘one concluded that with the victory over those institutions [...] all the inequalities in the world would disappear’ (ibid.). Within this framework, existing forms of social organisation were understood not only as unjust but also as artificial: they would consist in external constraints imposed on natural human freedom. Underlying this emerging ideal was, therefore, the notion that it would only take the fall of those social commitments which forced the individual into unnatural paths for society to move from oppression to freedom, from ‘historical unreason’ to ‘natural reason’ (ibid.). A general and negative ideal of freedom, as liberation from the subjugation of prevalent institutions, was premised on a similarly general notion of equality, as the natural condition of every human being on the basis of which a rational society could be founded.

Crucial for the emergence of this ideal was not only the wide-ranging opposition to the established social order, but also the philosophical rationalism of the 18th century, the focus of which was precisely ‘the general man, man in general’:

‘Just as the literature of the revolutionary period continuously speaks of the people, of the tyrant, of freedom in general, just as the “natural religion” contains providence as such, justice as such, divine education as such, so too the universal abstract man [...] is always and everywhere the same, apart from everything that distinguishes human beings from each other’ (ibid., 50f.).

According to this conception, every individual would contain a rational kernel that is essential to itself as well as the same in all human beings. That is why freedom and equality could be regarded as inextricably connected in a single ideal:

‘if man were only set free, then his merely human essence, which the historical commitments and corruptions had covered and distorted, would come forward again as his true self, and the latter would be the same for everyone because it constitutes the universal human being in us’ (ibid., 51).

The liberation of the individual from external constraints was thereby understood as the unshackling of an abstract, rational humanity possessed in equal measure by each and every one.

Equally important for such an ideal was the notion that each human being, in addition to taking part in a common abstract humanity, is and should be an *in-dividual*. In opposition to the surviving norms of the Middle Ages, the 18th-century notion of universal equality did not imply a social *fusion* into which human beings enter as members of a community, as parts of a substantive collectivity. They rather emerge as a set of isolated, legally or axiologically equal individuals. In Fichte’s words: ‘A rational being must *simply be an individual* – but precisely, not *this or that particular individual*’ (ibid.). This ideal is hence *in-dividualistic* in the sense that, against previous forms of direct

subordination of the person to the social whole, it asserts the boundedness and the autonomy, the self-sufficiency and self-responsibility of the individual. Yet it is *quantitative* in the sense that the human being is conceived as possessing the same abstract nature as any other and thereby as a commensurable or interchangeable element, different from others only in a 'numerical' sense.

There is hence an important affinity between this form of individualism and the modern money economy. As the ideal of quantitative *in-dividuality* was defined in opposition to existing social institutions, so the development of the modern economy was also marked by a break with the kinds of social bonds characteristic of the European Middle Ages. Due to its abstract and quantitative character, money *detaches* the elements it connects: slipping as an 'insulating layer' between person and property, as well as between the total personality and the social circle to which it belongs, it allows for a larger development of personal independence (Simmel 2013 [1896], 245). As Simmel remarks, monetary remuneration guarantees in several contexts a higher measure of freedom, since in payment in cash the individual does not deliver the totality of her self, but only the impersonal results of her work. However, this freedom is widely understood as a merely negative one, i.e. as freedom *from* something and not freedom *for* something, given the fact that money establishes a personal domain of reserve and choice which might remain, nonetheless, an empty realm of pure possibility. On the other hand, given its abstract nature money also *reconnects* that which it separates: its status as a universally recognised means of exchange offers 'grounds for an immediate mutual understanding' among human subjects in such a way that, according to Simmel, it would have been partially responsible for the emergence of the idea of the 'universally human' by the end of the 18th century (Simmel 2013 [1896], 51). The same process that made people and things unrelated to each other also created renewed and extremely strong connections among them: since it cannot be immediately consumed, money always points to the other participants in the economic system and, more generally, to the totality of economic exchanges. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the doctrine of freedom and equality could be regarded as the intellectual foundation of the modern economic order, with its formally equal competition between rational, free individuals: 'According to the new theory, the natural order of things saw to it that the unlimited competition of all resulted in the harmony of all interests, that the unrestricted striving after individual advantages resulted in the optimum welfare of the whole' (Simmel 1950 [1917], 83).

This ideal of negative freedom and abstract equality would, however, appear as problematic in the following century. In contrast to quantitative individualism, another conception emerged which dissolved the previous synthesis: the grounding of equality upon freedom, and freedom upon equality, was broken by a renewed emphasis on *inequality*.

'Just as equality in the eighteenth century, so now inequality in the nineteenth only needs freedom to emerge from its mere latency and potentiality and to dominate all of human life. Freedom remains the general denominator even if its correlate is the opposite of what it had been' (ibid., 78).

If freedom can now be connected to inequality, it is because the latter is no longer understood in the same manner. While the 18th century affirmed the individual's negative freedom against the 'external' inequality produced by illegitimate social norms, the 19th century emphasised a form of positive freedom associated with the development of each one's 'internal' inequality in relation to others.

'It seems that, as soon as the ego had become sufficiently strengthened by the feeling of equality and generality, it fell back into the search for inequality. [...] First, there had been the thorough liberation of the individual from the rusty chains of guild, birth right, and church. Now, the individual that had thus become independent also wished to distinguish himself from other individuals' (ibid.).

The emphasis is no longer on being a free individual as *any other*, but rather in being a peculiar one that can be replaced by *no other*.

Despite the differences between these individualisms, they both share a fundamental impulse: that according to which 'the individual seeks its self as if it did not yet have it, and yet, at the same time, is certain that its only fixed point is this self' (ibid., 79). But if 18th-century individualism saw the self as a centre of rational autonomy bounded to a general law equally valid for all, 19th-century individualism found within itself an incomparable and obscure peculiarity. While the former is associated with the 'unquestionable clarity' of 'a conceptually demonstrated rationalism', the latter is oriented by the 'enigmatic unfathomableness' of 'very obscure instincts' (ibid.).

It is no coincidence therefore that, according to Simmel, it was in a work of art that this form of individualism appeared in its first full elaboration. Though intimations of this conception are already displayed in Lessing's, Herder's and Lavater's writings,⁵ it is in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* that one sees, for the first time, 'a world which is based exclusively on the individual peculiarities of its protagonists and which is organised and developed only on

⁵ Even if Simmel associates each form of individualism with a different century in European history, it is clear by his treatment of the subject that this temporal attribution should not be understood in a clear-cut manner: not only intimations of qualitative individualism can be found in the 18th century – and, as we will see, also in the previous ones – but the same applies to quantitative individualism, whose origins can be traced back to earlier times. Moreover, it becomes evident that, for Simmel, both these traditions continued to be developed beyond the centuries in which their clearest expressions emerged.

this basis' (ibid.). Philosophically, says Simmel, this new ideal was expressed in Schleiermacher's claim that each individual is a synthesis of the forces that constitute the universe, yet one that is each time incomparable and entirely unique. Its core idea was 'that the absolute only lives in the form of the individual, and that individuality is not a restriction of the infinite but its expression and mirror' (ibid., 81). As in the previous century, a connection is thus established between nature and the individual. However, the former no longer appears as a homogeneous universal that is equally present within every human being, but rather as an infinite multiplicity of forces expressed within each one in a unique and obscure manner. Hence its association with 'mystical-fatalistic' ideas and its proximity, against 'the bright rationalism of the Enlightenment', with Romanticism (ibid.).

This worldview's characteristic emphasis on singularity did not only apply to the individual, but also to other cultures. Valuing 'the fascinating beauty of the Middle Ages, which had been neglected, and of the Orient, which had been despised by the activist culture of a liberal Europe', the Romanticists were, after Herder, the first to absorb and emphasise the uniqueness of historical realities (ibid.). Such a valuation of singularity was accompanied, however, by an equally accentuated search for *oneness*. Lying behind the interest in cultural worlds different than one's own was the notion that a sort of unity could be achieved, or discovered, that would be more felt and sensuous than reflective and rational. As Simmel emphasises, 'Novalis wanted his "one spirit" to transform itself into infinitely many alien spirits; the "one spirit inheres, as it were, in all objects it contemplates, and it feels the infinite, simultaneous sensations of a harmonious plurality"' (ibid.). It is in this sense that 19th-century individualism is connected to a conception of humanity that highlights not the abstract man-in-general, but 'the concrete totality of the living species' (ibid., 80). But as Novalis' quotation also indicates, the emphasis on the concreteness of sensations led, on the other hand, to an equally accentuated interest in the smallest singularities, in every minor contrast of experience: 'Above all, the Romanticists experienced the inner rhythm of the incomparability, of the specific claim, of the sharp qualitative differentiation of the single element' (ibid., 81f.). Such a tendency was already present in Lavater, who 'so stubbornly pursues the special characteristics of man's visible and inner traits that he cannot find his way back to man's total individuality, but remains arrested in his interest in the completely individual and single' (ibid., 82). Accordingly, the Romanticist 'feels its way through an endless series of contrasts' in such a way that each of them appears, at the instant it is being experienced, 'as something absolute, completed, self-contained, but at the next moment it is left behind' (ibid.).

Both these strivings – toward concrete singularity and concrete totality – will also reflect in a new conception of society, understood as a 'total organism' composed of heterogeneous elements. Such an idea contrasts with the 18th-century

ideal of a social order consisting of atomised, undifferentiated individuals held together by a law that ‘restrict[s] the freedom of the individual to the point where this freedom can coexist with that of every other’ (ibid., 83). This sort of mechanical unity, ‘put together through the mere addition of isolated and equal individuals’, could not be more foreign to the society envisioned by 19th-century qualitative individualism, with its striving for a social whole that rises from and above individual interactions ‘as a unit which cannot be found in the individual, not even as some sort of proportionate quantity’ (ibid.).

A crucial question faced by 19th-century individualism is, then, how to conjugate these two tendencies so as to achieve a concrete social totality that preserves the concrete singularities it assembles. At the level of social relations, the latter can be understood as a project akin to Novalis’ notion of ‘one spirit’ that is able to maintain a harmonious plurality without relinquishing the infinite contrasts in sensation. But, as Simmel here considers it, the path taken by 19th-century individualism was a different one. As a solution to that problem, it advanced a *restrictive* understanding of the qualitative personality, so that the latter could be integrated into the social whole. ‘The individualistic requirement of specificity does not make for the valuation of total personality within society, but for the personality’s objective achievement for the benefit of society’ (ibid., 80). In this framework, the individual does not contribute to social life with all the infinite nuances and contrasts of its concrete personality, but only as bearer of an *objective* task, the performer of a particular role in the division of labour. Though qualitatively specific, this role is nevertheless detached from all others, with which it is bounded only through an abstract law or medium, such as money.

All those ‘infinite contrasts in sensation’ that make up a personality are hence limited to how they come to be expressed in a particular objective performance. Accordingly, the concreteness of society is also restricted, with the harmonious plurality of the social organism being understood as an interrelation between distinct individual labours. Thus conceived, this form of individualism certainly contrasts with the previous one: while the 18th century emphasised the *equal* nature of rational individuals, the 19th rather highlighted the *distinctive* character of each personality. They are both marked, however, by an *atomised* conception of the individual – whether the latter is conceived as a bearer of equal rights, or as someone who performs a specific role within an economically differentiated society. The identification of qualitative individualism with the notion of a society organised on the basis of the division of labour amounts, therefore, to a restriction of its *in-dividual* aspects; it tends to convert this ideal into just another version of quantitative *in-dividualism*. Though it is discernible in Simmel’s account of 19th-century individualism the outline of a fully qualitative *in-dividuality*, this possibility ends up being held in check.

3 The sociological in-dividual

Tensions of this sort are also manifest in Simmel's sociological theory. His writings not only address the differences between those two forms of individualism; they are also *affected* by them. The paradoxical intertwinement between these ideals, as well as the social conflicts they manifest and to which they respond, find expression in the concept of individual articulated by Simmel in his sociology. Nowhere this appears more clearly than in the 1908 excursus on the *a priori* conditions of sociation (*Vergesellschaftung*), whose starting point are precisely the difficulties attached to the fact that sociation consists of relations between *individuals*.

Crucial for Simmel's sociology is the argument that, given the qualitative peculiarity of each human being, a *lacuna* is inherent to their reciprocal relations: it is impossible, after all, to completely know an individuality different from our own. 'It appears as though each person has a mark of individuality [*Individualitätspunkt*] deep down within, that can be reconstructed internally by no one else, for whom this mark is always qualitatively different' (Simmel 2009 [1908]: 43f.). In order to get around this unavoidable gap, each social participant must rely on some kind of generalisation of the other, 'a blurring of her contours' (*ibid.*, 44). The image thus obtained is characterised by dislocations that do not consist in mere illusions stemming from faulty or biased experience, but are rather fundamental modifications which convert a person into a social being. 'We represent all people [...] as the type of human to which their individuality allows them to belong; we think of them, aside all their singularity, under a *general category* that certainly does not encompass them fully and that they do not completely match' (*ibid.*; emphasis added). In social relations, we see the other not according to the whole of its personality but as a bearer of certain roles (officer, colleague, worker, etc.) and attributes (moral or immoral, independent or dependent, etc.). Such a process always involves, furthermore, some kind of typification: 'In order to take cognisance of people, we view them not according to their pure individuality but framed, highlighted, or even reduced by means of a *general type* [...] with which their pure being-for-itself does not coincide' (*ibid.*; emphasis added).

However, the knowledge of another human being via general types does not simply veil her pure being-for-itself. Typification has itself an *individualised* character: a set of general categories is combined so as to lead to a hypothetical construction of the other's personality, thus endowed with a certain unity on the basis of its fragments one is allowed to perceive.

'[T]he view of the other broadens these fragments into what we never actually are purely and wholly. The fragments cannot be seen only juxtaposed, but as we fill in the blind spot in our field of vision, completely unconsciously of course, we construct the fullness of its individuality from them' (*ibid.*).

From a plurality of fragments and their corresponding categories a complex, yet typified, image of the individual is formed which relies on the uniqueness of its real personality but is not identical with it. ‘The praxis of life pressures us to shape the picture of a person only from the bits of reality empirically known; but even that rests on [...] the transformation of the actual fragments into the generality of a type and into the completion of the hypothetical personality’ (ibid.).

This basic procedure, by means of which the other’s personality takes on a knowable and communicable form, functions as an *a priori* of all reciprocal actions between individuals: it is a practical assumption held by them and without which social relations could not take place. This constitutes what Simmel calls the first *a priori* condition of sociation. In line with the Kantian foundations of his 1908 *Sociology*,⁶ Simmel furthermore highlights the *schematic* aspect of those operations of social generalisation.

‘The civilian who meets an officer cannot free herself at all from the reality that this individual is an officer. And, although being an officer may be pertinent to this personality, her image still prejudices toward the *schematic type* comparable to it in the representation of the other’ (ibid., 45; emphasis added).

In this regard, the *a priori* categories of sociation function similarly to the Kantian categories of understanding (*Verstand*) that form the immediately given data into objects of knowledge:

‘Because the generalization is always at the same time more and less than the individuality, [...] those alterations and reformulations are in fact what obstruct this ideal knowledge of the [real] self even while being precisely the conditions by which the relationships that we know alone as social become possible’ (ibid.).

Yet while asserting the significance of these *a priori* generalisations for the establishment of forms of sociation, Simmel points again to their insufficiency. That *lacuna* inherent to reciprocal actions between individuals is somehow bridged, but not entirely solved, by schematic categories. There is always a remainder, something that evades generalisation. Even when the latter takes the form of an individualised type, ‘[h]overing above all this [...] is the idea of a person’s real, absolutely individual indubitability’ (ibid.). As a consequence, everything that resists typification via *a priori* categories will appear as an *extra-social* quality of the person:

⁶ On this issue, see Cantó-Milà 2005, 69–78, 113–5; Köhnke 1996. On the current relevance of such a framework, see Cantó-Milà 2018.

‘We know that the civil servant is not only a civil servant, the merchant is not only a merchant, the officer is not only an officer; and this extra-social being [*außersoziale Sein*] – its temperament and its fated outcome, its interests and the value of its personality – may alter very little the essential operations of the civil servant, the merchant, the soldier, and yet it gives opposing aspects to every one of them, always a particular nuance and a social persona permeated by extra-social imponderables’ (ibid., 46).

The process of sociation hence leads to a splitting of the individual. While the social being of a person corresponds to the image made of her via schematic categories and types, the extra-social being consists in the qualitative aspects of her ‘pure being-for-itself’ that do not fit such generalisations. It is no coincidence that these extra-social qualities are so often described in approximate terms – as the ‘tone’ or the ‘imponderables’ of the personality, its ‘temperament’ or ‘nuance’ (ibid.). They point, after all, to those aspects of the individual which resist categorisation. Crucial for Simmel’s sociology is therefore a distinction between ‘social’ and ‘extra-social’ whereby the former refers to reciprocal relations mediated by general categories and the latter to the qualitative aspects of the personality that are not incorporated into such schematic types, thus appearing as a realm situated beyond social activity. This *Außerdem*, as Simmel also calls it, refers to the person’s ‘absolutely individual indubitability’ and, as such, to the limits of sociation.

However, this limit itself will be taken into account by the schematic forms of knowledge that make reciprocal actions possible. The fact that ‘every member of a group is not only a part of society but also something else’ (ibid., 45) is reckoned by the very same typifying categories that mediate relations between individuals. The distinction between social and extra-social being is not simply established by the sociological observer, but practically assumed by the participants themselves. They do not relate to each other only ‘as bearers of the social roles falling to them just at that moment’, but ‘differentiate one another just as much [...] according to whatever degree of that “besides” [*Außerdem*] they possess or permit’ (ibid., 46). Social generalisations incorporate within themselves, in schematic form, the recognition of their own insufficiency. This is what constitutes for Simmel the second *a priori* of sociation.

The individual in its full qualitative peculiarity thus appears, in Simmel’s sociological theory, as the vanishing point of social life – even if, as just seen, this vanishing point is recognised as such within the schematic forms of sociation. Accordingly, society is defined ‘as a *purely objective schema*, [...] as an arrangement of contents and accomplishments’ which does not incorporate the individual’s entire existence, but only its qualitatively particular, yet detachable, performances (ibid., 49; emphasis added). Society hence appears as ‘an interconnection of qualitatively distinct phenomena’ which find its clearest example in bureaucracy (*Beamten-schaft*), conceived as ‘a definite organization of “positions”

with a predetermined set of skill requirements that exist *detached* from their respective office holders', and in which 'new entrants find unambiguously specific posts, just as though these positions were waiting for them and to which their energies must harmoniously conform' (ibid., 50; emphasis added). Even if, in contrast to the bureaucratic structure, the positions in society are not produced by a purposeful design, its

'phenomenological structure [...] remains an arrangement of elements, of which each person takes an individually defined position, a coordination of objectively and, in its social significance, meaningful [...] functions and functional centres; in this process the purely personal, the inwardly productive, the impulses and reflexes of the real "I" remain entirely outside consideration' (ibid.).

Such a conception of society is, Simmel asserts, practically assumed by social actors and therewith constitutes the third *a priori* of sociation⁷: 'That every individual is directed according to one's own quality in a definite position inside of one's social milieu [...] – that is the presumption under which the individual lives out a social life' (ibid.). Sociation cannot take place without the practical assumption of a correlation between the individual life and its environing social circles, without the presupposition that its intrapersonal particularity is integrated into the life of the social whole and finds a particular place within it. Nowhere does this appear more clearly than in the category of vocation (*Beruf*), which is characterised by the assumption that a 'socially functional activity is consistently the expression of inner capacity, that the wholeness and durability of subjectivity practically objectivises itself by way of its function in society' (ibid., 51). Thus conceived, the category of society assumed by individuals in their social dealings appears as a '*harmony* [...] between the structure and life process of society on the one hand and the individual make up and predispositions on the other', as an '*unbroken interconnected reality*' (*lückenlose Wechselwirksamkeit*) (ibid.; emphases added).

This is, as Simmel emphasises, a *phenomenological* depiction of society and not a psychological one: it refers only to the 'social content', to 'the kind of existence and accomplishments offered objectively socially by every element' (ibid., 50). As in the discussion of the two previous *a priori* conditions, the totality of one's personality – with its unique and unmistakable 'innate qualities, personal associations, and lived destinies' – is, for the most part, left outside the frame. The distinction between phenomenological and psychological perspec-

7 In line with this third *a priori*, Fitzl (2017) developed a wide-ranging interpretation of Simmel's oeuvre as a theory of 'qualitative societal differentiation'.

tives hence recasts the earlier opposition between social and extra-social being: everything that is not expressed in the form of an objective, functional performance appears as a psychological element situated outside the social realm, as an *Außerdem*. Here as well, there is always something that evades schematisation. Even if social life only becomes possible on the basis of an ‘unbroken’ concept of society, the latter never comes to shape reality without fail or remainder: if this were the case, ‘we would have the perfect society – [...] not in the ethical sense or eudemonistic perfection but conceptually: i.e., not the *perfect* society but the perfect *society*’ (ibid., 51). As an *a priori* condition of sociation, the category of society is at the same time presupposed in its perfection and imperfectly realised. There is always something in empirical social life that is not entirely grasped by this category, that evades its unbroken interconnectedness. Once again, as Simmel sees it, this is the case of those qualitative aspects of the personality that resist schematisation and manifest a certain ‘unpredictability’ (ibid.).

To be sure, such a conception of society does incorporate the qualitative peculiarity of each individual: it relies, after all, on the idea that ‘there exists a position-and-performance in society for each person, to which one is “called,” and an imperative to search for it until one finds it’ (ibid.). However, the personality only takes part in society to the extent that it accomplishes an objective performance within a structure of detached and schematised, even if qualitatively differentiated, social functions. Similarly to how Simmel presented the ideal of 19th-century individualism, here solely those qualitative aspects of personal experience are taken into consideration which fit the image of a society organised, as in the modern economy or the bureaucratic structure, in terms of detached roles performed by atomised *in-dividuals*.

As indicated by the presentation of these three *a priori* conditions, Simmel’s sociology is structured around a reiterated demarcation between a categorially schematised ‘social’ and its ‘extra-social’ remainders. Within this framework, the personality only takes part in social relationships in the shape of a detached and typified *in-dividual*, even if a qualitatively distinct one. And what does not fit this *in-dividual* form can only partake in social life as long as it is itself framed within a categorical distinction – e.g., the one between social and extra-social being. Accordingly, society consists in a schematic structure of detached positions that leaves out a great deal of the ‘tones’, ‘nuances’ and ‘imponderables’ that constitute the personalities involved, as well as, one could say, their reciprocal relations.

This is, however, only half of the story. Such a view is transformed as long as one considers a specific argument presented by Simmel in this excursus. As seen above, while addressing the second *a priori* he argues that the forms of sociation can be classified according to how much of that extra-social element, that *Außerdem*, they admit within themselves. From this perspective, each form of sociation

can be located at a specific point within a continuum of different balances between social and extra-social elements. At one of the poles of this continuum, Simmel locates those kinds of relationship we call love and friendship. Here, the extra-social being – i.e. that which the individual keeps in reserve beyond the activities directed toward the other – approaches the zero point:

[T]here is only a single life that can be viewed or lived from two angles, at one time from the inside, from the *terminus a quo* of the subject, then however, while nothing has changed, from the perspective of the beloved, from the category of the subject's *terminus ad quem*, which absorbs it completely' (ibid., 46).

Thus conceived, love and friendship are forms of sociation marked by a *total pervasiveness*: here the extra-social component, the *Außerdem* of social activity, vanishes 'because its content is wholly absorbed in the turn toward the other' (ibid.). It is as if that *lacuna* which Simmel deemed inescapable, the impossibility of fully knowing another individuality, were here overcome. Each of the lovers or friends presents herself entirely to the other, without reserve, so that their whole personalities enmesh and emerge as *a single life*. Their qualitative nuances and imponderables, their personal temperament and uniqueness are all shared with one another and absorbed in social activity. In such cases, the schematic component of sociation – previously taken as a synonym for 'social being' – equally disappears. Given the absence of distance between individuals, they find themselves immersed in a single life immediately given to both of them, so that there is no longer the need for general types as mediating figures between closed, inscrutable personalities. In fact, the opposition itself between a schematised 'social' and a qualitative 'extra-social' does not hold here. Against Simmel's own previous assumptions about the *a priori* conditions of sociation, his arguments on love and friendship point thereby to instances in which social life achieves a *non-schematic* form.

Inversely, the distinction between social and extra-social being is particularly intensified in the forms of sociation that Simmel situates at the other pole of the continuum: namely, 'the phenomena of modern culture as they are determined by the money economy' (ibid.). While love and friendship represented the vanishing point of extra-social being, where everything is shared and nothing is kept outside the relationship, economic relations are where the *Außerdem* reaches its peak. This is so because in the money economy, says Simmel, the individual approaches the ideal of absolute objectivity as bearer of an economic function:

'the individual life, the tone of the whole personality, has disappeared from the performance; people become only the bearers of settlements of performance and counter-performance as determined by objective norms, and everything that does not fit into this sheer thingness has also as a matter of fact disappeared from it' (ibid.).

This form of sociation hence relies on the most radical distinction between social and extra-social being, between schematised individuality and deeper personality. To the extent that one partakes in these relationships merely as a bearer of economic performances, most of her temperament, her qualitative nuances, her deeper mark of individuality is kept in reserve. The extra-social being thus reaches its maximum point: 'The "besides" [*Außerdem*] has fully taken up into itself the personality with its special colouration, its irrationality, its inner life, and it has left to those social activities only those energies, in pure abstraction, which specifically pertain to the activities' (ibid.). Since here what is socially performed by the individual ('social being') is entirely devoid of personal tone, almost the whole of personality is removed to the domain of the *Außerdem* ('extra-social being').

One can find in Simmel's sociology, therefore, a differentiation between two forms of sociation which is homologous to the previous distinction between forms of individualism. On the one hand, relations established within the money economy constitute the institutionalised form of quantitative *in*-dividualism: in them, almost everything that is qualitative about individual life is excluded from the domain of the social and relegated to the domain of the extra-social. There is a gap between the personalities of each of those involved, which can only be bridged by schematic categories and generalisations. On the other hand, love and friendship emerge as forms of sociation in which the opposition between schematic sociality and qualitative extra-sociality dissolves: here, neither the nuances of the personality are relegated to the domain of the extra-social (on the contrary, they fully permeate the reciprocal relations), nor social life is characterised as the domain of schematic categories (it is rather thoroughly marked by those personal imponderables). Love and friendship thus constitute the institutionalised form of qualitative *in-dividualism*: the form of sociation in which personalities fully enmesh and permeate each other to the point of appearing as *a single life*.

Important as it is to bear in mind this distinction between two forms of sociation, it is equally crucial to take into account its consequences for the whole of Simmel's sociological project. The latter relies, as we saw, on the assumption that sociation has a necessary generalising and typological character, and that everything which evades schematisation must recede to the realm of extra-social being. However, while this framework seems suitable to examine quantitative forms of sociation such as the one presented by the modern money economy, it fails to be so concerning relationships, such as love and friendship, in which sociality rather takes on a non-schematised, fully qualitative character. So once again, as in the case of Simmel's arguments on modern individualism, the consideration of forms of qualitative individuality points toward a potential that is simultaneously held in check. Here, as before, the possibility

of qualitative *in-dividuality* is at once presented and *tamed*, i.e. submitted to the general framework of quantitative *in-dividuality*. In such a perspective, the enmeshing of two qualitative *in-dividualities* into ‘a single life’ can only appear as irrational, inscrutable, or extra-social. Simmel’s comments on love and friendship point, nevertheless, beyond his own conception of social life as a schematic relationship between *in-dividuals*.

4 Intellectual and sensible *in-dividualities*

The distinction between the two forms of individuality outlined so far can be further developed on the basis of another set of Simmel’s writings: those dedicated to a diagnosis of modern culture. While his analysis of 18th- and 19th-century ideals presented a contrast between a quantitative *in-dividual* and a qualitative *in-dividual* (even if the latter ended up being significantly restricted in favour of the former), his sociological writings indicated that the human being itself can be split into two parts: a schematic *in-dividuality* and a fully qualitative *in-dividuality* (even if the latter was, for the most part, removed to the inscrutable depths of an extra-social *Außerdem*). As Simmel’s arguments also indicate, such restrictive understanding of qualitative individuality is a crucial feature of bureaucratic structures and economic relations, where only that which takes a schematic form is socially shared, while most qualitative aspects of the personality are kept in reserve. Hence the importance of addressing his diagnosis of modern (economic) life: in the latter, one can find not only a similar distinction between quantitative and qualitative parts of the individual, but also indications of how they might come to interrelate in different social settings.

Indeed central to Simmel’s depiction of modern individuality is a homologous distinction between two forms of social relationship: one marked by the predominance of an intellectual attitude toward the world, and another in which prevails a sensible stance with regard to persons and things. For Simmel, modern culture is characterised by an unprecedented extension of ‘intellectual relationships’ (*verstandesmäßige Beziehungen*) over ‘sensible relationships’ (*Gemütsbeziehungen*) – a process whose psychological consequences become especially clear when one compares the life in the metropolis and in the small town (Simmel 2002 [1903]).

As presented in his famous essay on ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, the differentiation between these two forms of social relationship relies on a corresponding distinction between two psychic agencies (referred to via expressions such as ‘layers of our soul’, ‘psychic organs’ or ‘inner forces’; *ibid.*, 12), one of

them prevailing in each of the respective modes of relation to the world. On the one hand, the psychic agency that Simmel calls *Gemüt* takes root in the 'more unconscious layers of the psyche', which can only accommodate to the changes and oppositions of phenomena through 'commotions and inner upheavals'. The *Gemüt* hence constitutes a more 'sensible' psychic agency, which stands closer to the 'depths of the personality'. On the other hand, the *Verstand* 'has its locus in the transparent, conscious, higher layers of the psyche'. It is a psychic organ more distant from those commotions and upheavals, which makes it 'the most adaptable of our inner forces' (ibid.).

As a psychic agency closely connected to the 'depths of the personality', the *Gemüt* is understood as more primary than the *Verstand*. In order to ground in psychological terms his sociological argument about the preponderance of relations of *Verstand* in modern life, Simmel had thus to provide an *ontogenetic* explanation regarding the development of this psychic agency under certain social conditions. Such a process is analysed from two different perspectives. At first – in what can be called an *energetic* model – the ontogenesis of the *Verstand* is understood as resulting from the impact of shocks from the outside world, in response to which this higher organ is developed as a protective layer. According to Simmel, when subjected to 'the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli', the human being feels an 'intensification of her nervous life' against which she needs to protect herself (ibid.). The more pronounced these conditions, the more distressing it is to react only on the basis of the inner commotions of the *Gemüt*, so that the psychic apparatus is led to the development of a 'protective organ' against the threat of uprooting posed by the constraints and discrepancies of the external environment: as Simmel states, one then 'does not react with the *Gemüt*, but above all with the *Verstand*'. It is by means of this process that, according to him, the intensification of the nervous life results in a corresponding 'intensification of consciousness' (ibid.).

It is clear, therefore, that this general process of differentiation of the psychic apparatus, resulting in the development of a specific agency, the *Verstand*, will be modified according to the intensity of the stimuli present in the external reality which the individual has to confront. Hence, social contexts marked by the occurrence of 'lasting impressions [...] which take a regular and habitual course and show regular and habitual contrasts' require a smaller 'quantum of consciousness' and allow, so to speak, a more open and less defensive response by the *Gemüt*; while those contexts in which predominate 'the rapid crowding of changing images [...] and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions' demand a more pronounced action of the *Verstand*, resulting in a more intellectualistic psychic life (ibid.). With its slower, more habitual and more smoothly flowing rhythm, the small town can orient its relations on the basis of mood and feeling,

which ‘develop most readily in the steady equilibrium of unbroken customs’. The metropolis, ‘with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life’, demands in turn a more pronounced action of the *Verstand*, resulting in a more intellectualist form of life (ibid.).

But the predominance of the *Verstand* in modern psychic life is also understood from another perspective. The metropolis is not only characterised by an increased social complexity, with its faster pace of life and its greater stimulation of the senses. It is also the locus of the money economy, whose intrinsic connection with the logic of *Verstand* reveals itself in a set of common features. Both are defined by a ‘pure objectivity in dealing with people and with things’: the *Verstand* is indifferent to all genuine individuality, since, Simmel claims, ‘relationships and reactions [that] result from [individuality] [...] cannot be exhausted with logical operations’ (ibid.); for its part, in the monetary principle there is equally no place for the individuality of phenomena, given that ‘money is concerned only with what is common to all: it asks for the exchange value, it reduces all quality and individuality to the question: How much?’ (ibid.). The money economy and the logical *Verstand* thus appear as examples of a particular kind of relation to the world, a certain form of life that Simmel called ‘intellectual relationship’ (*verstandesmäßige Beziehung*): marked by a pure objectivity, indifferent to the individuality of people and things, this form of life was defined in opposition to another, called ‘sensible relationship’ (*Gemütsbeziehung*), in which the qualitative peculiarity of persons and things is felt, as Simmel states, in its ‘full sensible shading’ (*gemütvollere Tönung*) (ibid.).

One must bear in mind the specific meaning of individuality in this context in order to understand Simmel’s argument. Individuality does not mean here the characterisation of the particularity of a person or thing as a crossing point of general determinations, each of them designated by a logically universal concept. Understood in this way, individuality would remain within the limits of *Verstand*, inasmuch as each singularity would present itself as the mere result of a specific conjunction of objective, universally valid determinations, albeit in distinct measures in each case. It points, instead, to something that escapes this purely objective or quantitative conception of individuality, concerning rather a given quality, a specific ‘colouring’ that cannot be reduced to a ‘general and schematised form’ or a set of them. In other words, the concept of individuality to which Simmel refers in this context is not defined by what is ‘equally attributable to all’, but rather by what is qualitatively ‘peculiar and unschematised’ (ibid., 14).

Each of these two forms of life, as their names indicate, is defined by the preponderance of a particular psychic agency. The contrast between the psychic organs of the *Gemüt* and *Verstand* takes on here a distinct character in relation to the first model: now the difference between them is not only a matter of degree – that is, of

the amount of consciousness involved in each – but rather based on a fundamental opposition in how people and things appear within them. While the *Gemüt* involves a consideration of people and things oriented by their qualities and peculiarities, by their ‘full sensible shading’, the *Verstand* deals with persons and things ‘as with numbers, that is, as with elements which, in themselves, are indifferent, but which are of interest only insofar as they offer an objectively measurable accomplishment’ (ibid., 12). Hence it is frequent in intellectual relationships that a ‘formal justice’ is associated with a ‘brutal harshness’: its objectivity is ‘ruthless’ because, like everything else in this form of life, the parties’ moral attitudes and interests are not subject to ‘any divergence from its set path because of the imponderability of personal relationships’ (ibid., 12f.). In short, while the *Gemüt*’s relationship with reality is qualitative, individualised, attentive to a ‘defined spectrum of colours’, the *Verstand*’s relation is quantitative, general, ‘flat and grey’ (Simmel 2013 [1896], 60; Simmel 2002 [1903], 14).

To this second characterisation corresponds a difference in the underlying mode of ontogenetic explanation. A central premise of Simmel’s argument in this second model – which can be called *dispositional* – is that certain forms of life, once disseminated, contribute to shape the subjects’ psychic structure according to the specific relationship with the world they give rise to. So, the fact that a certain psychic agency displays common traits with a particular form of life would indicate the occurrence of a process of internalisation, via sociation, of the latter’s characteristic logic. Such an argument implies a conception according to which the psychic apparatus deals with the external reality not only by developing a protective layer against excessive stimuli, but also by constituting such layer as an agency that – shaped, so to speak, in the image and likeness of that reality – provides the psychic apparatus with the means to adjust to it. *Verstand*, in this regard, does not constitute solely a psychic organ that ‘preserves subjective life’ (as in the first model), but also an inner force ‘capable of adaptation’ (ibid., 12; emphasis added). It acts as an *instance of mediation* between social reality and the commotions of that deeper, unconscious force called *Gemüt*. Thus, to the extent that these forms of life are incorporated by the *Verstand* and shape it according to their logic, they leave their mark on the psyche as a whole, including the psychic layer closer to the ‘depths of personality’, the *Gemüt*.

One can now see how Simmel’s sociological splitting of the individual into a schematic and socially categorised being, on the one hand, and a deeper and fully qualitative being, on the other, does not only concern its relations with others. It is not only a matter of what is, or is not, shared by the individual within social relationships. The split between a schematic and a fully qualitative self is also an *internal* one. It takes the shape of a psychologically conflictual relation between *Verstand* and *Gemüt* in which the logic of the former can even come to

‘colonise’ that of the latter: by participating in intellectual relationships, as seen above, the individual internalises their schematic and objectifying logic, which then comes to function as an organising principle of the psyche. In economic and bureaucratic forms of sociation, the human being thus becomes schematised not only *for the other*, but also *within itself*. It becomes not only externally, but also internally, an *in-dividual* organised in quantitative terms.

The question, then, is what happens to psychological experience in the opposite form of social relation, namely the one that Simmel called ‘sensible relationships’. This is not, however, a topic that he addressed in this context. While his essay on the metropolis provides a complex depiction of the psychological consequences of modern intellectual life, it does not offer an equally detailed account of sensible relationships and the specific kind of intrapsychic dynamics they entail. In this case, as in his historical and sociological analyses presented above, one can find only scattered and underdeveloped indications of how fully qualitative forms of sociation and *in-dividuality* actually look. Yet this issue can be further articulated by resorting to some of Simmel’s late writings.

5 Romanic and Germanic in-dividualisms

In Simmel’s late works one can find, once more, a contrast between two kinds of in-dividuality – now in the form of a distinction between Romanic and Germanic individualisms. This opposition stands out in relation to the previous ones given its cultural-geographical emphasis. While the former referred, either explicitly or implicitly, to antagonisms internal to modernity (Enlightenment *versus* Romanticism, bureaucracy and economy *versus* love and friendship, metropolis *versus* small town), the latter points to a much wider temporal scope, going back to the Renaissance period – and even to classical antiquity – on the Romanic side and to the Middle Ages on the Germanic side. Yet this contrast made its way into modernity, and by articulating it, Simmel expressed an undeniable concern with contemporary issues, not the least of which was the First World War (see Simmel 1999 [1917]).

What is significant for our purposes here is less the cultural-geographical (and somewhat exaggerated) opposition between two peoples or ways of life and more the fact that this distinction noticeably, though for the most part not explicitly, recasts the previous ones. As the 18th-century ideal of freedom and equality defined itself against the then-dominant corporatist and ecclesiastical ties, Romanic individualism is now seen as a reaction to the forms of collectivity that prevailed in the Middle Ages. Attempting to release itself from the binding forms

of medieval community, the Italian Renaissance was marked by a strong accentuation of individual particularity, a striving for presenting oneself as independent and unique. Simmel considers this tendency ‘especially well illustrated by the story that for a time at the beginning of the epoch there was no general fashion in men’s clothes because everyone wished to dress in a unique fashion’ (Simmel 2005 [1916], 89). Accordingly, Renaissance portraits accentuated individual particularity to such an extent that ‘the representation of the human being could not be strange, exclusive, or characteristic enough, up to the point of the grotesque’ (ibid., 87). And yet, when one looks at the aesthetic representations of Romanic individuals, one might discern a certain uniformity of style, ‘a common ethos and attitude to life’: seeking to accentuate their individuality, they present themselves at the same time as *bearers of a type*. Along with ‘a passionate accentuation of one’s own singularity’, Romanic individualism hence displays as well a ‘basic striving for the general’ (Simmel 2007 [1917], 67).

That is not, however, a sign of incoherence. What allows for this conjunction of individual particularity and stylised commonality is, above all, the specific character of the latter. The generality that is strived for in such context is not of a concrete kind: it does not involve a longing for *Gemeinschaft*, a ‘collectivity or any practical amalgamation into an encompassing figuration, or a merging of individuals into some greater totality’ that would dissolve their individualities (ibid.). Rather, what is at stake is a ‘generality akin to the concept’: a form or law that determines a number of individual existences, each of which represents it in a certain manner. All freedom, differentiation and individual excellence are thereby sought within the limits of this conceptual generality; they are nothing more than particular manifestations of universal attributes. In the Romanic context, Simmel says, ‘[a]ll individual characteristics are generalities’ and the human being is nothing but ‘a plurality of generalities’ (ibid.).

For that reason, the Romanic individual displays – as the one articulated by 18th-century Enlightenment – a quantitative character: ‘the will to power that infused the individuals of the Renaissance realises itself in a perhaps only *quantitative*, singular increase of traits that in the last analysis are *typical*’ (Simmel 2005 [1916], 87). In contradistinction to Simmel’s depiction of quantitative individualism, however, its Romanic variety is characterised by a striving for being different from others, for *distinguishing* oneself. In this regard it resembles the restrictive, *in-dividualistic* interpretation of the 19th-century ideal, as well as the individual as performer of a specific role in the division of labour. Significantly enough, Simmel now characterises this orientation toward distinction as a ‘sociological’ one: indeed, here one finds again that same articulation of typified particularity and schematic generality that was ascribed to the socialised individual in his 1908 *Sociology*. Common to these different figures of *in-dividuality* is, in any

case, the fact that they all rely on a typical and abstract form of generality which provides the measure of either their equality or their inequality.

‘Everywhere [...] where there is comparison (however much its result is diversely exhibited) there are common premises making comparison possible – a common standard that in our case means in particular a common idea of the human of which, so to speak, some quantum is contained in each personality that, however differently arranged, permits all of these incompatible forms to be infused and governed by a sense of common style and general type’ (ibid., 89).

This is a crucial dimension of the contrast between Romanic and Germanic individualisms: for the latter, ‘sociological’ difference vis-à-vis other beings is irrelevant. This form of individualism is marked by a striving for singularity that sharply contrasts with the Romanic focus on the different quantities each one possesses of a plurality of general features. The Germanic individual does not distinguish itself from others on the basis of a comparison made possible by the reference to a law-like generality, but rather affirms the incomparable peculiarity of its being: it ‘seeks individuality only within the unique self, and is deeply indifferent as to whether this implies a type of some kind or to whether individuals can exist more than “just once” in the world in a numerical sense’ (ibid., 68). In this regard, such a conception is akin to the (non-restricted) ideal of qualitative individualism,⁸ as well as to the (allegedly extra-social) indubitable personality and the *Gemüt*-oriented individual of sensible relationships. In the framework of Germanic individualism, ‘an individual life grows from its own roots, responsible for itself alone, unpreoccupied by whatever phenomena such roots might have pushed up among people of any comparable nature’ (ibid.). The ‘roots’ of individuality in this conception thus differ from the set of particular features that characterise the Romanic individual: whereas the latter’s attributes are particular (quantitative) instantiations of general forms, the roots of German individuality are (qualitatively) peculiar, irreducible to any type, concept or general law.

The difference between Romanic and Germanic individualisms reflects, according to Simmel, two different modes of knowledge. The form of cognition characteristic of the latter proceeds by ascribing general categories to an individual life (‘a person is clever or stupid, generous or petty, good-natured or

8 It is no coincidence that Simmel mentions as representatives of Germanic individualism, among others, some of the key figures of 19th-century qualitative individualism: ‘Rembrandt’s depiction of the human figure, fusing soul to body and body to soul; Beethoven’s depths of musical yearning and formative impulse; Herder’s and Schleiermacher’s conceptions of the human essence; Walther von der Vogelweide’s pictures of existence, and those of the German romantics in general, and of Kierkegaard, Ibsen and Selma Lagerlöf’ (Simmel 2007 [1917], 68).

malicious'; *ibid.*, 66). However, this mode of knowledge is only secondary and, so to speak, external. By characterising an individual in terms of a set of general categories,

‘what I learn is only that they have manifested themselves yet again in such and such a combination in the case of this particular human being. I do not, thereby, know this human being *from within*, but rather my knowledge flows from concepts that I have *already brought with me*’ (*ibid.*; emphasis added).

In order to know which of the concepts already available are applicable to a person, Simmel says, one would have to rely on a form of primary knowledge that does not proceed via general concepts.

‘The first stage of this immediate knowledge has already been acquired at the moment in which – in brief – the person enters the room. In this very first moment we do not know particular facts about him, nor any of the aforementioned categories. Nevertheless, we still know a tremendous amount: the person, and that which is unmistakable about the person’ (*ibid.*).

This intuitive, ‘completely indivisible’ mode of cognition is, for Simmel, what characterises the Germanic sensibility in opposition to the Romanic one. Now, among those thinkers and artists taken as representatives of Germanic individualism, one stands out in particular. Rembrandt, to whom Simmel dedicated one of his last books, was viewed as especially capable of giving artistic form to that primary and immediate knowledge. ‘Out of his portraits shines above all essentially that which we know about a person at first sight, as something completely inexpressible, as the unity of her existence’ (*ibid.*, 67). Whereas Renaissance art is directed toward individual attributes, conceiving the human being as a type or a plurality thereof, Rembrandt’s ‘understanding of the [personal] totality encompasses to a higher degree a *melting into*, an *empathy*, that, in the moment of contemplation, allows the subject-object setting to immerse into the greater indivisibility of intuition’ (*ibid.*; emphasis added). In his artistic works, each depicted moment is grasped not on the basis of logical atemporal forms, but through the qualitative becoming of *this* person, i.e. ‘out of the life that is shaped as its own singular stream, even though, of course, fed by countless impersonal inflows’ (*ibid.*, 89).

Such emphasis on the qualitative singularity of the person will, however, lead Rembrandt further away from any form of *in-dividualism*. Precisely the focus on the singular stream of an individual life draws him toward the impersonal flows that surround and feed it. This move becomes especially marked, Simmel argues, in Rembrandt’s last period. ‘Life now is no longer directed through the strongly individualised movement of a soul, but spreads beyond the singular being as such toward a vibrancy that completely overwhelms all

limitations of this particular human life' (ibid., 90). As a result, representation becomes more obscure. While one could still describe Rembrandt's earlier figures in terms of specifiable psychological qualities ("“this one is proud,” “that one rustic,” the “third of superior intelligence””), in a late portrait such as *Titus* this falls away completely: ‘everything is flowing, vibrant life with no conceptually fixed, specifiable point therein’ (ibid.). To be sure, the focus is still the life of one person. However, the task of representing the latter in its ‘pure nakedness’ – i.e. in its qualitative aspects and not the quantitative differences in relation to others – demands the painter to follow, so to speak, a path from the singular stream of an individual life to those vibrant flows that overwhelm its limits.

‘What is decisive is completely unclear; maybe the rhythm of oscillation of the smallest parts; maybe the relative proportion of the mix of more latent and more current liveliness that is everywhere present. In any case, the essential psychological singularity has receded into the far distance. It now stands at the periphery of life in which the central differences are merely those of the rhythms of its flowing and its powers’ (ibid., 91).

The move away from *in*-dividuality thus suggested cannot, however, be fully accomplished in Rembrandt's portraits. Despite their openness to the impersonal flows that feed and overwhelm the depicted individual, they can point to these vibrancies but, as it were, not show where they are coming from. As a result, the portrait acquires a paradoxical form which affirms as much as negates the boundaries of individual life.

‘Here is something decisive that remains in the limitation of the personality, but somehow, however, pushes back each describable quality [...]. [I]t is as though the life of this person were admittedly absolutely their own, and not detachable from them, yet raised above all the *individual things* that one may say about them; as though a stream of life flowed that, although not washing over its shores and as though it were as a whole a totality of unmistakable unity within itself, nevertheless creates no wave of singular characteristic form’ (ibid.).

While representation remains here within the shores of a personality and its qualitative unity, the latter does not appear as a set of clearly identifiable attributes but rather as flows whose limits are blurred as much as they blur the individual boundaries in which they are located.

But how can one understand, after all, these flows contained within the limits of an individual life and which nevertheless overwhelm it? The answer becomes clear in the moment when Simmel turns away from Rembrandt's individual portraits in order to address his pictures with several figures. Only now, says Simmel, one can speak of the ‘mood’ (*Stimmung*) in the appearance of a painting. For mood ‘is something interior, personal, perhaps something singular

for each, which has nevertheless extinguished all particularity of contents of representation [*Vorstellungsinhalte*]’ (ibid., 100; see Simmel 2007 [1913], 26–9). In the paintings with more than one figure, one can see how those sensible qualities of life that are no longer differentiated, those flows with blurred and blurring boundaries, *permeate each other* and come to appear as a common atmosphere.⁹

‘In *The Jewish Bride*, the figures are like the tones of a chord that is certainly not external to those individual tones; however, they are merged in the chord into a construct that cannot be displayed pro rata in each separate tone. A tender life, as if held still, is entirely contained in each of the two figures and nevertheless continuously overflows them and extends into a shared atmosphere wafting around them’ (Simmel 2005 [1916], 100).

A mood, like a chord, is internal to the individual elements of which it is made; it is contained in each of them and yet also something beyond them. ‘The fact that this sphere is *above* individuality constitutes the form in which it is present *within* individuality’ (ibid.).¹⁰

Here the individual no longer appears as a distinctive element with clear-cut boundaries, connected to others only by means of external, law-like forms. The mood is a ‘dissolved and dissolving sphere’ within which individual life, in its full qualitative character, is both superseded *and* preserved. ‘A higher unity has absorbed the being-for-themselves of the individuals, whose singularity falls away in the face of this unity and yet nourishes it with the ultimate generality of their life’ (ibid., 100–101). The mood corresponds therefore to a form of *in-dividuality* that does not lack personal borders but is nevertheless pervaded by impersonal vibrancies. More precisely, it constitutes a sphere in which the difference itself between personal and impersonal is obscured or complicated.

To the extent that within this shared atmosphere the individualities permeate each other in the most intimate sense, the significance of the mood extends beyond the particular attributes of the fleeting situation. Although the movements and gestures of those involved are certainly transitory, through them a sphere emerges in which these individual lives (even if only for a moment and in a certain sense) come to form a single one.

⁹ On the notions of *Stimmung* and atmosphere, see Rosa 2016, 633–44, and Linkenbach, in this publication.

¹⁰ Simmel’s characterisation of the mood in harmonic terms is congruent with his views on music presented in other essays: ‘Music [...] transcends ideas by representing life immediately. [...] [It] comprehends the tidal flow of its being, its dissonances, its loss and recovery, and its ceaseless movement toward resolution and redemption’ (Simmel 1986 [1907], 92). On this topic, see Kemple 2009.

‘In *The Jewish Bride*, [...] [h]ow the man leans toward the woman and embraces her, how her hand touches his – at once encouraging and calming – this is not a *transitory* movement. At the same time, it is not a typical gesture that, as in classical art, would indicate something general beyond these personalities. It belongs entirely to the individual, but it forms itself initially in that stratum in which the life of the individual arises like a homogenous sphere from the appearance, dissolving all determinations tied to singularities. Now, here this life encloses two related figures and achieves its zenith [...] all the more impressively as it fused them, in a way that is logically inexpressible, into a *shared life* without abandoning its source in each separate figure’ (ibid., 101; emphasis added).¹¹

6 Conclusion

By following the thread of Simmel’s different contrasts between forms of individuality, one can see how a depiction of the quantitative *in*-dividual is repeatedly invoked as a crucial feature of modern social life and its main institutions, such as the money economy and bureaucratic organisations. Equally remarkable is that, in this context, even one’s qualitative peculiarity can come to be shaped in such a way that the person assumes a schematised, atomistic, *in*-dividualised form – as bearer of a singular, yet objective achievement in a money-mediated division of labour, or as member of a totality structured on the basis of particular detached positions. As we saw, this understanding of the individual and its relations with others comes to dominate Simmel’s own conception of sociology, where schematic individuality tends to be considered synonymous with social being. Yet Simmel’s writings also recurrently display the figure of a qualitative *in*-dividual whose life is permeated by the lives of others. In his comments on the Romantic project of a concrete whole as a harmonious plurality of infinite singular contrasts; on love and friendship as forms of sociation in which a single life emerges that absorbs the personalities’ being-for-themselves; on *Gemüt*-based relationships in which persons and things are considered in their full qualitative, unschematised shadings; and on the mood (*Stimmung*) as a sphere in which two separate lives are superseded *and* preserved within a shared one – in all these figures, a dimension of sociality comes into view that does not simply *eliminate* the boundaries between individuals (and their properties), but rather *blurs*

¹¹ If, as Podoksik (2010, 145) correctly observed, ‘Simmel’s final notion of individuality may [...] be seen in terms of a constant tension between the idea of separate and unique individuality and the idea of individuality as a reflection of the totality of life’, the reference to the *in*-dividual’s situatedness within a shared mood allows – so I argue – to preserve such a tension *and* supersede it.

them to the point where they enmesh and constitute a common concrete totality without entirely losing sight of their concrete singularities.

Thus conceived, the *in-dividual* appears indeed to be more prominently featured in certain forms of sociation or social milieus (e.g., love and friendship, the small town). But it is not at all exclusive to them. *In-dividuality*, as Simmel understood it in his late work, constitutes a primary and intuitive mode of relation to the world that can be associated in different ways with secondary modes of relation, which involve *in-dividuals* with definite attributes and bounded by general laws or forms. It refers, in other words, to a qualitative *common* life that can come to be shaped and articulated into schematic *universals*. How these two dimensions of sociality (intuitive and categorical, common and universal, *in-dividual* and *in-dividual*) interrelate will then define the lineaments of each form of life. In this regard, characteristic of modernity is the fact that highly schematic and quantitative forms of *in-dividuality* predominate to such an extent that a qualitative common life might come to appear as non-existent or only possible in very limited forms, as inscrutable or removed to the depths of personal intimacy. It is as if the experience of *in-dividuality* could take place solely in residual and extraordinary phenomena, or else in the restricted (and actually *in-dividual*) form of schematically detached positions and properties. If this is correct, then it does not come as a surprise that a longing for extraordinary *in-dividual* experiences might arise precisely as a result of this ordinary dominance of *in-dividual* forms. One can thus understand why modern life appears, for Simmel as much as for us, to take its course ‘within the struggle and in the changing entanglements of these two ways of defining the individual’s role in the whole of society’ (Simmel 2012 [1903], 31).

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Arthur Bueno, Julie Casteigt, Antje Linkenbach, Markus Vinzent
Afterword: dividual socialities

Dividuality is neither simply a counter-concept to individuality, nor simply complementary to it. Instead, it is also the dynamic foundation, the processual primary basis, from which individualities emerge. In order to move away from an understanding of the individual as an autonomous, singular, self-contained and isolated ontological being, dividuality underlines the continuous and inevitably social nature of all individuals. Hence, individualization encompasses both the dividual and individual dimensions capturing the dynamics of belonging and becoming. From the outset, dividuality points to the individual as part of the social fabric – to one’s ability to reach out and open up to others, while at the same time long for self-development. Self and others are no opposites either, but dividuality expresses them as a moving social continuity that gives contours, sometimes even edges, mutual shapings and re-shapings, and stands for attraction, interpenetration and repulsion. Bridging the existing distinctions between the individual subject, the process of individualization, the concept of individuality and the ideal of individualism, dividuality encompasses all four notions as their dynamic foundation. Despite the fact that the foundational dividual sounds as being non-*individual*, dividuality is not a pseudo-ontological condition of individuality, but these two are mutually and intrinsically interwoven.

The articles presented in this section outline the historical trajectory leading from an ontological construction of personhood, self and individual to more dynamic, mutual, reciprocal and non-hierarchical models, which lend themselves to contemporary cultural and sociological concepts of dividuality and individuality.

While a dominant line in western tradition from contemporary astrophysics back to Plato and Aristotle assumes a primordial single hierarchical principle, which mirrors the nature of the individual, the first contribution on Albert the Great by *Julie Casteigt* shows that Albert develops the concept of the identity of the individual differently. Starting from the self as a substance to which properties either substantial or accidental are attributed, Albert goes beyond this Aristotelean substantial model of identity, building on Augustine and Boethius by introducing potentiality, the dynamic inner relationship of the faculties of the soul. Still dissatisfied with this model, he is inspired by Neo-Platonic, Islamic and potentially further Eastern sources and envisions a conception of mutual relationality of the faculties of the soul.

The chapter by *Markus Vinzent* on Albert’s student, Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–1328), presents Eckhart’s idea of the first principle as ‘dividual’. According to him, there is no first principle without what is principled, and yet, principle

and principled have to be conceptualized not only as mutual inner relationality, but as strict reciprocal relation. Any principle only becomes what it is, it cannot be without what it principles, and no principled is only a product of a hierarchical prior principle, but is itself the principle for it being principled. The sphere might be the highest form – in good Platonic tradition – but according to Eckhart it is not the best form. The best form is the dividual, as the respectful condition of you and I. Respect is the form of recognition and self-recognition. The significant other is not entirely other, but the signifier of the self and vice versa. Dividuality stands for co-constitution of any self and other. Co-constitution happens through reciprocal interpenetration, which simultaneously is differentiation.

The dividual nature of the human being, set out in philosophical terms, is always culturally conditioned and thus leads to another dimension of dividuality (see introduction). People are born into specific social contexts, at particular times and in concrete spaces. The lived reality of the dividual and individual, and the social imaginary of the individual and dividual are expressed in varying symbolics, cultures, religions and semantics, as shown by the next two articles.

Starting in the seventeenth century, as the third contribution by *Antje Linkenbach* highlights, the social qualities of sympathy and empathy are conceptualized as counteracting and weakening individual forms of superiority, disentanglement, and maintaining impermeable boundaries between oneself and the other. In the context of suffering, sympathetic and empathetic abilities are closely linked to ideas of communicability of pain, healing and morality. Sympathetic imagination is the moral and practical imaginary looking out for the sentiments of others by putting oneself into the place of the other, while empathy, as conceptualized by recent philosophico-phenomenological approaches, creates a contact room of bodily resonance and communication, where, for example, a cry is enough to make one reach out to and touch the other, establish a relationality and trigger dividuality. Through empathy the self becomes understood as one deeply affected and marked by the other, and the other by the self, within a mutual and reciprocal communicative process. In contrast to the medieval Eckhart, the article stresses the qualitative difference between the self and the other, mitigated by the partibility and divisibility of the self, which allows for intersubjectivity.

In the last chapter of this section, *Arthur Bueno* addresses Georg Simmel's series of homologous distinctions between two forms of individuality: quantitative and qualitative, intellectual and sensible, Romanic and Germanic. While in the former the individual appears as an entity composed by a set of clearly defined, bounded and abstractly universal attributes, the latter emphasizes the singular sensible shadings that characterize each individual life, blurring its boundaries with others and the world. Quantitative individualities relate to one another through the mediation of general law-like forms (e.g. money, defined cultural

lifestyles, or social norms) that make their properties comparable, commensurable, and by the same token, either distinctive or common. Implied, in this case, is a relation between particular *in*-dividuals and general patterns. Qualitative individualities, for their turn, find themselves embedded in rather indeterminate and shared – though heterogeneous and possibly conflict-ridden – atmospheres which they jointly create. Crucial, here, is the entanglement between singular *in*-dividuals and pervasive moods. While for Simmel both forms of individuality are part and parcel of modern life, some of life's most central institutions (e.g. science, the money economy, and the bureaucratic state) are seen to rely on the prevalence of quantitative individuality, which would even display a tendency to 'colonize' the totality of cultural life. In this context – and in line with discourses on sympathy and empathy developed since the seventeenth century – Simmel views the model of qualitative *in*-dividuality, with its emphasis on co-created spaces of bodily resonance and sensible communication, as a possible counterweight to the excesses of the quantitative *in*-dividuality.

From a methodological point of view, these four contributions aim at illustrating the diversity of the levels (ontological, psychological, sociological) on which dividuality as a dynamic, reciprocal and non-hierarchical condition for identity can be studied. They vary the focus on the identity of the individual taken in herself or himself and in relation with social elements, highlighting the metaphysical foundations of the different conceptions of her or his dividual identity as well as their different social expressions.



Section 2.2: **Parting the self**

Shahzad Bashir

Reading the self in Persian prose and poetry

Let us start with a thought experiment. Five hundred years from now, when I am long dead and forgotten, a reader comes across this essay and other writings I have published. How would such a reader understand the referent to be associated with my use of the word 'I' in such documents? Would she be justified in claiming to know me as a human subject based on having read words that invoke the grammatical first-person pronoun? I suspect not, despite the sense of intimacy my usage intends. But the lack of direct knowledge would be due neither to an insincere use of the pronoun on my part nor to a fault in her reading. The complication is that the 'I' invoked in my academic publications is a genre-bound evocation. In using it, I am taking up a posture allowed by conventions of academic writing as it is practised today. This 'I' has a tempered relationship with my full human subjectivity. It cannot bear the burdens of my other uses of the same pronoun in conventional speech, such as when I talk to a family member, or address a shopkeeper, or struggle to make myself understood by someone who does not know English. The word 'I' is a quasi-homonym that can refer to variant, although often interconnected, parts of my existence as a being in the world.

I spend my time trying to understand and interpret people who lived, and wrote, hundreds of years ago. The thought experiment I begin with is helpful for me to undertake such work. The uses of the first-person pronoun I come across in evidence from the past available to me are, simultaneously, conditions of possibility for my work and barriers that mask my access to the people who composed the texts. A writer's use of 'I' allows me to locate a piece of evidence in spatiotemporal terms relative to my own understandings. It brings to mind a living body like my own, the shared corporeal form warranting interpretability across time and space. But the commonsensical affinity is an illusion because of the intermediacy of matters such as genre, posture, rhetorical positioning, and bias with respect to the immediate circumstances in which the original text was produced. On the side of production, these factors stand between the written 'I' and the person who produced it. On my side, current intellectual and sociohistorical limitations condition me to understand the materials in ways far removed from the originating context.

The problem of interpreting an 'I' that comes to us from social contexts long dead provides a venue to think productively about interoperability between individuality and dividuality. In one sense, the first-person pronoun is the most concrete marker of *individuality*, the grammatical assertion of one person distinguished from others. Yet, as indicated above, invocation of the pronoun necessarily signifies only a part of the putative individual, subject to rules of linguistic genre and social situation. In

this sense, the ‘I’ is a marker of *dividuality*, conditioned by the fact that the human subject is socially constituted by all that surrounds her. As seen in the written ‘I’, individuality and dividuality are the proverbial two faces of the same coin.

I propose to utilise the individuality-dividuality distinction as a tool for exploring literature that contains extensive use of the first-person voice. My specific quarry consists of materials in Persian. I believe my conceptualisation of the problem extends to other contexts and literary traditions, but I leave it to specialists in those fields to adjudicate its usefulness. As discussed extensively by now, the academic debate regarding in/dividuality has its roots in ethnographic work invested in categorising cultures presumed to have differing ways of constituting human subjectivity. The ethnocentrism that characterised the initial formulations has been criticised through showing that cultures that were characterised initially as individualistic or dividualistic could, as easily, be described as belonging to the opposite category (e.g. Smith 2012). What, then, is the benefit of retaining the distinction as a part of analytical approaches to human cultural situations? For me, the in/dividuality distinction does have value, not as a way to categorise cultures but as a lens that can help us parse certain types of materials and situations. Analysing invocations of the first-person voice seems to me to be an especially significant instance in this regard.

1 A resurrection of poetry

I wish to draw out the relationship between the first-person voice and in/dividuality by concentrating on a single, lengthy work composed in India in the 17th century CE that is exemplary for the problematic at hand. The work is an artful description of the lives and work of individuals described as practitioners of the art of composing poetry in Persian over a period of about seven centuries (c. 950–1650 CE). The work’s framing comes from a single compiler, although it introduces us to the voices of thousands of authors. I will first provide a brief description of the work and then analyse the way the first-person voice figures in it.

Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad Awḥadī Daqqāqī Balyānī’s *‘Arafāt al-‘āshiqīn va ‘arāṣāt al-‘ārifīn* (*The Resurrection Ground of Lovers and the Courtyards of Knowers*) is one of the most extensive biographical dictionaries of Persian poets ever composed (Gulchīn Ma‘ānī 1985, 2:3–21). Initiated during the period 1613 – 1615 CE in Agra, India, it was added to by the author until his death circa 1640. It contains entries on more than 3500 poets, distributed over nearly seven centuries and throughout the Persian-writing sphere spread over Iran and Central and South Asia. Published for the first time in 2009 and 2010 in seven- and eight-volume

modern editions on the basis of five manuscripts, this work has received minimal scholarly attention besides being cited occasionally as a source of information for one or another poet. Since the publication of the printed editions, the work has begun to be mined to comment on literary and social patterns relevant for the early modern period in Iran and India (e.g. Āl-i Dāvūd 2008; 1996). The work is an exceedingly long unified narrative in which the author's first-person voice interpolates his reportage on poets, dead and alive. The work's narrative is prefaced by an account of the author's birth and early years in Iran, his passage to India, and subsequent travels in northern and southwestern parts of the subcontinent. But a far greater use of the first-person pronoun in his work occurs in citations of poetry attributed to the thousands of poets that are his subject. The work's monumentality can be gauged from the fact that the printed versions run to nearly five thousand pages.

Balyānī's valuation of poetry as speech worthy of extensive archival attention derives from his view of the relationship between the cosmos and the human ability to vocalise. This is encapsulated in the following cryptic description, part of the introduction:

It is written and remembered that the world is a shell that contains the pearl that is Adam, and Adam is the shell that contains the pearl that is the world. This is so because the shell surrounding the pearl that is the world is speech, and speech is the pearl that lies within Adam's shell. Then it follows that every pearl in the realm of speech must be like a shell and every shell in the realm of speech must be like a pearl. Indeed, God has a treasure under his throne, which is touched by prophets and flows on the tongues of poets. (Balyānī 2010, 1:8)

This statement needs unpacking in some detail to understand Balyānī's conceit regarding the status of poetry and poets. The first sentence evokes equivalence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, the world and the human being. A commonly held view in Balyānī's context, the effect of this understanding is that the human person is thought to encompass all that can come to pass in creation. The second sentence begins by locating the source of the equivalence in speech: the 'shell surrounding the pearl that is the world' is a reference to the divine command 'be', as described in the Quran and its predecessor texts. God's speech in the form of this 'be' created the macrocosm and hence, in a fashion, contains it. The sentence then continues to the effect that the foremost quality of the microcosm (Adam) is that it possesses speech. Overall, then, we are presented with the picture that God's speech initiated the creation of the world and the world is consummated by the human being capable of speech. Human capacity for language is a creative force that echoes the initial divine 'be' that gave rise to the world.

In the third sentence, we move to speech itself, which is represented as bifurcated into 'shell' and 'pearl'. Every bit of speech has an outward form and an inner

precious quality, the two aspects being distinct but conjoined. A ‘pearl’ of speech is a specimen beautiful on the outside; but this pearl is itself a shell that contains something valuable inside of it, namely its pearl-like meaning. The pearl/shell, inside/outside binary can get ever deeper indefinitely in that all external forms of speech give rise to meanings, which can then be expressed in more speech, which has meanings, and so on.

The conclusion of this understanding comes in the last sentence, which identifies prophets and poets as those human beings who have the most intimate connection to God’s treasure, meaning speech. Prophets ‘touch’ this treasure, since God doles it out to them in the form of scriptures that they then convey to other human beings. And the treasure flows endlessly on the tongues of poets in the form of the precious speech they create and share with others. God’s initial ‘be’ creates the world, and poets recreate it in the continuing flow of their words. Poetic speech also marks the human being’s intermediary status between God and the world. Balyānī’s description gives poetry a generative function in the working of the world, and poets are a special class of humanity: the lovers and knowers mentioned in Balyānī’s title (*The Resurrection Ground of Lovers and the Courtyards of Knowers*). They also actuate an eternal, quasi-divine function pertaining to the cosmos. Poetic voice and capacity are understood as constants in the world even as poets come and go, live and die. Poets’ corporeal presences are vehicles for the continual generation of poetry as a cosmologically essential presence.

Although biographical dictionaries dedicated to poets and others had been a staple of Persian literature long before Balyānī’s lifetime (see Gulchīn Ma‘ānī 1985), his work contains a unique organisation tied to his overall attitude to language. He creates a multi-level order that criss-crosses between language, space, and time. Balyānī asks the reader to imagine time as a vast plain akin to the plain of ‘Arafat in Mecca that figures prominently in the annual rite of the hajj. People who go to the pilgrimage are required to stand in this plain for several hours during one day as a preview for the resurrection that is expected to happen at the end of time. In Islamic eschatology, God is expected to reconstitute all humans to be present at such a plain once the world has been dissolved. Balyānī’s invitation to imagine time as a resurrection plain self-consciously mimics the divine function, except that his purview is limited to the segment of humanity that consists of Persian poets. As in the ultimate resurrection, Balyānī’s resurrection collapses the normative sequencing of time and allows people from all periods to be present simultaneously in a single narrativised place.

The resurrection ground – a representation of embodied time consisting of poets’ lives – is then imagined as a space split into twenty-eight courtyards that correspond to the letters of the Arabic alphabet. In this process, time that had first become space is now divided into the building blocks of language. Each courtyard/

letter is then divided into three enclosures that contain poets divided between ‘the ancients’ (*mutaqaddimīn*), the ‘middle period ones’ (*mutavassifīn*), and the ‘lately arrived ones’ (*muta’akhhirīn*). Poets are placed in the enclosures within the courtyards on the plain according to where their poetic pen names (*takhalluṣ*) occur in the alphabetical order. The division into enclosures brings a temporal structure back into the scheme, although the categorisation is now subordinate to the rule of language embodied in the alphabet. Time is first eliminated and then re-established as a sub-category within the linguistic abstraction that is the alphabet.¹

Balyānī’s work sticks to the proposed order throughout and contains reports, of widely varying lengths, on about 3500 poets, with brief comments on their lives together with samples of poetry and comments on their literary value. Islamic eschatological narratives emphasise the fundamentally individual nature of the event of the final resurrection. On that day, human beings are supposed to answer for their deeds without aid from anyone else. Balyānī’s poetic resurrection effects this as well in that the alphabetical categorisation eliminates calendrical or genealogical time sequencing. Moreover, the organisational scheme dispenses with geography, ideological belonging, and social hierarchy such as the differences between king and pauper or men and women. The catalogue of poets also includes some Hindus, and Balyānī has special praise for satirists, antinomians, and characters described as religiously deviant, whose verses mock those invested in normative Islamic authority. The sum of these characteristics is a narrative that contains an alphabetical resurrection of individuals on a homogenising plain, committed to giving exemplary language primacy over other forms of categorisation.

An overall assessment of Balyānī’s work reveals him as a person with a remarkably prodigious memory, a talent for taxonomy, and firm belief in his own authority to judge the worth of poetic expression in Persian. We might consider his presentation an instance of what is today called ‘big data’, whose efficacy is predicated on processing voluminous information combined with a deliberate loss of particularising details. He delights in appreciating both the exemplary and the unusual when it comes to versified expression in Persian. He sees poets contemporary to him as belonging to a transhistorical class that together carries the weighty burden put on poetry as an aspect of the cosmos.²

1 The conceptualisation of some of Balyānī’s other works also indicates a concern with alphabetisation and imagery associated with the Ka’ba. For example, his *Surma-yi Sulaymanī* (Solomon’s Collyrium) (Balyānī 1985) is an alphabetical dictionary of difficult vocabulary encountered in Persian. His long poetic works include *Ka’ba-yi dīdār* (Ka’ba of Sight) and *Ka’bat al-ḥaramayn* (Ka’ba of the two sanctuaries) (Balyānī 2010, lxi).

2 Although very extensive, Balyānī’s work also has clear geographical biases in terms of the way the Persian poetic tradition is covered. Particularly for the contemporary period, his greatest

2 A tale of two voices

With this overall picture in mind, let us now move to consider the question of individuality in Balyānī's work. My point of concentration is the first-person voice, for which the work has two contrasting pivots. It deploys an autobiographical narrative in prose that, first, introduces the author to the reader, and is then used continually throughout the rest of the work to indicate Balyānī's opinions. This voice occurs also in accounts of the author's personal encounters with those he had met and decided to include in his work. This usage bears comparison with my own use of the word 'I' in academic work, together with its attendant limitations. That is, it conveys an aspect of the authorial person as this could be articulated in Persian prose in a work that is a mixture of memoir and poetic prosopography, executed in an especially innovative form. In this paper, I refer to this usage as the 'prosaic self'.

The clear majority of Balyānī's text consists of citations of Persian poetry, distributed into more than 3500 entries pertaining to poets identified by name. Taken together, the massive poetic corpus presented in the work is replete with the first-person voice, although this usage is very substantially different from the autobiographical self. This is the universal poetic voice, bound to a set of well-known literary tropes, which all poets adopt to create linguistic products understandable to audiences initiated into the discourse. This utilisation – which I refer to as the 'poetic self' – can appear, on the surface, to be deeply personal. However, the poetic self refers to the universal human subject, and poetic speech encapsulates a persona available for adoption by those who wish to compose this type of poetry. The poetic self enables claims of linguistic virtuosity based on the ability to inhabit the imaginary universe presumed to surround the poet. Although exceedingly 'self-centred', the poetic self is a highly generalised subject position fundamentally distinct from poets as complex living persons. However, as I will discuss, the poetic voice is not impersonal; it is a tropological vehicle for the expression of personality.³

How are the prosaic and poetic selves encountered in Balyānī's work individualistic and dividualistic? This question constitutes the frame for my assertion

praise is reserved for people of his own type, namely Iranians who had made names for themselves in Iranian or Indian courts. A complete evaluation of Balyānī's view of the poetic tradition would be a massive undertaking that has yet to happen.

³ For an excellent discussion of the construction of the poetic persona in Persian as this pertains to the early modern period see Losensky 1998. The point about the literary self as a generic convention is not exclusive to Persian and has been discussed in the context of many literary traditions.

that debates over in/dividualism can help us engage productively with complex literary products. The analytical distinction between individuality and dividuality helps us to see the contrast between the two types of selves critical to understanding not just Balyānī's work but the overall way in which pre-modern Persian literature relates to the societies in which it was produced.⁴

I would like to preface my presentation of the work's details by summarising a set of conceptual conclusions. Stating these in advance should help to clarify my choices of examples. I contend that both the prosaic and the poetic selves are equally individualistic and dividualistic, but in contrasting ways. The prosaic self, the grammatical subject of autobiographical comments in Balyānī's work, is *individualistic through outside designation*. This self describes its uniqueness through matters such as the date and conditions of the author's birth and his undergoing particular experiences in circumstances that are described through reference to external historical events. The prosaic self is substantiated as a unique entity also through references to appreciation by others, such as when kings and connoisseurs of poetry and religious thought are reported to remark on his extraordinary gifts.

The prosaic self is *dividualistic through subordination to authoritative social and discursive patterns*. Balyānī's work is rooted in the autobiographical voice's appeals to normativity as this is produced through external social structures. Balyānī defines himself for the reader by emphasising an exalted genealogy and the fact that he had received poetic inspiration directly from God. In prose, he is keen to portray himself as someone who is a part of existing hierarchies, a cog in the wheels of time and society rather than someone who stands apart through exception. The individualistic and dividualistic sides of the prosaic self both portray the author as rooted in social settings. As an individual, the prosaic self is constituted through the appreciation of others, while as a dividual, it is marked by adherence to norms and values of the societal settings within which it is ensconced.

The poetic self is also both individualistic and dividualistic, although on different grounds. Its individualism has an assertive voice that speaks often in the first person and insists on its difference from the listener and the world at large.

⁴ The prosaic and poetic selves under discussion map to a variety of ways in which the first person can be invoked in Persian literary speech. The commonest forms are the words *man* (I) and *mā* ('we' used to indicate a singular), but authors can refer to themselves through a wide variety of euphemisms such as 'the writer' (*navisandeh*), 'this wretch' (*in haqīr*), and so on. For current purposes, I am limiting myself to the strong binary contrast between prosaic and poetic selves, without getting into the intricacies of why certain forms are used to invoke one or the other in particular discursive circumstances.

The poetic self is *individualistic through emphatic self-assertion* rather than by appreciation from the outside. It is marked by a fierce independence that often requires rejection of norms. The individualistic side of the poetic self is also emotional, even sentimental; it is a vehicle for the expression of feelings that are seen to convey the uniqueness of its circumstances and reactions.

The poetic self's *dividualism* rests on its claim to universality. It is *dividualistic through the presumption of an identity shared across humanity*. Although poetic first person assertions describe intimacies that seem exceedingly personal on the surface, it is a mistake to take these on face value as simple expressions of the circumstances of the poet who composed the verses. All substantiations of the poetic 'I' are posture-driven products. Poetic virtuosity consists of innovative uses of generic language that turn well-worn tropes into new and evocative expressions. The first-person voice we encounter in poetic speech indexes a universality that the discourse presumes as being present in all humans in varying capacities. Somewhat paradoxically, the poetic 'I' projects intimacy while being emphatically impersonal in that it is bound to a genre that does not allow for a free relationship between voice and person. The poetic 'I' is thus a *dividual* part that is understood to go into the making of the complex human person. When it comes to the poetic self, both the individualistic and *dividualistic* elements are focused on internal states of the human person. The social sphere is certainly implied but does not drive the formation of the self as in the case of the *prosaic* self. With these conceptual formulations in mind, let us now see how the issues play out in the details of Balyānī's work.

3 The *prosaic* self

The preface to Balyānī's work contains an extended autobiographical narrative that, he says, he is providing because it contains circumstances 'not devoid of peculiarity' (Balyānī 2010, 1:16). He traces his paternal genealogy to a famous Sufi master separated from him by seven generations. His parents got married in Isfahan, Iran, and his father left for India soon after Balyānī was conceived, where he died before his son's birth on 3 Muḥarram 973 AH (31 July 1565 CE). Weaning from his mother suddenly at the age of one, Balyānī claims that, from that point to the age of fifty, he could remember almost everything that had passed in front of his senses 'like etchings on stone'. This seemingly eidetic memory helped him to excel during a traditional education in the religious and philosophical sciences. He had an aptitude for poetry as well, although his mother and other guardians dissuaded him from it, considering it frivolous in comparison with the religious

sciences that he was expected to master thoroughly on account of his genealogical heritage and evident talent. He says that he acquiesced to this restriction only until the age of twelve, when his mother passed away as well, leaving him completely orphaned (Balyānī 2010, 1:18–20).

Between the ages of twelve and twenty, he spent time in Isfahan, Yazd, and Shiraz, becoming ever more adept at many kinds of learning. His inward concentration on the development of his connection to God led him to experience a vision of the Prophet Muhammad, a customary marker of divine favour in this socioreligious context. At twenty years old, he became attached to the blind Safavid king Muḥammad Khudābandeh (d. 1595–96), from there on becoming a part of courtly life in Iran, principally due to his extraordinary facility with Persian poetry. The apogee of his career in this regard was an incident that occurred in Isfahan in 1598 CE. The reigning king Shāh ‘Abbās (d. 1629) had just come back to Iran from Central Asia after defeating his Uzbek rivals and had decided to make Isfahan the empire’s new capital. To commemorate the event, the city’s monuments were lit up with lamps at night. In a carnivalesque atmosphere, a competition was held for the best quatrain describing the city’s illuminated condition. Judged by the king himself, Balyānī claims that his following verses won the competition that evening:

Isfahan’s square, shining like the moon and the Pleiades,
casts a hundred marks on the chest of the highest celestial sphere.
This is no illumination! Rather, spread in front of the king,
are stars fallen from the sky in poses of prostration. (Balyānī 2010, 1:29)

After a few years with the court, Balyānī parted company from the Safavid establishment and spent some years traveling, with stays in Yazd, Isfahan, Qazvin, and Shiraz, in Iran, and Shi’i holy shrines in southern Iraq. He then decided to undertake a journey to India in 1606. While on the way, he heard the news of the death of the Mughal king Akbar (d. 1605) and upon arrival in Lahore, he stayed for a year and a half as a part of the court of the new Mughal king Jahāngīr (d. 1627). He then moved to Agra together with the court, the same association also leading him to travel to Gujarat, where he spent three years, followed by a return to Agra in 1611–12, when he could not arrange for a passage to Arabia via sea to perform the hajj. He states that he was in Agra at the time of writing the introduction, working assiduously to complete his massive compendium of Persian poets in the years 1613–15 (Balyānī 2010, 1:30–32).

In addition to the narrative in the preface to the work, Balyānī’s autobiographical voice – the prosaic self – permeates the fabric of his narrative in the form of indicating his first-hand knowledge of poets contemporary to him. Some prominent examples, picked from various bins in the alphabetical organization,

are: Bibi Turān Shāh, a princess known for her intellect and poetic talent (Balyānī 2010, 2:926); Jismi Hamadānī, whom he describes as a person from Hamadan who had arrived in India in the antinomian garb of a Qalandar and was now resident in the Deccan (2:1046–53); Rāy Manōhar, a Hindu prince who had been taken into the Mughal court and was regarded as an accomplished poet in Persian (3:1587–93); Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥasan Shafāyī Iṣfahānī, who was fifty-seven years of age in 1613 and had been known to the author most of his adult life (4:2239–52); Fikrī Khurāsānī, a specialist in quatrains, who cultivated a bizarre outward appearance while being a part of the court of Akbar (5:3312–19); Qulī Khān Bēg Mujrim, an Iranian nobleman, both a poet and a musician, who had travelled to India with Balyānī (6:3467–73); Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nazīrī, an Iranian emigre who had done very well in India as a Mughal official and had died in Gujarat (7:4439–69); Shaykh ‘Alī Naqī Kamra-yī, whom Balyānī had known as a close companion in Iran, hearing the news of his death after arrival in India (7:4476–93); Qāzī Nūrī, whom his teacher had nicknamed ‘jackass’ despite his skill in composing poetry (7:4504–17); Mīr Vālahī Qumī, known equally as a musician and a poet (7:4558–72); and Vaḥshī Bāfaqī, a poet regarded as a legend in his lifetime due to the freshness of his composition (7:4581–95). Needless to say, this list can be extended to hundreds of names.

When Balyānī speaks in the first person in prose, his voice substantiates the entity I have called the narrative’s prosaic self. Throughout its instantiation – in both autobiographical and prosopographical forms – the prosaic self is given external framing. This includes reference to dates in the Hijri calendar, through which his life is pegged to an impartial temporal scale. Then there are the references to normative authoritative structures such as his kin, other poets and scholars, and kings of the Safavid and Mughal dynasties. These elements represent diachronic structures of authority that feed into his self-presentation, whether directly or through implication.

The work’s prosaic self can be read as being both individualistic and dividualistic, as I indicated in the conceptual summary above. On the individualistic side, Balyānī clearly portrays himself as special, both as a distinct person who came into being at a certain time, and as someone who possesses extraordinary capabilities that have had a hand in defining his life’s trajectory. But the sense of specialness rests, ultimately, on his self-inscription into structures of authority that define his social setting. His prosaic self depends on being incorporated into matters such as genealogies, political structures such as empires, and social hierarchies to which he subscribes and aspires. The prosaic self is constructed in the middle between the individualistic and dividualistic aspects of his being. In his self-description in prose, he is both an exceptional person and someone whose significance is based on being ensconced within the sociopolitical reality that surrounds him.

4 The poetic self

The distinction between the prosaic and poetic selves that I have drawn is affirmed explicitly in Balyānī's own presentation: his catalogue of poets includes an entry on himself. His pen name was Taqī, placing him under the letter 't' in the scheme of his work, in the enclosure meant for the most recent poets. His description of himself in this entry references the autobiographical narrative at the beginning of the work but provides little extra detail that would allow us to substantiate him as being situated within specific temporal and social structures. Self-described as a poet, he appears quite different from the prosaic self. He treats himself as he would all other poets whom he has decided to include in his work on account of their poetic compositions. He enumerates the amounts and types of poetry he has composed over his lifetime, describing also what has been lost and what remains with him. As in the case of all the other entries on poets, much of his entry on himself consists of samples of poetry. I will provide translations of three examples that can give a sense for the range of his poetic expression. For present purposes, I suggest that we regard Taqī (i.e. Balyānī) as an example for the overall paradigm of the poetic self we encounter in his work.

The following couplet is an example of the expression of a highly personal sentiment:

Moonfaced one, the day I saw your silvery form,
of a morning, naked in the hammam,
by the evening, as stars made their appearance,
from desire for you, my spirit had melted, oozing out from my pores.

(Balyānī 2010, 2:925)

In this example, the focus is squarely on the relationship between the body and emotions. The verses manage to interweave the heat of the hammam and of the passion, placed in a day and night cycle that withers body and spirit. The verses' effect is created through poetic/conceptual alliteration between the revealing of the beloved's form by the removal of clothes, the rising of desire from within the self, the shining forth of the stars with the coming of darkness, the pouring of sweat from the skin pores, and the gliding of the spirit out of the body.

In contrast, the following verses also locate the self in the body but now with the aim of emphasising the self's separation from presumed normative conduct:

'Farewell, heart, as I fasten pilgrim's garb, headed for the beloved's sanctuary.
I tie up the provisions, determined to travel to the Ka'ba of hopefulness.

God, make me steadfast in being an unbeliever!
 Like someone non-Muslim by birth, I tie the knot of the *zunnār* belt' (Balyānī 2010, 2:913).⁵

In this instance, the poetic self acquires its distinctiveness through being devoted to the beloved. Opposite to the melting of the spirit in the first case, here outward distinction, manifested in the form of non-Muslim clothing, provides evidence for the self's radical transformation through the way love has affected it. The tie created by the fact of falling in love reverberates to clothes, provisions, and socioreligious bonds in the verses' imagery.

The last sample I provide is a full ghazal (a short poem in rhyming couplets), a lengthier text that exemplifies a cascading series of complex topoi that are a part of the poetic self encountered in Balyānī's work:

'I am the one who, like heart, is the king of the celestial throne.
 Like intellect, I am ruler over the clime of perfections. [1]
 My mind is the tavern of the hidden world.
 My intellect is the manifesting place of sanctity's witness. [2]
 My speech is sister to the beloved's ruby lips.
 I am fellow resident in the abode that is the patience of lovers' hearts. [3]
 Like the evening of separation, there is no deliverance from my sorrow.
 Like the day of affliction, I am not an aid that saves from oppression. [4]
 I am the flute's exile: what, after all, grieves me in life?
 I am the flute's mourning: what tragedy, after all, has afflicted me? [5]
 In companions' sight, I am a precious stone lit up in fire.
 In the enemy's eye, I am a diamond needle piercing through silk. [6]
 A knight and two rooks make moves, play the game.
 In the arena of grasping speech, I am glory and dispel oppression. [7]
 Like Anvarī of the age, I do not have pearls of speech.
 When speechlessness is divine favour, I am *Ẓahir*. [8]' (Balyānī 2010, 2:916f.).

On its surface, this poem reflects an absolute focus on the speaker, the poetic self, the first-person pronoun being present in every couplet. It lays out distinctions accorded to the self in a boastful way, also showing this self to be an immensely capacious entity. However, the poem's grander implications come to light once we see it as a densely intertextual paean to the traditions of Persian poetry, referencing thematic

⁵ Much utilized in poetry to signify concurrent unbelief and faithfulness, the *zunnār* was a coloured belt required to be worn by non-Muslim men in public in certain early Muslim societies.

resonances and directly invoking famous predecessors. Although a full explanation of the contents of this poem would require too much space in the context of the present discussion, I will provide a summary mapping between the text and the larger tradition for us to appreciate its various associations.

The poem can be divided into four parts. Following the numbers I have assigned to verses, these are: (i) 1 and 2 are references to cosmology; (ii) 3 through 5 are plays on the presumed world inhabited by the lover, the chief stock character in Persian poetry; (iii) 6 and 7 contain hyperboles concerned with the poet's presumed role in social and courtly settings; and (iv) 8 refers to two earlier poets, providing us a way to identify the location of the poem's usage. The first two verses are a play on the interconnection between the macrocosm and the microcosm. In the first, 'heart' and 'throne' are references to the doctrine that the place of the heart within the human being is the same as that of the celestial throne, mentioned in the Quran, in the cosmos. This identification was the basis for complex theories in which the human journey into the innermost part of one's being was also seen as a climb up the cosmic ladder to be in the proximity of God. Such journeys were imagined to take place through cultivating one's intellect as well as the capacity for becoming the subject of divine self-manifestation. The point of the second verse is to claim that the speaker's mind has become such a place of manifestation and that he has attained the intellectual maturity to become a witness to the divine in the deep sense.

Verses 3 through 5 relate to the presumed game of love, in which the poet takes on the role of lover, and God or another human being can be the beloved. The first hemistich of the third verse refers to the expectation that speech of love, i.e. poetry, comes into being through unrequited love. The poet/lover pines for the beloved, who either shuns or remains coy. But speech produced in this way holds such charm that even the non-acquiescent beloved cannot but let it flow on the lips. The second hemistich of the third verse invokes a different part of the love tale: here the poet takes on the expected role of suffering patiently while the beloved remains unattainable. The fourth verse hinges on the 'evening of separation' and 'day of affliction', stock scenarios against which lovers' patience is tested. Here the poet takes on the characteristics of experiences associated with these durations. The fifth verse continues with the theme of grief and mourning, this time by reference to the mournful sound of the reed flute. The flute's voice is a direct reference to one of the most famous poems in Persian literature: the *Maṣnavī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) that begins by comparing the flute's voice to the cry of the human soul searching for the divine (Papan-Matin 2003).

The poet as a stock character is expected to possess tremendous mental alacrity that allows him to use his power over language to acquire social mastery. The traditional proving ground for this to happen is the royal court, presumed to be split into warring factions vying for resources and the sovereign's favour. The sixth

verse refers to this situation, indicating the poet's great value to his friends and his deadliness when in the role of a conniving enemy. The first hemistich of the seventh verse continues this scheme, transferring it to action on the chessboard, a courtly game. The second hemistich then identifies the game in play as that of understanding and producing speech, the domain in which the poet claims excellence. Finally, the last verse refers to Awḥad al-Dīn Anvarī (d. c. 1150–80) (Anvarī 1961) and Ṣahīr al-Dīn Fāryābī (d. 1201) (Fāryābī 2003), early Persian poets regarded as masters of composing panegyrics for kings and other elite patrons. The citation of these two as the poet's predecessors makes it nearly certain that Balyānī's own poem was written for use in the setting of the Safavid or Mughal courts.

My explanations of the Persian verses in English do the original no favours, even as they may make the matter more understandable to readers unfamiliar with the allusions. It seems counterproductive and tawdry to disassemble the poem's carefully constructed affect into humdrum rationalisations. But there is an important lesson in the contrast in that it provides a sense for what Balyānī is after in his evaluations of poetic production in Persian. As in other poetic forms, the verses are spectacularly economical deployments of language in the service of conveying ideas, emotions, interpersonal relationships, and so forth. The examples I have provided from Balyānī's entry on himself aim to substantiate a part of the concrete content associated with the poetic self as it comes across in his work. Multiply this by thousands and we have a sense for the experience of reading the work at length.

As I hope is clear by now, the poetic self is highly invested in individualistic self-evocation that can very easily extend to posing radical challenges to ideological and societal norms. Balyānī's verses describe him as lusting after a naked person he has seen in the baths, and he openly professes repudiation of Islam and taking up the garb of non-Muslims while pursuing a beloved. However, as evident in the last example, these and other invocations of individualism index long-standing traditions. The poetic self is a voice shared among all the poets Balyānī is keen to showcase in his monumental work. The 'person' who speaks in this voice is present in all human beings, although it never encompasses the full humanity of a particular individual. The poetic self is then individualistic in the same measure as the seeming individuality registered in its strident statements in verse.

5 Conclusion

I hope to have shown that the debate regarding in/dividuality provides us analytical tools to undertake assessments of complex literary products. This deployment of the distinction is heuristic rather than descriptive, its value residing in

the degree to which it helps us to comprehend texts in context. When we encounter a work such as the one I have explored, we are presented with the challenge of imagining the social world that gave rise to it but is no longer available for direct observation. Balyānī's work is, on the surface, replete with references to the first person. If we take all 'I's and its equivalents present on face value, the work is rendered utterly contradictory and incoherent. For example, the authorial self affirms religious norms while also stridently flaunting them. It is self-effacing, yet also boastful and invested in seeing itself as the exception. It delights in claiming novelty of thought and expression while also proving bound to received tradition in the utmost. In this situation, the distinction between individualistic and dividualistic aspects allows us to generate a conceptual basis for resolving the contradictions, thereby making the work a window onto the social world of its origins.

In the approach I have taken, it is crucial that the contents of the terms individualism and dividualism are not taken as standard based on data coming from any given society or textual base. That is, no particular characteristics should be allowed to be seen as inherent in what we understand by the two terms. Rather, the contents of the terms must be derived from a careful analysis of the data at hand. In the case of Balyānī, I hope to have shown that we have a single work that has two types of selves, each with its own distinctive forms of individuality and dividuality. Individuality and dividuality are relative rather than absolute descriptors. The two cannot be taken as universal substantives, and their associations need to be constituted from the specific examples we are exploring. Any meanings we can assign to them must be recovered from the specifics of the data we are confronting rather than through a priori presumptions.

My perspective on individuality and dividuality cashes out in the way it allows me to think productively about the societies that were the origins of the literature that I seek to interpret. By thinking about the question as I have done, I can understand Balyānī as both a being rooted in his world and as someone who acted upon the world as an individual, projecting himself as different from others who surrounded him in various circumstances. This is an important and non-trivial analytical benefit that derives from the discussion of in/dividuality. Reading genre-bound literature produced in societies to which we have no direct access is a challenging matter. We are mistaken to read this material simply as a reflection of a formalised world, in which human actors were nothing but automata carrying out societal scripts dictated to the last rule. But it is equally problematic to take on face value assertions of selves we find in these works, in the form of the use of first-person pronouns and otherwise. We cannot regard the words that meet our eyes as literal self-ascriptions of the people who produced the works. The in/dividuality paradigm provides a systematic and systemising approach to explore literature that is simultaneously virtuosic and a product of

tradition. It allows us to imagine our subjects as complex beings existing between the poles of interiority and exteriority.

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Riccarda Suitner

The good citizen and the heterodox self: turning to Protestantism and Anabaptism in 16th-century Venice

In the following pages, I wish to discuss conversions within the specific context of the so-called 'Radical Reformation', tackling issues such as their similarities with and differences from other types of intra-Christian conversion, and the legal and psychological implications of this decision. The Venetian Republic lends itself best to a survey of this type, particularly during the period between the 1540s and 1560s. These years saw numerous conversions to Protestantism and at the same time the high point of the local Anabaptist movement. Furthermore, these decades saw the first trials of the Inquisition, which as we know was established in 1542 but only came into full force very slowly; during the period of interest here it had not yet succeeded in radically undermining the organisation of Venetian heterodox groups as it did in the second half of the century. Finally, for numerous reasons the conversions of inhabitants of these regions were rather different from those that took place elsewhere. The analysis of the modalities with which factors such as conversion, Nicodemism, confessional eclecticism, and exile came to interact with each other in some milieus of this city provides an excellent example of the exercise of individual religious choice in early modern Europe – which is here strictly related to other phenomena such as plurality of *personae* and of multiple religious 'identities', and thus with ways of 'parting the self'.

1 Embracing the Reformation in early 16th-century Venice

The authorities of the Venetian Republic had numerous reasons to close one eye to suspected cases of heterodoxy and to allow non-Catholic individuals at least to reside on its territory. One of these was the web of commercial relations with the populations of central Europe and the Ottoman Empire, often mediated by Jews. The *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, the *Fondaco dei Turchi*, the Jewish ghetto and

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their various synagogues (though some crypto-Jews lived outside the ghetto) were among the places intended to spatially delimit confessional divisions. The latter were on the one hand aimed at preventing contacts with the Italian population and simultaneously (at least in the eyes of the Venetian authorities) also served in some ways to ‘protect’ these religious minorities from potential attacks by the local population.

Obviously, that adopted in Venice was a concept of ‘religious tolerance’ typical of the early modern period which has little in common with the current meaning of this expression (for a detailed analysis of this notion see Forst 2003; Salatowsky, Schröder 2016; Vollhardt, Bach, Multhammer 2015). This was a sort of paternalistic concession, made essentially for reasons of convenience, of a minimal number of rights, on the part of a religiously homogeneous and cohesive community, to individuals seen as posing a potential danger to the social order; they could not expect to become fully integrated, but merely to be ‘tolerated’ and not to risk death or forced conversion. Not coincidentally, these groups were permitted only to perform specific jobs and were obliged in various ways to ‘signal’ their difference. For example, Jews had to wear a specific type of hat and, if they were students at the University of Padua, paid higher university fees (see Ravid 2003). Furthermore, spaces were divided in accordance with rigorous confessional criteria, we can think for example of the *Fondaco dei Turchi* or the Jewish ghetto; in the case of multi-confessional spaces, these were conceived to allow the authorities simultaneously to isolate and to control non-Catholic individuals. A well-known example of such spaces is the *casa dei catecumeni*, established in imitation of similar institutions disseminated around the Ottoman Empire, where, when necessary, conversion processes were regulated (as an introduction to the link between space and conversion in the early modern period see Marcocci et al. 2015; specifically on the *casa dei catecumeni* see Matheus 2013).

All of this, obviously, had only a minimal impact on the Catholic, Italian-speaking population, towards which – and particularly towards those who turned to Protestantism – there was no need to demonstrate any sort of ‘tolerance’. Nonetheless, the penetration of the Reformed ideas into Venetian territory was easier than elsewhere in Italy, given the larger volume of international contacts and the existence – mentioned above – of foreigners in the city, alongside other factors: the flourishing and relatively free book industry; and Venetian political independence, pervaded from the earliest centuries of its history by a strong anti-Roman – and therefore anti-Papal – sentiment that led it to demand and practise a strong autonomy in decision-making also expressed in matters of the repression of religious dissent (classic studies on Venetian history are Lane 1973; Zorzi 1979; Landwehr 2007; Bouwsma 1968; specifically on the Venetian Inquisition see Grendler 1977; Pullan

1997; Del Col 2012, 342–94). The dissemination of Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines on Venetian soil – though mainly ‘second hand’ – and above all of the works of Erasmus and perhaps also those of Servetus (see for instance Seidel Menchi 1993; Felici 2010; Ongaro 1971), suddenly opened up a range of options: conversion to Lutheranism, Calvinism or one of those more ‘radical’ versions of the Reformation that, harking back to preconciliar Christianity, rejected the Trinity and the baptism of infants. In the two former cases, the two possibilities open to the convert were dissimulation or flight.

The ‘dissimulative’ approach is so-called Nicodemism, a famous term thought to originate with Calvin, who introduced it in 1543 with specific reference to Italian crypto-Protestants (though the practice was widespread and theorised not just by Juan de Valdés and other Italian reformers, but also in some German reformed circles to the ‘left of the Reformation’, like that of Otto Brunfels), initially studied by Delio Cantimori, Antonio Rotondò, Carlo Simoncelli and Carlo Ginzburg, and later by numerous other scholars. The expression designated, in modern historiography, the doctrine of the permissibility of religious simulation, the deliberate concealment of Protestant belief beneath a veil of Catholic observance (Cantimori 1948; Rotondò 1967; Ginzburg 1970; Simoncelli 1979; Biondi 1974; Eire 1985). Often the Nicodemite attitude culminated, as we know thanks to the numerous transcripts of trials held in the Venice State Archive, with an abjuration that could be followed by a conviction or otherwise, often entailing the death penalty.

One Nicodemite was Paolo d’Avanzo. This young man, aged about thirty, from Città di Castello, a small town in present-day Umbria, worked in the 1560s in the Rialto area for the Florentine leather merchant Michelangelo Baglione (see Archivio di Stato Veneto, hereafter cited as ASVE, Savi all’eresia, b. 29, file ‘Paolo d’Avanzo’, fol. 1r: ‘Paulo d’Avanzo [...] prattica in Rialto et veste alla forestiera giovane di 30 anni in circa con poca barba’). The first charge laid against him was that of a conversion to Calvinism, the second that of owning forbidden books. The second charge was dropped after a search in the house of Donato Baglione, the son of the merchant under whom he served, where no subversive books were found. The accounts given by the various witnesses who testified during the trial against him from 1568 onwards and his own evidence provide us not only with insights into the life of a young emigrant to Venice, but above all with an idea of the concrete stages involved in a conversion in Venice at this time. The young man had relatives in Geneva and an uncle, Pompeo, in Lyon. The latter had fervently praised the sermons of the local Huguenot community, whilst his relatives in Geneva had convinced him of the superiority of the Calvinist doctrine amongst those of the Reformed world. He himself had travelled to Geneva for work. D’Avanzo was just an errand boy, but he nonetheless had the opportunity to travel, and came into contact not just with other merchants but also with

the different social classes in the city of Venice: the Buccella family, the doctor Ludovico Abbioso, Paolo Moscardo (*ibid.*).

Among those who chose the second alternative – to emigrate abroad – some succeeded in attaining a status very close to full integration (Cantimori 1939). This is true of Guglielmo Gratarolo, a student of medicine first in Padua and then at the Collegio dei fisici in Venice. The bibliography on Gratarolo, rather than on religious issues, focuses mostly on his keen interest in alchemy and the natural sciences and on his activity as editor of Pietro Pomponazzi's works. Indeed, if we examine his religious views as well, we see that he survived a first trial that ended with an abjuration (see ASVE, b. 10). After fleeing the Veneto in 1550, Gratarolo settled in Basle in 1552, where he edited the works of Pietro Pomponazzi for the printer Pietro Perna, and became a professor and dean of the local university. In Switzerland Gratarolo became one of Michael Servetus' harshest antagonists and a defender of Reformed orthodoxy, going so far as to report the owners and suppliers of forbidden literature to the authorities (see Church, 194–201; Thorndike 1941, 600–16; Maclean 2005; Doni 1975; Pastore 2002; Gallizioli 1788).

The very different cases of Gratarolo and d'Avanzo are a good illustration of the two main routes to conversion in the Venetian Republic during the mid-16th century: commercial relations with foreign countries, and the cosmopolitanism of the *élite* at the University of Padua, constantly fed by relations between Italian professors open to Reformed ideas and foreign students (see Suitner 2016b, with further bibliography). In both cases we are dealing with a dualism between a simulated Catholic faith and the Calvinist faith with which people intimately identified. The choices made by the two converts and their consequences, though, were entirely different: Gratarolo chose emigration, which in the long term saved his life, whilst the young errand boy hid his genuine faith for as long as possible and was ultimately prosecuted by the Holy Office. Whilst in the former case this dualism was 'overcome' by emigration – allowing for a new 'reconciliation' between faith and 'area of residence', previously separated, – in the latter we are dealing with a conflict between inner faith and outer faith that in the territory of the Venetian Republic could not be overcome.

However, Gratarolo and Avanzo had one thing in common: they turned to one of the main confessions then in the process of institutionalisation in the Reformed world and led by clearly identifiable 'figure-heads'. At that time, Lutheranism and Calvinism had gradually constructed their own theological orthodoxy and, aside from a few multi-confessional contexts, were firmly rooted in specific territories. By contrast, other stories of conversion from Roman Catholicism were completely different. For example, Anabaptism and Antitrinitarianism, excluded from the so-called process of 'confessionalisation', were beliefs stigmatised both

in Reformed and Catholic territories.¹ In yet other cases, to be discussed in the following pages, this conflict could not be overcome since in the mid-16th century – an era of *cuius regio, eius religio* (‘whose realm, his religion’) whose implications are exemplified in different ways in the events considered above – embracing Anabaptism implied the absence of a physical ‘place’ to which converts could legitimately emigrate.

2 Turning to the ‘Radical Reformation’

In mid-16th century Europe, the various confessions had not yet reached a definitive configuration, and this was even truer of Venice. During this phase, a general fascination with Protestantism presented Italian religious dissent, influenced by its highly composite doctrinal background – Machiavellianism, the philosophical mortalism widespread at the University of Padua, the ideology of the mendicant orders, the heritage of Savonarola’s preachings, Valdesian groups – a multiplicity of options in terms of religious criticism. The works of Luther, Calvin and Erasmus, furthermore, were often known only indirectly. The doctrinal nuances to be espoused by a reformed religion capable of taking root in the states of Italy were not clear even to those who had rejected Catholicism or those who were preparing to do so.

If we leaf through the transcripts of the section ‘Savi all’eresia’ of the Venetian trials held between the 1540s and 1560s, we find that the sympathisers of the Reformation share a particular series of convictions: the non-belief in transubstantiation, in the intercession of saints and the worship of their images; a positive predisposition towards salvation through grace and the non-existence of Purgatory; the condemnation of the sale of indulgences. On key doctrinal issues, however, there was complete disagreement. The Pope was seen by some as one prophet among the many, by others as the Antichrist; some believed in the virginity of Mary, others thought that she was simply a pious woman and yet others that she was a prostitute (since otherwise, we read in some confessions to the inquisitors, she would certainly not have given birth in a cave, under such unsuitable circumstances); the soul is sometimes considered immortal, at others material and mortal. Apparently minor differences in the interpretation of issues such as the mortality or otherwise of the soul, the difference between the soul of the damned and that of the just, the rapport between the soul of animals and that of humans,

¹ The geographical and chronological extension and the legitimacy itself of the notion of ‘confessionalisation’ have been widely debated; see Brady 2004.

led to radically different conceptions of religion and the form to be taken by the concept of ‘Reformation’.

Some people arranged to read texts by Reformers at clandestine meetings, some discussed them cautiously with their students or foreign clients, some came into contact with the Reformed world through travel abroad, and some attempted a sort of ‘practical application’ of their beliefs, such as the parish priest of the church of San Pantalon in Venice who, while celebrating Mass, deliberately ‘forgot’ to declare the transubstantiation of the host into the body of Christ (ASVE, Savi all’eresia, b. 19).

The way in which these beliefs were ‘assembled’ and personally (re)interpreted differed less from group to group (since their boundaries were not always particularly clear), and more from person to person. Very frequently, individuals did not adhere to an ‘orthodox’ version of Lutheranism or Calvinism but created their own personal, eclectic interpretation, essentially a fairly ambiguous and hybrid religious identity. All this was true of many sympathisers of Calvinism and Lutheranism, whose dissemination in Italy never went beyond the initial stage and came to an almost complete halt in the second half of the century. This was even truer of Anabaptism, a credo in a yet more embryonic state, with few reference texts, difficult to find, without a developing orthodoxy and characterised – if I may use a contemporary expression – by an evident lack of *leadership*. We are indeed still far from the phase of Socinianism proper. In fact, if we wish to seek out a phase during which Antitrinitarianism developed a normative and ‘institutionalised’ structure, we should look to the specific context of eastern Europe from around the 1570s. These decades saw the work of various intellectuals who took Antitrinitarianism to the heights of theological refinement: Giorgio Biandrata, Fausto Sozzini and Ferenc Dávid. This is a doctrinal level completely different from that which had characterised, for example, Venetian and Paduan non-conformism a few decades earlier, which we discuss in these pages. It is no coincidence that this phase marked the first time that we can associate Antitrinitarianism with a specific territory. In Transylvania, in 1568, the legitimacy of the Unitarian confession was sanctioned and legally recognised alongside Calvinism and Lutheranism. Conversions to Unitarianism increased progressively, especially from the 1570s onwards (see Caccamo 1970; Wien, Brandt, Balog 2013; Balázs 1996). With the exception of this short-lived phase in some regions of Eastern Europe where some sovereigns included these faiths among those that could be legitimately practised within state borders, Anabaptism and Antitrinitarianism never enjoyed political protection in early modern Europe.

In contrast to those drawn to mainstream Reformation, very few Italian Anabaptists had direct contacts with relatively well organized foreign communities during these decades. One exception was the professor of anatomy Niccolò

Buccella. Buccella had Anabaptist sympathies: he had undergone a second baptism and preached the free interpretation of Scripture and the inequality of the persons of the Trinity. He was influenced in his heterodox views, like various other Venetian physicians of his generation, by contacts with the students of the *natio germanica* at the University of Padua and by the debates on radical Aristotelianism and mortalism that had been held for some time in the *Facultas artistarum*. On the one hand, Buccella held a series of basic convictions common to Venetian Protestantism: the critique of worshipping images of saints, of transubstantiation and of indulgences (but not of the cult of Mary, as was by contrast typical of other Anabaptists of the time), the non-existence of Purgatory, the nature of the Pope as a usurper. However, he combined these theories with ideas drawn both from the philosophical discussions taking place at the University of Padua and from the convictions of Moravian Anabaptists (Stella 1961–1962; Stella 1967; see also Suitner 2016b, with further bibliography). Unlike many others, his knowledge of Anabaptism was not second hand; he had travelled to Moravia himself, where he had come into contact with local Anabaptist communities. For this reason, he was able to give accurate testimony to the inquisitors, together with his travelling companion Francesco della Sega, on the organisation of the Moravian community: on the practice of the second baptism of adults ‘with pure and simple water without any ceremony’, demanding a declaration of faith in the resurrection of Christ for the sins of humankind, on the attempts to practice the sharing of property, on radical pacifism (ASVE, Savi all’eresia, b. 19).

The convictions most widespread among the Italian sympathisers of Anabaptism were the sole validity of baptism received as an adult and the affirmation of the human nature of Jesus Christ. On the exact form to be taken by the critique of postconciliar Christianity there was complete disagreement, as demonstrated in exemplary fashion by the confession of Pietro Manelfi in 1551 (Ginzburg 1970). There was no unitary approach to issues such as the status of the soul before and after death, the essence and power of angels and demons, the Resurrection, the relationship between Old and New Testament, the characteristics of Hell and Purgatory nor a long series of other issues.

This heterogeneity particularly characteristic of Venetian Anabaptist groups also implied an extreme ‘fluidity’, the potential for not remaining ‘rooted’ in a fixed religious vision, changing one’s position over time. It is as if for some individuals, once the process had been ‘triggered’, it could no longer be stopped: they continued until they found the religion most suited to their own selves, to their own inner life. ‘Multiple’ conversions are much more common – and well-documented – personal developments in the two following centuries, for example in Holland during the 17th and 18th century, with converts who reached deist positions if not those of the so-called ‘Radical Enlightenment’ (see Israel 2001). Obviously, many sympathisers

of Antitrinitarianism or Anabaptism who eventually became atheists, or adopted an undefined form of scepticism or agnosticism (and who sometimes became Catholics again at the end of their lives), did so as a result of multiple migrations and a combination of various factors: opportunistic motives given the need to simply survive in a foreign country on the one hand, the condition of being perennially uprooted and contact with other cultures on the other. This is, for instance, true of two Italian physicians: Simone Simoni and Agostino Doni. Starting from Averroist positions in line with Venetian/Paduan medical circles, during the stages of his exile (Geneva, Paris, Heidelberg, Leipzig, Basel, Cracow), Simoni passed through Antitrinitarian and later clearly atheist positions before eventually reconverting to Catholicism (see Verdigi 1997; Suitner 2016b). Doni, also an exile in Switzerland and Poland, highly probably integrated Michael Servetus' theory of the single *spiritus* into his work *De natura hominis*, strongly depending upon Bernardino Telesio's natural philosophy (Suitner 2019). These cases of migration are of a different kind from that of Gratarolo treated above. Here we don't see a conscious choice of a country which guaranteed the possibility of practising the 'true' faith; migration instead triggers the acquisition of a new and more complex religious identity, showing us how strong the religious dimension of biographical experience is. Furthermore, in some cases – particularly those involving physicians – the sources for accusations of atheism and/or Antitrinitarianism were not always reliable, as such charges were often mixed up with professional rivalries.

In any case, this is a phase and a generation after that of the mid-16th century under discussion here, and one that saw the migration of the so-called 'Italian heretics'.² The discussion of the implications of migration for the development of the self exceeds the purposes of this paper, which concentrates on groups of dissenters in the Venetian Republic and not specifically on the later exile of some of their members. Anyway, it is worth mentioning that the connection between the crossing of borders and the emergence in Europe of processes of individualisation has been stressed on several occasions, with particular reference to the mobility of Renaissance intellectuals (see for instance Elias 1987). There is undoubtedly a close relationship between religion and specific individual biographical models, and between biographical and religious experience. By contrast, biographical models may also have influenced the religious practices (or their absence) of individuals (see Nassehi 1996, 11). Furthermore, migration studies stress more and more the 'multiple belongings' and the 'internal plurality' triggered by migration (see for instance Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013), concepts which seem to be useful in the debate on the in/dividual.

² The expression *eretici italiani del Cinquecento* was famously introduced by the homonymous book of the Italian scholar Delio Cantimori.

Whilst some citizens of the Venetian Republic passed directly from Catholicism to the Radical Reformation,³ moving from Lutheranism to Anabaptism was in fact far more frequent. In 1551 or 1552, Nicola d'Alessandria visited some nuns in Treviso, to whom he explained the doctrine of the Anabaptists. The nuns turned out to already be very well informed on Lutheran doctrines, but after discussing them with their guest they agreed that those of the Anabaptists were even better, and declared their intention to leave the convent to undergo adult baptism:

'In Utine del Frioli sono de molti Lutherani, sì come ho inteso da Nicola da Treviso et da maestro Iacometto suo compagno, etiam, de Treviso: et ho inteso dalli sudetti che questa estate, cioè questo iulio et iunio passato, essendo Nicola da Treviso nella sudetta città, ribattezzò dui, li quali non cognosco né so il nome; de più me disse ch'era stato per mezzo di certi Lutherani in uno monasterio de monache, se ben me ricordo de san Francesco, dove parlò con loro della dottrina Lutherana et le ritrovò in detta dottrina essere molto bene istruite, et così cominciò a parlare la dottrina anabattista, cioè il battesimo, et loro accettorno tal dottrina et domandorno, secondo mi dissero li sudetti, il battesimo; ma perch'erano ancora nel monasterio et non potevano uscire non furono rebattizzate da Nicola, benché l'eshortasse ad uscire del monasterio per ribattezzarsi; et loro dissero che se possevano il fariano' (Ginzburg 1970, 81f.).

A significant detail is that these nuns lived in seclusion. As such, we do not know how their story ended, and whether they decided to leave the convent or not. The conversions of the religious, generally described as *sfratati*, reappear constantly in the transcripts of trials. In general, these were former members of mendicant orders (Capuchins, Franciscans), receptive not only to critiques of the corruption of the Roman church but also attracted by the nature of Venetian Anabaptism: its pacifist leanings, the radical return to the text of the Scriptures and the Christology of the Synoptic Gospels (on pacifism see for instance Ginzburg 1970, 48: 'Maestro Giovan Maria spataro, ma non fa più 'l maestro, perché gli anabattisti non vogliono alchuno he facci arme, né dipintori, anabattista').

There are also people who became atheists after turning to Lutheranism and Anabaptism: for example, those Neapolitan groups, studied by Luca Addante and Massimo Firpo, who later moved to Padua (Addante 2010; Firpo 1990). These are disciples of Juan de Valdés, who on the basis of a more esoteric and exclusively oral level of doctrine, probably already theorised by their leader, bent his teachings in a more radical direction to 'espouse' ideas that had very little to do with the Reformation, such as the denial of the redeeming power of the life of Christ,

³ George Hudston Williams' monograph *The Radical Reformation* (1965), as is well known, gave its name to this set of doctrines.

and not just of his divine nature, the condemnation of both the Old and the New Testament and, in some cases, of all forms of religion.

A series of social, economic, cultural and confessional factors made it possible for part – albeit a tiny part – of the population of the Venetian Republic of the mid-16th century to develop the feeling that they had been given the potential to choose the confession most suited to their own inner needs, be it Anabaptism, Lutheranism, Calvinism or even an atheism not devoid of evidently blasphemous undertones. This close connection between individual choice, conversion and an approach that we could describe as ‘confessional eclecticism’ is fairly unusual in Europe at this time. Actively seeking out a religion suited to oneself clashed stridently with the iron-clad territorial criterion then prevailing and with the very mindset of this period, which ‘could not conceive of religion as a sphere separate from other domains of being’ (Luebke 2012, 4). The best-known example of the application and crystallisation of this principle is the Augsburg confession of 1555 (the celebrated motto *cuius regio, eius religio* famously dates to a few years later), which, not coincidentally, offered Lutherans and Catholics the possibility of migration, but excluded Anabaptists and Antitrinitarians.

The first generation of Venetian Anabaptists is representative of *individual* religious choice; their religious identity is pluralistic, fragmented and eclectic, lacking in dogmatic coherence and loyalty to a single confession. The same could be said for all those who adopted the teachings of the magisterial Reformation in an eclectic and personal, hybrid fashion, a highly ‘spurious’ reformed thought.⁴ In general terms this is certainly an expression of individualisation unconceivable without the major shift starting from the Reformation, but that should be considered a separate phenomenon, in opposition to the gradual establishment of reformed orthodoxies in other countries. It seems to me that the events under discussion here are a good demonstration that individualisation is not a single, almost supra-historical process, but a multiplicity of discontinuous processes resulting from specific networks, factors and contingent situations.⁵

The phenomenon of the radical fringes that emerged at the margins of the Reformation and long persecuted in Europe had, among other things, long-term theological consequences. Consider, for example, the Mennonite and Amish communities in North America. Both, though they are now fragmented into numerous

⁴ In particular the works of Massimo Firpo offer a detailed picture of the multiplicity of influences typical of 16th-century Italian heterodoxy.

⁵ For a summary of the state of research of the KFG – which has shown that individualisation is not linear and progressive, but is characterised by strong discontinuities and gaps – see Suitner 2016a. The Christian Middle Ages and ancient Rome had for instance their own concept of religious individuality: see Rüpke 2013; Rüpke, Spickermann 2012; Mieth, Löser 2014.

subgroups with specific beliefs and slightly different practices, originated from the migration of non-conformist communities established in 16th-century Europe, especially the Anabaptist community, with which they share many fundamental principles, including opposition to the baptism of infants and radical pacifism. The diversity of American religious sects and congregations, in an apparently paradoxical way, can be considered simultaneously an expression of individualism and conformity. These communities are an integral part of a context in which individualisation has become a rule, a specific feature of national religious culture. As Richard Madsen has pointed out,

‘religious individualization is the American religion [...]. The geography of American religion is coming to resemble an archipelago of little islands of strongly held faith. The population of these islands is somewhat transitory, because restlessness is built deeply into the core of American religious culture. The restlessness is not so much a result of the weakness in faith. It is a result of the very strength of the fundamental promises of the American religious individualism’.⁶

In relation to our Venetian context – and without claiming to be making rigorous comparisons – we could mention the growing attention paid in recent years in anthropological studies to multiple identities and the fragmentation of the personal identity of the individual. This research has called into question part of the narrative proper to the so-called ‘modernisation theory’, which presumes an opposition between a pre-modern and/or non-European ‘dividuality’ and a Western ‘individuality’, a dichotomy between the dividualised/collectivistic/relational and the individualistic personhood.⁷

In opposition to this viewpoint, which theorised a presumed internal uniformity of the non-Western and Western blocs, scholars have spoken of a ‘fluidity of the boundaries that define the contours of one’s persona’, as a consequence of which ‘personae (whether they be individualistic or collectivistic) have various modes of being; these modes of presence are inherently plural and diverse’, of ‘personhood

⁶ Madsen 2009. See also Fuchs, Rüpke 2015, 3: ‘it is of specific interest to determine and research constellations in which individualized relationships with the Supreme as well as with human others becomes a social trend, a defining feature for at least certain sections of society [...]. The approach allows to capture paradoxical constellations, in which individualization is made into a norm or even becomes stereotyped’.

⁷ See exemplarily Strathern 1988 on gender relations on Malanesia, and Geertz 1974: ‘the Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe; a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organised into a distinctive whole and set contrastingly both against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures’.

as defined and shaped by a multiply authored, relational nexus between individual autonomy and the collective' (Appuhamilage 2017; see also Sökefeld 1999). This is a fascinating debate arguing that pluralism and the fragmentation of the self should not be considered the exclusive prerogative of pre-modern and non-European contexts, in opposition to individualisation, but rather an integral part of it. This position seems to me to be confirmed, with all the due distinctions, by the reflections made on the Venetian heterodox groups of the mid-16th century, with their more or less conscious struggle for the search of an individual form of religion, their rejection of any form of dogmatism, and their 'multiple' religious choices which, instead of juxtaposing and replacing themselves on one another, gave result to 'hybrid' forms of religiosity.

A different matter are the clear conversions to a Reformed confession, also discussed above. Regardless of whether this conversion is made explicit by a migration, or concealed by the practice of Nicodemism, the religious identity of the person is clearly defined. The outcome of forced retractions may be highly dramatic, such as suicide. A famous example is that of Francesco Spiera, a lawyer from Cittadella (near Padua), who turned to Lutheranism and was forced first to dissimulate and later – once discovered – to abjure. In despair at having betrayed his faith and certain that he was therefore destined for eternal damnation, Spiera let himself die of hunger and depression in 1548, leading to a heated debate in erudite Italian circles (Curione, Calvin, Gribaldi, Gelous, Scrymgeour 1550).

Alternatively, there may be a 'happy ending' – as in the case of Guglielmo Gratarolo, who decided to emigrate to a region where he found an entire community and pre-defined system of dogmas to support his choice. In this case, the Nicodemitic opposition is between a 'genuine' religious identity (that of the Calvinist) and a fictitious identity (that of the Catholic) that is not truly heartfelt. These two identities do not form a whole, and are not both intimately experienced. The premise here is the confessional state with its identification of religious and political/civic identity; the 'exception' of migration forms a coherent part of this picture, aimed at reappropriating this lost genuine identity.

We are not dealing here with a dividuality in the sense in which it is used in the most recent anthropological debate, 'in the sense of permeability, porosity, and openness' (Linkenbach, this publication; see also Smith 2012), nor with a duality resembling that of the libertines and the 'free thinkers' of the two following centuries. Underlying the latter was a deliberate doctrine of dissimulation and a distinction between different *personae*, roles and levels of communication in a complex stratification of levels. This meaning of *dividuality* could, for example, take concrete forms in the opposition between author and private individual, between the *persona* of an author of texts for a bourgeois audience and the *persona* of an author for an audience of 'insiders', or in a series of conscious dissimulation strategies

and literary practices such as a play with different pseudonyms by a single author, the use of fictitious letters or the composition of dialogues in co-authorship (see on this Mulsow 2012, 58–79 and in this publication). Furthermore, these practices, attested mostly in 17th-century Socinian and pre-Enlightenment, ‘rationalist’ Huguenot milieus, show how even the strategies of religious dissenters belonging to the ‘left wing of the Reformation’ – including confessional eclecticism and multiple conversion – had become more ‘aware’ in comparison with the undoubtedly more naïve religious fluidity of Venetian Anabaptists treated in the previous pages. The ‘double truth’ that is the expression of their world has nothing to do with the opposition between theology and philosophy, or between two different theological truths; it does not form an integral part of the structure of confessional states (but rather a foreign presence), and presupposes a complete identity of the individual only in the simultaneous presence of all their different identities.

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Martin Mulsow

Dividualisation and relational authorship: from the Huguenot *République des lettres* to practices of clandestine writing

1 Complementary questions

Relational authorship has recently been discussed in the contexts of literary studies and of the history of knowledge.¹ I would like here to bring these discussions together with another concept: that of dividuality. While relational authorship looks at the collaboration of different authors or actors in the creation of a single work, the theory of dividuality is concerned in particular with the division of a single author into distinct personae, which manifest themselves in different works, or indeed within a single complex text. On the one hand, a work which emerges from a network; on the other, a network in a sense *within* an author, or the author as a networked plurality. Each of these would seem to be a case for a social epistemology – at least where the works in question deal with aspects of knowledge – but the question arises: what is the relation between these two things? Are they complementary phenomena? Or are the questions and perspectives arising from these two approaches quite different to each other? This is what I want to examine here.

In doing so I will in fact look at texts that deal with knowledge, specifically texts which are largely philosophical and theological, and I will concentrate on the period around 1700. My approach to the Enlightenment will therefore take in a ‘long’ 18th century, which had already begun in the debates, often in French, from the 1670s onwards, with Simon, Le Clerc, Bayle, van Dale and Fontenelle.²

The Enlightenment developed not least out of theological disputes and debates critical of religion, and as the names mentioned here suggest, Huguenot thinkers were at the centre of the fray (Haase 1959). It may therefore be legitimate to focus on these writers, at least at the outset of this investigation. In a later

¹ See e.g. the conferences organized by Carlos Spoerhase and Erika Thomalla, ‘Werke im Netzwerk. Relationale Autorschaft im 18. Jahrhundert’, held in Berlin, 11–12.5.2017, and Bielefeld, 16–18.11.2017.

² See the still classical work by Hazard 2013, but also Israel 2001.

Note: Translated from German by David Finch.

part of this essay I will then make the transition, as seamlessly as possible, from instances of dividualisation to questions of relational authorship. I will consider the theoretical implications of a social epistemology of authorship throughout this essay, and especially towards the end.

2 Dialogised theology

As has been said, the most sophisticated combatants of the early modern *République des lettres* were Huguenots; their experience of emigration, especially after 1685, made them international in outlook, militant and quick to respond to new intellectual currents. The plurality of the situation, in terms of Cartesianism, Spinozism, Lockean empiricism, chiliasm, Socinianism and critical studies of the Bible, led – I suggest – to a ‘dialogised’ form of writing, and even to a splitting of authorial *personae*.

As is well known, the idea of ‘dialogism’ was introduced into literary theory by Mikhail Bakhtin, to address the ‘polyphony’ found in many novels of the modern era, from Rabelais to Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984). The concept has since become almost a commonplace – in contrast to the monological world of the Middle Ages, in which a single world view was largely predominant, Bakhtin sees in the ‘open Galileian world of many languages, mutually animating each other’ and of competing world views, a dialogism expressed in ambivalent and hybrid forms of language and in the linguistic variety of the characters. There arises in the novel an ‘interaction between different contexts, different standpoints, different horizons, different expressive systems of emphasis, different social languages’ (Mair 2015, 578f.).

The starkness of the opposition here between the medieval and the modern has been often criticised, but for the moment we will let it pass. More important, it seems to me, is the productive use Klaus W. Hempfer has made of this view for our understanding of the Renaissance dialogue (e.g. Hempfer 2002), a use that was not at the forefront of Bakhtin’s thinking (as his understanding of dialogism was not primarily that of the direct disposition of language in the dialogue form). But this approach brings new aspects to the fore, especially where the language of knowledge, of science and the humanities, is concerned: the Renaissance dialogue often addresses typical humanistic themes such as morality, politics and history, but also metaphysics and the philosophy of nature. If polyphony occurs here, one would conjecture that it is a direct reflection of the pluralised worldview of the early modern period (Mulso 2000; Müller, Österreicher and Vollhardt 2010). These dialogues set out competing viewpoints in the form of arguments, not without some rhetorical flourishes. What they also demonstrate

however is that in the 15th or 16th century it was not yet possible to give open expression to *all* competing viewpoints. While writers such as Lorenzo Valla or Poggio Bracciolini could present an Epicurean or a proponent of a free monetary economy as a figure within a dialogue, they were not free to identify openly with these positions (e.g. Schmitz 2004). Whether and to what extent real social networks and circles of debate were behind these dialogues, is a question I wish to, and must, leave open here. I want only to stress that the reader was left to draw his or her own conclusions, while the author disclaimed all liability, as a neutral moderator between divergent points of view (Mulsow 2007, 102–7). Renaissance dialogues therefore reflect on the one hand the beginnings of pluralisation, and on the other, concealed speech in an unfree context.

A field long closed to this form of dialogue was of course that of theology. Here no pluralisation was allowed – on the contrary, following the *de facto* pluralisation of the Reformation, which was experienced by some as a catastrophe, the different denominations were all the more concerned to ensure that dogmatic monologicity prevailed within their spheres of influence. But the new and urgent discussions of theological and exegetical questions, reinforced by critical philology, could not be stopped (see e.g. Van Miert et al. 2017). This is particularly clear in two cases, which touch on the area of clandestine literature: of texts which could only be distributed in manuscript copies, or which were printed in small numbers and kept hidden from the general public.

The first of these is well known – Jean Bodin’s *Colloquium heptaplomeres*, from 1596 (Bodin 1857; see Gawlick and Niewöhner 1996). The author is not identified by name in the text, which can be ascribed to the famous political theorist only by means of internal evidence. The text itself puts forward no identifiable and unequivocal position, rather, as the title tells us, it gives us a conversation between seven speakers: a Catholic, a Lutheran, a Calvinist, a Jew, a Muslim and two non-confessional figures, one of whom appears to be a kind of Deist, the other a kind of sceptical Naturalist. The exchange between these figures purports to promote tolerance, but some of the arguments of the last two figures are critical of religion and open to a reading that leads to more radical conclusions, conclusions that deny the continued justification of Christianity.

Much less well-known is a dialogue by Christian Francken from 1593, between a theologian and a philosopher. Francken was one of the many religious seekers after truth of the 16th century; he began as a Catholic and a Jesuit, became a Lutheran, slid from there to Antitrinitarianism and went to Poland. He later moved to Siebenbürgen, where the nonadorantist strain of Antitrinitarianism was in the ascendancy. And, from being an Antitrinitarian, Francken eventually – at least possibly – became an atheist. That is the case at any rate if he identified with the position of the sceptical-atheistic philosopher in his *Disputatio inter theologum et*

philosophum de incertitudine religionis Christianae. As with Bodin, this is not unequivocal. Francken leaves the question open, but the possibility of his atheism remains strong (Francken 1593; see Simon 2008).

I would therefore say that both Bodin and Francken are early cases of philosophical-theological dialogism. They remained exceptional for the moment, but by the second half of the 17th century at the latest, the epistemic situation had become so complex that dialogistic forms of writing took hold in theology, absorbing and expressing a polyphony of viewpoints.

This can be seen first, and even before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, at the Calvinist Academy of Saumur, where theological and classical studies were pursued in the tradition of Duplessis Mornay, Moysse Amyraut and Louis Cappel (Kretzer 1975). In 1674 at Saumur, Tanneguy Le Febvre, in his *Epistolae*, was the first to discuss philological questions in the form of a fictional exchange of letters (Ribard 2008). In 1681 the Arminian theology student at Saumur, Jean Le Clerc, took this as a model and, in his pseudonymous *Epistolae theologicae*, used fictional correspondents to present a range of mutually relativising theological positions.³ These letters surely reflect actual discussions between students at Saumur, relating to sceptical views on the Trinity, Cartesian philosophy, and historical and philological Bible criticism – there may be a network of participants in the background here too – but the point I want to make is that they are practising a new form of hypothetical writing.⁴ The theory of relational authorship takes a close interest in letter-writing networks, and all the more so when a number of letters are combined to make up a book.

The frame of *Epistolae theologicae* is provided by an anonymous (fictional) editor who presents himself as a friend of the – pseudonymous – Liberius a Sancto Amore, whose name adorns the title page. According to this editor, the texts contained in the work originated as *adversaria*, as notes and observations made while reading, and were then formulated as letters. Many of the views have an experimental status, says the editor: they have been expressed in private conversation in order to test them out ('saepe se expertum in familiaribus confabulationibus') (Le Clerc 1681, *praefatio*).

The 'letters' published within this framework are all written by Liberius, but are addressed to different recipients. The first letter, from August 1679, is to a 'Firminus Parrhasius', and develops its argument on the premise that Christ is coeternal with God the Father. It tests out a theory of the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ, which employs Cartesian concepts. But the letter which

³ On Le Clerc see Barnes 1938; Pitassi 1987.

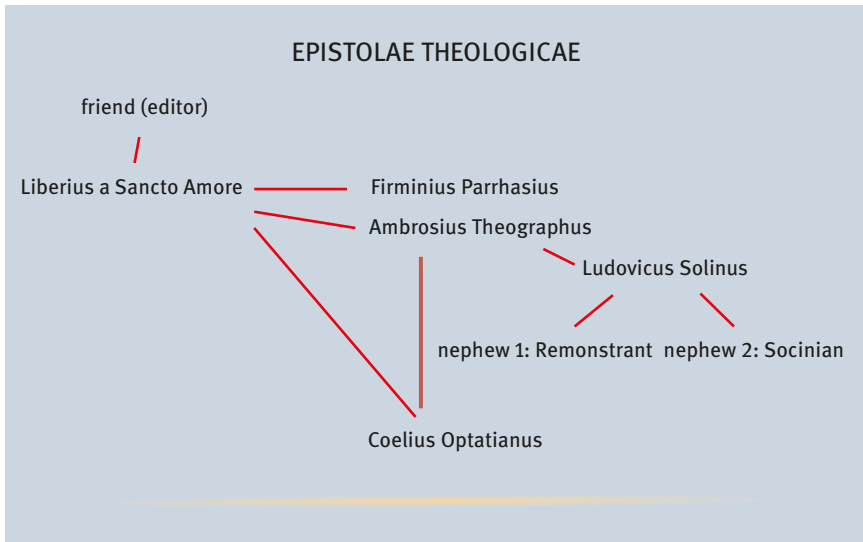
⁴ In the followings paragraphs, I adapt passages from a previous essay: Mulso 2005.

follows undermines precisely the premise on which the first letter is based. This second letter purports to have been written on New Year's Eve 1678 to 'Ambrosius Theographus', but is further framed and distanced by being solely an account of a 'Ludovicus Solinus', a friend of Theographus' uncle, who conducts a discussion, or comparison of views (a *collatio*), with two of his nephews, to whom he poses certain questions. This 'Solinus' is introduced as someone who has had to leave his home country and now resides elsewhere. It is almost as if one were being asked to see him as one of the Socinians who had been driven out of Poland. In any case, cultural transfer is built into this framing. The discussion between Solinus and his nephews is nothing less than a theological experiment *in vivo*: far removed from all theological debates, Solinus has instructed both nephews in Hebrew, Greek and Latin and then set them to read the Bible without any commentary. For three years they have studied entirely separately from each other. The question Solinus now poses is: what standpoint do they take on the question of the Trinity? One arrives at the position of the Reformed Church, the other at that of the Socinians. A dispute between the two brings no solution, and three friends brought in to arbitrate cannot decide on a victor.⁵ The moral of the story is therefore that if Scripture is so equivocal and unclear on this matter, we must be prepared to tolerate different opinions, and thus also those of the Socinians. The relational authorship of the positions, which is to an extent built into the text, is *equirelational* – the Reformed Church and Socinianism are equal in value. According to the *Epistolae theologicae*, the common ground in other questions – that God possesses all perfections, that He wishes to redeem mankind and that Christ died for this – suffices, alongside a shared morality, for a mutual acceptance.

The third letter, to a 'Coelius Optatianus', claims to have been written a little later, in February 1679. This Coelius has supposedly read Liberius' first two letters, at the home of 'Amicus'. Coelius wishes for a 'thorough explanation of the three *modi* of thought in the Godhead'. But Liberius must now admit to a difference in starting points in relation to his first letter. 'Before I had read the discussion, it was my view that the mystery of the Holy Trinity – which I assumed can be proved from Scripture – can be explained in this way, and I thought that it was therefore not necessary that I should write to my Solinus on this matter [...]' (Le Clerc 1681, 95f.). Now however, for Liberius, the given of the Scriptural guarantee of the Trinity is suddenly no longer secure. The rational reconstruction of the Trinity which follows has therefore a merely hypothetical character. This hypothetical doctrine presents a kind of psychological model of the Trinity:

⁵ On Socinianism and its relation to the Reformed Church see Daurgirdas 2016; Mulsow 2018, chapter 13. On the question of toleration, see Marshall 2006.

‘Although [God] is one, He can bring forth simultaneously any number of different sequences of thought, and therefore the persons in Him can be various. God thinking in a certain way is called the Father, in another way the Son, in another the Holy Spirit’ (Le Clerc 1681, 103). These are therefore the ‘*modi cognoscendi*’ of the ‘*series cogitationum*’: the ‘*modus*’ of the Judge (the Father), of the Mediator (the Son) and of the Comforter (the Holy Spirit).



Liberius praises this theory – which is perhaps inspired by Spinoza’s or Malebranche’s terminology – as not open to the charge of Sabellianism (as in this modalistic view the persons are consecutive and not side by side), and sees it therefore as a possible alternative to Socinianism: this standpoint is ‘as probable as the Socinian one’ and is consistent with ‘right reason’.

Hypothetical questions and considerations of probability are being weighed up here. The probabilism of the 17th century throws its shadows. If we examine more closely why Le Clerc in particular developed a dialogised form of this kind, we come upon the role of Erasmus of Rotterdam in this phase of the history of theology, and in this way the Renaissance dialogue is present once again. Le Clerc’s great edition of 1703–1706 of the works of Erasmus is only the late and external sign of this effect. Erasmus stands, as Stefano Brogi has said, for the combination of philological exactitude, liberal reasoning and rhetorical finesse (Brogi 2012). Perhaps, following Pocock’s ‘Machiavellian moment’, we can call this development of theological polyphony in texts by a single author the ‘Erasmian moment’.

3 The pluralisation of masks

When the Academy of Saumur was dissolved in 1685, complex argumentations, in which authors split themselves into a kaleidoscopic array of possible positions, were carried forward into exile, in particular in the Dutch Republic (Mulsow 2010). In 1687, Noel Aubert de Versé, a Socinian and friend of Le Clerc, presented in *Le Tombeau du Socinianisme*, – a merely ostensible refutation of Socinianism – the fictional letters of a ‘Basilius von Ankyra’ to one ‘Eudoxus’. In fact, the matter is even more complicated: the book is a seeming riposte to the *Le Protestant pacifique* by a Seigneur de la Guytonnière from 1684, a text which was in fact also written by Aubert de Versé. So the author is operating under different pseudonyms, playing them off against each other.⁶

Aubert de Versé is not an easy author to interpret, and was not, even for his contemporaries. He changes repeatedly back and forth between Protestantism and Catholicism; in Paris he collects his pension for reconversion but then returns to Holland. He is therefore greatly mistrusted by both sides. It is said that he will hire his pen to anyone who will pay him, and even his Protestant comrades in arms such as Pierre Bayle regard him with suspicion, despite the fact that he is in the forefront of the fight against Bayle’s close personal enemy Pierre Jurieu.

The most consistent element in Aubert’s writings is his Socinianism, or more precisely, his rejection of orthodox forms of the Trinity. This said, it seems to have been relatively unimportant to him whether he associated with liberal Catholics (with Gallicans and Oratorians), or with liberal Protestants. But as far as Socinianism was concerned, his writings show an attempt to bring together Arian positions, like those of his friend Christoph Sand, with Socinian viewpoints. At the same time, he brings these theological themes into contact with the new philosophical language of Cartesianism and Spinozism (Scribano 1988).

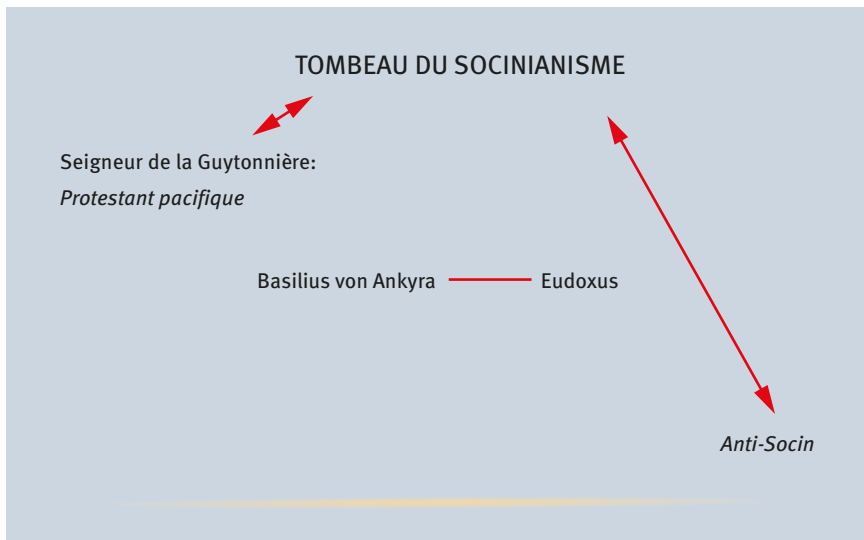
In this way, a game of deception and misdirection arises which is even more perplexing than Le Clerc’s already confusing *Epistolae theologicae*. We can say of Aubert that the theological dialogism demonstrated by Le Clerc is extended throughout his entire intellectual life as an author, and that in the pseudonymous disputing personae of his writings and his changes of confession he embodies the multiplicity of viewpoints circulating at the time.

In his *Le Tombeau du Socinianisme* Aubert uses, like Le Clerc, patristic-sounding names as cyphers for different hypothetical viewpoints. At the end of the book, he prints the already mentioned letter from one ‘Basilius of Ankyra’ to ‘Eudoxus’. This ‘Basilius’ expresses a textually critical view of the Bible, as did

⁶ On Aubert de Versé, see Morman 1987.

Le Clerc's 'Solinus'. 'Now to conclude this work', writes Aubert, 'I wish to include here a letter written to me by a friend, whom I shall call Basilius of Ankyra, on the subject of the Trinity [...]. Here we find a quite new hypothesis on the Prologue to the Gospel of St John, a view completely contrary to my own, but which so destroys my previous conception that I am seized by enthusiasm, and which on reflection compels me to say that this is not a hypothesis, but a truth which seems to me divinely inspired' (Aubert 1687, 169).

I cannot go into the detail of the theological discussion here, but it is probably clear that with Aubert, even more than with the dialogues of the Renaissance, a complex dialogism is at work. The author is torn this way and that between the diverse exegetical and dogmatic possibilities of thinking a doctrine of the Christian Trinity which no longer holds Christ to be co-original with the Father. He wants to give voice in his work to the ambivalence and indecision in relation to the possibilities, but at the same time he needs to give due consideration to a wide variety of interests, according to whether he wants to recommend himself to the Catholics or to the Protestants, whether he needs to camouflage his Antitrinitarianism as orthodox, or even, as he was forced to do in his later work *Anti-Socin*, to demonstrate the orthodoxy of his views by writing a retraction of his earlier works (Aubert 1692). Aubert squirms under this forced individualisation, while employing almost every trick in the book when it comes to 'Persecution and the Art of Writing'.⁷



⁷ See the well-known work by Leo Strauss 1959.

4 Dividualisation

A note on the idea of dividualisation may be useful at this point; I have already used the term repeatedly here to refer to the division of the persona of the author. The term is intended as counterpart to the term ‘individualisation’, not in order to deny the process of individualisation in the modern period in Europe, but to extend it and round it out. For what the idea of individualisation does not encompass, and even obscures, is the – occasional – internal pluralisation of the human being which occurs when persons are obliged to act differently on different levels (with multiple *personae*), or to adopt a stance in relation to positions of equal validity. As we have seen, this can lead to the formation of corresponding forms of text. I suggest the term ‘dividualisation’ to describe this phenomenon.

I have in mind here a theoretical discussion in anthropology, which (in response to Marcel Mauss’ essay on the notion of the person as ‘a category of the human mind’) has developed around Melanesian forms of personhood.⁸ Since about 1990, Marilyn Strathern has written of the ‘dividual personhood’, while the anthropologist of visual art Alfred Gell used the term ‘distributed personhood’.⁹ Strathern’s meaning is that Melanesians typically interact as composite beings. They are the product of gifts, contributions or separations from others; they form a relational multiplicity, in relation to other persons. Where, from a Western standpoint, an observer might see only people exchanging objects, from their own point of view they are exchanging parts of themselves as persons. Gell’s concern in this is to take the fact that personhood can be in a sense extended into objects, and to use it to deepen our understanding of art, not only Melanesian art, but also of phenomena in Western modern and contemporary art.

Two lessons can be drawn from this. The first is a certain scepticism as to the universal applicability of the concept of the individual. But the other is the possibility of adding to and broadening this concept, through the notion of ‘dividualisation’. The anthropological description becomes especially interesting when it is related to Western contemporary life: not only is it possible to dispute the necessity of the link between Western contemporary life and individualisation, but as we have seen, it is also possible conversely to assert the relevance of non-Western dividual personhood for the contemporary West. Mark Mosko has recently suggested that a key to Christian conversion experiences can be found in the ‘dividual person’ (Mosko 2010). He also contrasts this idea with that of ‘possessive individualism’,

⁸ See as well the introduction to this section.

⁹ See Strathern 1988; Wagner 1994; Gell 1998; Fowler 2004; Ulbrich and Jancke 2005, 32ff.; Rampley 2005.

a term coined by James Macpherson in 1962 in relation to the theories of Hobbes and Locke (Mosko 2013). Edward LiPuma goes on the offensive, suggesting that the model of dividual personhood could provide an impulse towards a concept of interpersonal freedom in contemporary societies, one which would include other people without tipping over into new forms of dominance (Li Puma 2000).

In using ‘dividualisation’ here as a term for a process of increasing internal pluralisation, in the sense of a habitual adoption of techniques to adapt to and withstand social and intellectual pluralisation and de-authorisation, I am not relying simply on importing Melanesian anthropology. We should not of course place too much weight on parallels with ‘dividual persons’ on the other side of the world; these parallels are weak, and are not much more than a stimulus to thought – but perhaps a useful one, as they allow us to see the other side not only of individualisation, but also of relational authorship. This is especially relevant when the networks, the relations – the multiplicity so to speak – shift to the interior of the single author.

5 Fictional or real Greeks?

It will of course be necessary to determine in each case exactly where the transitions lie between a merely epistemically intended dividualisation and dissolving of boundaries of the authorial persona, and the dividualisation of a real person as a strategy of dissimulation. Intellectuals such as Aubert de Versé were able without difficulty to pretend, against their true convictions, to reconvert to Catholicism, in order to travel to France to collect a pension, before returning to Holland and resuming their polemical activities. Such tactics reached their most extreme form in the case of Jean Aymon: Aymon was a Huguenot who wrote, for strategic reasons, a tract on the possible reconvergence of the Catholic and Protestant churches. In 1706 he gave out that he wished to reconvert, and obtained a passport to enter France, where he inveigled his way into the confidence of the Royal Librarian (Goldgar 1995, 174–80). He used this to purloin the manuscript of the Council of Jerusalem (1672) and remove it to Holland, intending to publish it in support of the Calvinist side in the dispute over the *Perpetuité de la foy de l’église*, concerning the continuity of the doctrine of the Eucharist from early Christian times onwards.¹⁰ This he did in 1708, with his *Monumens Authentiques De La Religion Des Grecs, et De La Fausseté De Plusieurs Confessions De Foi Des Chrétiens Orientaux*.

¹⁰ On this dispute see Zwierlein 2016, 124–42.

While the pseudonyms adopted by Aubert and Le Clerc were still those of fictional Greeks such as ‘Basilius of Ankyra’ and ‘Ambrosius Theographus’, Aymon now introduced a new twist. In purloining documents from the Greek Orthodox Church, his tactic was to make *real* Greeks speak for his cause. As in the documentation battles between the confessions a hundred years earlier, for instance between Goldast and Gretser (Mulsow 2007, 145–90), it was considered most effective to let the ‘res ipsa’ speak – the documents themselves, which were not so mutable and assailable as the differing theological positions. The *Monumens Authentiques* was not concerned with the question of the Trinity, but with that of the Eucharist, the Communion. Here the battle lines were drawn somewhat differently. On the one side were the Jansenists around Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, who had taken the field to demonstrate to the Crown their otherwise disputed Catholic loyalties, and on the other side were the Huguenots around Jean Claude, who questioned whether the Transsubstantiation had been a doctrine of the early Church. Against him, Arnauld and Nicole arrayed their huge work on *La Perpetuité de la foy*, in which they claimed to show on the basis of authentic documents that precisely this doctrine had been maintained throughout the whole course of Christian tradition since earliest times.

But thanks to the purloined codex Aymon was now able to produce letters from the Patriarch of Alexandria and Constantinople, Kyrillos Loukaris, whose dogma in relation to the Eucharist appeared decidedly Protestant in tone (Aymon 1708, 1–199).¹¹ This was in many ways more resounding as an argument than the ‘Basilius’ invented by Aubert, with his hypotheses of an early forgery of the Prologue to the Gospel of St John, for which he had no evidence. The network standing in this case behind the author, or rather publisher, Aymon, is a real if merely adapted one, that of the Patriarch Loukaris, a network with which Aymon was not personally acquainted at all, but which he had in a sense made his own, through his theft.

6 Relational authorship

Aymon’s case, which was discussed with great ambivalence in Huguenot circles, also shows the reverse side of the pluralisation of personae and authorship: in situations such as this, not only could one author be several persons, several authors could also work on and refine a single text. We move here from dividualisation to relational authorship. Between 1710 and 1716 for instance, Aymon and a few friends who were also freethinkers were occupied with preparing for publication the manuscript of a work of the radical Enlightenment, *Traité des*

¹¹ On Loukaris, see Hering 1968.

trois imposteurs. This tract was inspired by Spinoza and reinforced with ideas critical of religion originating with Hobbes, Vanini and others.¹² It is more of a compilation (an ‘unfixed text’¹³) than a stand-alone piece of writing and was probably cobbled together in the years before 1700 by a student or admirer of Spinoza (possibly Jean-Maximilien Lucas or Jan Vroesen) as a hard-hitting atheist polemic intended for a wide readership.

The manuscript had lain for some years in the library of the Rotterdam Quaker Benjamin Furly, a friend of John Locke and of many freethinking, mostly Huguenot intellectuals. The text was then discovered by a group of men which included Jean Aymon, as well as Jean Rousset and the publishers Charles Levier and Thomas Johnson. They decided to publish it in print. This was a highly audacious plan, as even in liberal Holland the publication of an atheist text was an almost suicidal undertaking. Despite this, Aymon and Rousset improved somewhat the style and language of the text, making it perhaps rather more incisive, and Levier did in fact print the work in 1719 under the title *Espirit des Spinoza*, though in only a small number of copies, which were sold ‘under the counter’.



Authorship was therefore relationally shared out: many heads were involved. We should distinguish between the voices passively present in the text, through their

¹² See the edition by Schröder 1994. On this work and its composition, see Berti, Charles-Daubert and Popkin 1996.

¹³ See Sabel and Bucher 2001.

inclusion in the compilation, such as Hobbes, Spinoza and Vanini; the compiler (Lucas); and the relational authors in the actual sense – Aymon, Rousset and Levier, the producers of the final text. They are ‘actually’ relational in the sense that they knew each other and acted together, with collective intentionality.

How was it that Aymon, who was after all a defender of the Protestant cause, had a hand in this undertaking? One reason was surely that Aymon, like Aubert, was an adventurer who relished taking part in dangerous games of this kind. One would need to be some kind of daredevil to carry out an undercover commando operation on the library of the King of France – and to polish the style of an atheist pamphlet. Another reason may be that Aymon’s dogmatic substance had begun to erode, as both a cause and a consequence of his changes of persona. To fight for the cause of the Protestants in Church politics was one thing, to believe in the letter of their dogma was another. There were in fact a number of intellectuals in the Netherlands who themselves no longer quite knew what to believe in any more. Whether they became sceptics, like Pierre Bayle, or simply concerned themselves with money and publishing success, like some booksellers, was no longer of prime importance. They found they had a taste for such little games as printing the text which was to become the most notorious work of the Enlightenment. Scholars have spoken of a ‘grey identity’ in relation to eroded intellectuals of this kind.

But what does Aymon’s participation mean here in the light of our interest in dialogism and multiple pseudonymity? It shows us a complementary phenomenon: not an author who divides himself into several personae, but a text which has several progenitors. Interest in phenomena of multiple authorship has been aroused only in very recent times, with the questioning of the category of the author itself and the development of the theory of social networks. We need not necessarily speak of *multiple* authorship, but can instead, as I have here already, use the concept of ‘relational authorship’. In doing so we join with the newer relational sociology¹⁴ of for instance Donati and Archer, who have explored the implications of the fact that in relations between persons – in networks – a variety of different reflexive references to a shared ‘we’ always play a part (Donati and Archer 2015). It is important to reconstruct historically such reflexive references, where groups of free-thinking intellectuals work together on writing a text, or views are pseudonymously advanced that can only be fully explained in relation to a shared cause. As I have stressed in the case of the *Traité des trois imposteurs*, ‘actual’ relationality and reflexive reference to a ‘we’ is only present where there is mutual acquaintance and reference by writers to each other.

14 See in general Emirbayr 1997.

With ‘unfixed’ texts which grow slowly and are laid down layer by layer, as new authors extend, manipulate and rewrite the text, the question is more complicated. But whatever the case, we must ask: what kinds of connections in what kinds of networks were decisive? Were the connections strong or weak? What kinds of concern for what kind of ‘we’ were present? What is the collective intentionality of a militant confessional or post-confessional grouping?¹⁵

7 Partially reflexive relationality

Let us turn to a case where, as with the *Traité*, several people work on a single text, but where there is clearly no reflexivity in the narrower sense – that is, no personal acquaintance between those responsible for the final text. I remain here in the field of clandestine literature, and in the period around 1700. The text known as the *Symbolum sapientiae* is an openly atheist work, written in the years around 1690, which advances its arguments on the basis of a strict – and crude – naturalism.¹⁶ The author may have been a Wittenberg lawyer, Georg Michael Heber, but we do not know this for certain, and there are only a few indications of this. The text was distributed in only a small number of handwritten copies, and therefore had hardly any effect, despite its undoubted philosophical quality. The atheism it puts forward is of a sceptical kind. For its legally trained author, the burden of proof lies with those putting the case for the existence of God, while numerous objections can be brought to bear against it.

There are in fact a number of variants of this clandestine manuscript, which contain extensive additions to the text. Textual comparisons allow us to identify the anonymous author of these changes as Johann Georg Wachter, another radical author of the early German Enlightenment. Wachter must have obtained a copy of the *Symbolum*, perhaps in the years following 1710. Spinozist that he was, he identified so strongly with the text that he empathetically inscribed himself into it. Wachter’s additions, which organically interpolate single words, half-sentences, and sometimes even whole passages into the flow of the argument, give the original text a somewhat differently nuanced orientation. The emphasis now lies rather more on a Socratic scepticism which is aware of its own limits, and on the hidden existence of the wise man who lives apart, unknown to society (Mulsow 2002, 241–7).

What has happened here? To what extent is the final clandestine text – a typical example of its kind – the product of relational authorship? Only in a

¹⁵ On collective intentionality see Searle 2011.

¹⁶ The edition edited by Canziani, Schröder and Socas 2000. See also Mulsow 2018, chapter 11.

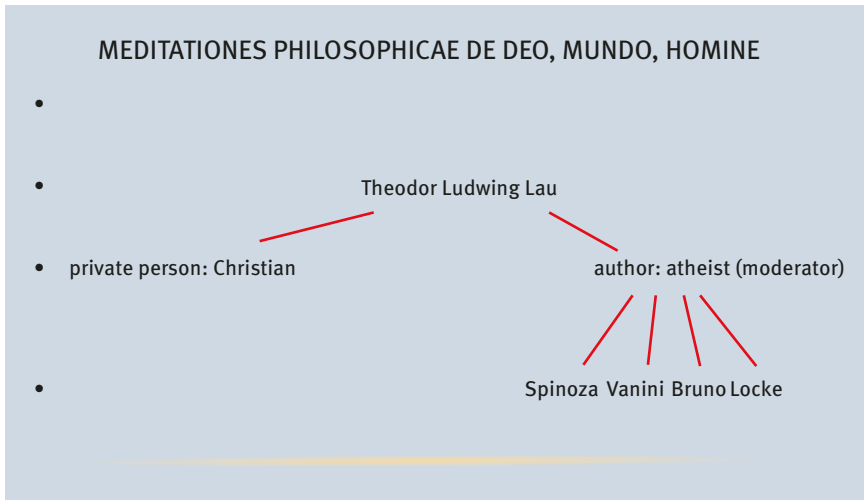
restricted sense, as a result of what I call clandestine ‘networks over time’ (Mulsow 2008; Mulsow 2014, 231). These are connections through which later radical, often isolated, authors align themselves with earlier thinkers who are often anonymous and therefore unknown to them by name, whose texts they acquire or transcribe and read intensively, so intensively that they sometimes even intervene in and extend the texts. There is reflexivity here in only one direction: the later partial author, in this case Wachter, identifies himself as part of a ‘we’ with the earlier author, Heber, but without the earlier author being able to respond, either being dead or knowing nothing of the later writer.

8 Dividualisation and *personae* in natural law

In conclusion let us examine how the different forms of dialogism, of dividualisation and of relational authorship relate to other types of division – in particular those motivated by natural law, which we also find around 1700, and which theorise the division of a person into several functions or roles. This is a line which extends from Samuel Pufendorf through Adam Smith to modern times (Kobusch 1993; Mulsow 2012, 58–79). Did the breaking down of boundaries between different schools of philosophy and religious confessions after 1685, in particular the boundaries surrounding Socinianism, lead to a blurring of the boundaries around the personhood of the author?

The relation between theological dialogism, as we find it in Le Clerc and Aubert, and dividuality based in natural law has not been remarked on up till now. But it is quite clear. In defence of his own freethinking books, Theodor Ludwig Lau, a student of Thomasius, invoked Pufendorf’s concept of the *persona moralis* in the sense of a separation of roles. In his *Meditationes philosophicae de Deo, Mundo, et Homine* of 1717 Lau also saw himself, like the editor of the *Epistolae theologicae*, as a moderator, presenting various hypotheses for consideration, or as a theatre director, bringing different works to the stage without pronouncing in favour of any particular one. Where Le Clerc had spoken of speculative intellectual games within a small circle (‘saepe se expertum in familiaribus confabulationibus’), Lau spoke similarly of proposals and suppositions ‘merely problematically expressed’, i.e. purely for the purposes of discussion (Lau 1719, preface). For Lau, reaction to pluralisation and retreat beyond the reach of legal or theological liability are two sides of the same coin, as they had been for some Renaissance freethinkers. That Pufendorf’s social theory now offered a language in which to describe this was welcome, but not actually necessary for the formation of a writing strategy.

Lau is certainly a compiler, like his slightly earlier counterpart in Berlin, Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch, an assiduous reader of Le Clerc's *Epistolae theologicae*.¹⁷ Both writers practised relational authorship only in the restricted sense that they put together different positions in the manner of a puzzle. This is undoubtedly dialogism, in the form of eclecticism, but is not explicitly presented as a mixture of opposing viewpoints. The dialogism emerges rather more implicitly; we notice it when it becomes clear that, with both Lau and Stosch, the eclectic mix of arguments from Locke, Gassendi, Spinoza, Toland or Thomasius is not really consistent. From a systematic philosophical standpoint each of these books is a disaster – bad amateur philosophy. But both authors insist that their texts are to be read more as reading notes, as a kind of *Reader's Digest* of positions which are naturalistic and critical of religion, and which seem to them worth discussing. Dialogism is to be seen here more as a retraction of claims to authorship, as a moderator's citation of the origins of the ideas presented. The actual dividuality of a figure such as Lau can be discerned rather in the distinction between a (supposedly) private Christian persona and an atheistic authorial persona, where this authorial persona is in fact the disclaimed one of the *Reader's Digest* compiler. It is only here that Lau employs Pufendorf's concept of different *personae morales* or roles, and argues that, even though as a 'weak' author he sets out a panorama of heterodox positions, as a private man he can still go to church like a good Christian (Lau 1719, § 2; see Mulsow 2012, 67ff.).



17 For Stosch's use of the *Epistolae*, see Mulsow 2018, chapter 13.

That is as may be, but the connection was established at any rate between the division of roles, dividuality, eclecticism and dialogism. We should remember that dialogism in the context of scholarship does not produce a ‘wild’ polyphony, such as Bakhtin found in Rabelais’ texts, but one which is highly controlled, tactical and precisely calibrated. This is how we should also see the dividuality of authors such as Le Clerc, Aubert or Lau: it is a very precisely considered dividuality that takes into account a hundred different circumstances, and encompasses all shades from the innocent to the criminal – as with Aymon.

This brings me to my conclusion. In the light of what we have reconstructed here, Søren Kierkegaard’s strategy, in the 1840s, of making various pseudonyms in his writing speak against each other, in order to force the reader existentially to declare his position (Nun and Steward 2015), is actually an almost anachronistic readoption of the old pseudonymity-games from the confessional confrontations of the 17th century. As we know, in *Either/Or*, a fictional editor, ‘Victor Eremita’, presents first the papers of an aesthete ‘A’, also containing a ‘Seducer’s Diary’ which is merely published by A, and then the papers and letters of an ethicist ‘B’, which respond to A. Other pseudonyms appear in other works by Kierkegaard: in *Repetition*, a recluse named ‘Constantin Constantius’ debates with a ‘young person’, while *Fear and Trembling*, which appeared at the same time, is supposedly written by a ‘Johannes de Silentio’. *The Concept of Anxiety* is attributed to a ‘Vigilius Haufniensis’, the *Philosophical Fragments* to a ‘Johannes Climacus’. It is true that the early Romantics around Friedrich Schlegel had been the first to lay the groundwork, with their theory of irony, for Kierkegaard’s distancing techniques (Strohschneider-Kohrs 1960), and in the 19th century the pluralisation of the *persona* was no longer by any means the only possible way to respond to the pluralisation of world-views. In fact, we can say that a central aspect of the history of theory in the 18th century consisted in responding to the dilemma of absolute claims to truth in a pluralised epistemic situation, and using concepts of tolerance, eclecticism and the privatising of religion to offer ways of thinking which mark a new stage in the structure of social semantics.¹⁸

But for Kierkegaard these adjustments were unsatisfactory. He saw them as a levelling of Christianity, which was now merely ‘tepidly’ practised alongside bourgeois existence in a way that no longer had any bearing on the individual. He therefore strove for a renewed intensification of the claim to truth, no longer on a

¹⁸ For structural Shifts like this see above all Luhmann 1980–1995; for a ‘communication reform’ already around 1700 see Gierl 1997.

dogmatic level, but conceived of as a commitment for the subjective existence.¹⁹ The result however was a reprise of some of the paradoxes of the early modern period. Perhaps this is why what Kierkegaard practised reminds us so strongly of Le Clerc's *Epistolae theologicae*. Kierkegaard's role as a protagonist of modern individualisation is undisputed. Should we not therefore also recognise the early adventurers of theological dialogism as protagonists of this kind? As protagonists of an individualisation through individualisation? And should we not use the theories of relational authorship and of epistemic networks to pay closer attention to the networks around the texts, the networks around the authors and the networks in the authors?

I have not discussed here 'normal' networks between authors and their publishers, or authors and their correspondents, nor large-scale learned works such as Vincent Placcius' *Theatrum anonymorum*, which could not have been compiled without the collaboration of a large number of scholars – as Placcius himself says in his subtitle: 'from contributions and their comparison by learned men throughout Europe' (Mulsow 2007, 217–45). It is perhaps an irony of history that Placcius required a whole relational network of collaborators to trace those I am concerned with here: the multiple personae in Placcius' title engraving, shown as if dangling from the ceiling on a washing line.

I have been concerned here only with more 'acute' cases of relational authorship, where theologians faced with an accelerating pluralisation of world views felt they had no other option than to depict the whole complex network of mutually undermining positions in a single book; or where 'fluid' intellectuals tried to shake off their persecutors through tactical changes of pseudonym, while remaining on the lookout for new possibilities to reposition themselves; lastly, where underground authors had no sooner got their hands on a clandestine manuscript than they had added their own writing to it, and sometimes published it as well.

As we have seen, a relational analysis of these authors must address the whole complexity of the intellectual situation, for without it, these 'hommes pluriels' (Lahire 1998) would not have emerged. This may be a special case from the point of view of literary studies, but I would point out that it is often precisely the 'acute' cases, the cases where the extraordinary is the norm, the difficult cases, where the structures of a phenomenon are revealed with particular clarity.

¹⁹ See the contribution of Matthias Engmann to this section.

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Matthias Engmann

Disunited identity. Kierkegaard: traces towards dividuality

1 Introduction

In Kierkegaard the self has a dissonant structure. The self is not only a relation of different relation-poles but also a relation related to itself (see the famous definition of the self in *Sickness unto Death*). That implies, besides other points, that the self is simultaneously related to the external and the inner reality: a conglomerate of one's own subjective actuality including the surrounding world, socialisation, personal actions, body, thinking, normative values (ethics), (possible) religious convictions etc. Relating all that together, therein lies self-awareness. Vigilius Haufniensis, the pseudonymous author of *The Concept of Anxiety*, names it 'self-consciousness' (SKS 4, 443/KW 8, 143¹), i.e. the consciousness of the self (as embodiment of the person's subjective actuality). It represents self-reflexivity and the ability to evaluate one's own possibilities, actions, and convictions in life. In other words: the self is a multilayered and self-reflected web (or set) of relations.

However, when it comes to the systematic examinations of being oneself or how self-identity is characterised in Kierkegaard, the secondary literature gives almost exclusively a line of interpretation in which Kierkegaard is considered as a philosopher who develops an understanding of identity as 'unity'. This perspective on Kierkegaard has its own justification insofar the terminology and argumentation Kierkegaard uses and develops (especially in his pseudonymous works) often implies 'continuity', 'wholeness', and/or 'completeness'.

This article takes another stance. The aspect of identity will be examined in the light of 'dividuality', which is understood here as the multiplicity of heterogeneous and juxtaposed self-views in the individual. The perspective is, therefore, to look at the subjectivity of the individual and his/her self-understanding; thus the following explanations offer an interpretation of subjectively recognised identity in its hermeneutic structure and existential instantiation.

Firstly, I will discuss identity and its conditions by combining the category of becoming and the social embeddedness of the individual.² Hereby, I refer to the

1 For the citation of Kierkegaard's writings, see the references.

2 I need to emphasise here that this article looks at the 'social' foremostly as an immanent and important *structural* aspect of one's self-relation.

pseudonymous voices of Johannes Climacus (*Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*) and Judge Wilhelm (*Either-Or*). Secondly, I will show how the Pseudonyms of Kierkegaard's literary production themselves give an example of a multilayered self-view of the individual. Accordingly, this article looks at existential self-awareness by considering both the literary form and philosophical content of Kierkegaard's work.

2 Existential becoming and social embeddedness

In opposing the philosophy of idealism, Kierkegaard offers a philosophy of the *concrete* individual. Johannes Climacus, for example, develops the category of 'concrete thinking' (e.g. *SKS* 7, 303/*KW* 12.1., 332), which is understood as self-reflexivity that considers one's concrete embeddedness into the world. For the purposes of this article, two aspects of this embeddedness are most important: the becoming and the social embeddedness of the individual.

2.1 Becoming

Johannes Climacus is the pseudonymous voice in Kierkegaard which discusses *Dasein* or existence from an ontological perspective of becoming, which has to be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, becoming means to 'become subjective'³ which implies not only an instantiation process of existential actuality as *increasing self-awareness*, but also a *becoming new* by looking in new and different ways on the already existing personality. On the other hand, becoming includes the constant becoming of the world, which implies *constant change and unpredictability*.⁴ As long as the individual is part of the world, he/she is also changing.

From an existential and, therefore, subjective perspective, both understandings need to be combined. The individual recognises him/herself by considering the facts of change and uncertainty. It implies that being oneself (identity) is withdrawn from any kind of descriptive objectification and/or factual stabilisation. The self is not a fixed actuality. Increasing self-awareness, which is intended by

³ See the *Postscript*, part two, section two, chapter one. For a short discussion, see Dalferth 2006, 242f.

⁴ 'The perpetual process of becoming is the uncertainty of earthly life, in which everything is uncertain' (*SKS* 7, 85/*KW* 12.1, 86).

Climacus, has to be seen, then, as a process of always changing views of oneself. Consequently, identity dissolves in the fluidity of change.

One the one hand, Kierkegaard does of course not emphasise such conclusion, because of his permanently stressed point of self-decision.⁵ However, on the other hand, we will see that the immanent interpretation of Kierkegaard's thought underlines the structural importance of this conclusion.

2.2 Social embeddedness

Kierkegaard's philosophy of existential concreteness implies a distinct awareness in the individual of how he/she becomes the person he/she is. The conditions of actual self-awareness are, firstly, social embeddedness, and, secondly, how the individual interprets him/herself out of this social embeddedness. By that, Kierkegaard gives, especially in *Either-Or*, the first suggestions of a sociology of identity, almost 60 years before Georg Simmel. However, regarding the first point, Judge Wilhelm notes, that the self 'is not an abstract self [...], but a concrete self which stands in living interaction with these determinate surroundings, these conditions of life, this order of things. The self which is the aim is not just a personal self, but a social, a civic self' (SKS 3, 250/EO, 553⁶).

Like George Herbert Mead, Wilhelm does not underline the idea of entelechy for the individual. The self appears as fundamentally relational. Every self-relation is intertwined with the society in which the person is located. That implies, firstly, that the individual is confronted with a number of ideas and narrations of what it means to be oneself,⁷ through which he/she interprets his/her own person. (This is important for our discussion of the pseudonyms.) Secondly, it implies that the inner and the external worlds of the particular person are always entangled; thus the self becomes an expression of a singularly developed participation in the surrounding community and cultural contexts. It means, on the one hand, that character traits are always an expression of socialisation.⁸ On the other hand, it might

5 Beside the long explanations in *Either-Or*, part two, we can read in the *Postscript*: 'Through the decision in existence, an existing person [...] has become what he is. If he sets aside, [...] he has lost himself and must start from the beginning' (SKS 7, 443/KW 12.1, 489).

6 On *Either-Or* I use the translation by Alastair Hannay; see the references.

7 '[F]or instance, cultural structures such as educational, political, religious, and economic institutions offer various ideas about selfhood. Thus, there are a variety of different possibilities of selfhood that compete with each other for the attention of each person' (Jøthen 2014, 50).

8 The individual 'has these abilities, these passions, these inclinations, these habits subject to these external influences, [...] influenced thus in one direction and thus another' (SKS 3, 249f./EO, 552).

imply, more generally, that the self is fully determined by the external world. But such a perspective thwarts Wilhelm's understanding of freedom as the capability of choosing between alternatives and possibilities in life as the basis of choosing the self. (Wilhelm takes hereby an ethical stance; only those possibilities are worth including in one's self-view which express and relate the individual to the obligations of socially practiced humanity.) However, although the individual can choose between alternatives of action in self-becoming, the individual is also determined by all the alternatives and possibilities he/she does not consciously choose in life. That gives, thirdly, a picture of one's self-determination. The self needs to be seen always as a heterogeneous expression of an actively willed development of choices and, at the same time, as a passively occurring determination by the imposing and impinging external reality with which the individual is confronted. This emphasises, fourthly, the aspect of contingency: not only in the sense of uncertainty and coincidence, but also in the concrete sense of historical contingency. The self is determined by the historical-political point of time, the topographical place, and the social position (class) the person is born into (it is no coincidence that Wilhelm characterises the self as a 'civic self'). From an existential perspective, the individual has to deal with that historic contingency. If the individual wants to understand its own identity, it has to deal with its socio-historical givenness of identity.

2.3 Contingency and self-choice

If we focus more on contingency and relate it to the self-awareness of the individual, then it is important to consider how the individual relates him/herself to his/her *own* past, present, and future (see also Engmann 2017, 162f.). From such biographical point of view, the future is a concrete expression of contingency. The single person does not know what will happen; the future includes in its ambiguity the stabilisation as well as the loss of the current self-being. Such unpredictability also applies to the past, since it too was full of socially impacted possibilities. The biographical self is, therefore, just one emerged possibility out of different possibilities of self-being. The present represents this possibility in its actuality which is furthermore only a transition into the possibilities of future.

Thereafter, the biographical self is characterised by an openness of possibilities. However, at the same time, the self is precisely that particular and definite self it became through its socialisation. Having such *inter-esse* between openness and cohesion of the self in mind, it is important for our discussion when Judge Wilhelm notes, '[T]he self [...] contains an infinite multiplicity inasmuch as it has a history, a history which he acknowledges identity with himself. [...] [H]e is only the one he is, with this history' (SKS 3, 207/EO, 518). Out of all the possibilities

of how his/her own biography could have been, the individual has to take the standpoint that the factually emerged biography needs to be taken as basis for his/her own identity; thus the individual *relates and positions* him/herself to his/her concretely experienced socio-cultural embeddedness, and, therefore, to all the impacts which have an influence on his/her own self-view(s). The individual chooses, then, its being in all its contingency,⁹ and chooses, therefore, its own self-acquisitions from the socio-cultural environment¹⁰; it chooses ‘absolute continuity with the reality one belongs to’ (SKS 3, 237/EO, 541). The individual takes, thereby, responsibility for what he/she became,¹¹ even though the individual has no full control over what he/she became. And precisely by that, the individual recognises the actuality of manifold possibilities in life and keeps that awareness of potentiality as basis for its own self-view¹²: that it can ‘become something else and more’ (SKS 7, 122/KW 12.1, 130).

In the light of contingency, self-choice describes a process in which the individual ‘produce[s] himself’ (SKS 3, 239/EO, 543) by becoming aware of his/her dependency and potentiality. To say it in dialectical terms: the individual chooses, in his/her givenness, the openness of self.

2.4 Self-interpretation

By taking responsibility for socio-cultural self-determination, our interpretation implies that the individual subjectively *identifies* him/herself with the external impacts and influences on the own person. The conditions for such a subjective creation of identity are the distinct perception and retroactive interpretation of the own person in time. This does not mean that the individual reacts only passively. Through self-interpretation, the individual gives his/her personality a contour. The hermeneutic process of self-understanding implies then, that the individual traces *and* shapes the development of personality by embracing *and* negotiating

9 ‘Everyone can, if he wants, become a paradigm man, not by wiping out his contingency but by remaining in it and ennobling it. But he ennoble[s] it by choosing’ (SKS 3, 249/EO, 552).

10 ‘The individual thus chooses himself as a diversely determined concretion [...]’ (SKS 3, 240/EO, 543).

11 ‘The individual is [...] aware of himself as this definite individual, with these aptitudes, these tendencies, this instinct, these passions, influenced by these definite surrounding, as this definite product of a definite outside world. But in becoming self-aware in this way, he assumes responsibility for it all’ (SKS 3, 239/EO, 542).

12 ‘[H]e chooses himself as a product; [...] As a product he is pressed into the forms of reality, in the choice he makes himself elastic, he transforms all of his outwardness into inwardness’ (SKS 3, 239f./EO, 543).

the perceived values, roles, and self-narrations. By taking the thoughtful perception and reception of his/her own personality seriously, the individual discovers consciously and productively the surface and the hidden parts of his/her own being, and confronts him/herself with both the trustworthy and shameful character traits of the own personality. To deal with such unavoidable multiplicity truthfully defines self-responsibility regarding the hermeneutics of self-understanding. The individual reaches, then, honest and upright self-acceptance.

Such self-acceptance is not to be confused with equanimity since the constant actuality of becoming prevents any kind of finished self-understanding. This is an important point. As long as life is ongoing, the person is constantly in the progression of time and gets confronted with external reality and inner actualisations, thus the person's own self-understanding is never finished. Insofar as identity depends on the subjective perception of life, the individual has to recognise a constant possibility of change. Such correlation between life-perception and the consciousness of self-change emphasises the process of self-understanding necessarily more as a process of *self-discovering* than of self-determining. By that, one's self-understanding is based on a constant learning in which the individual acquires the own self through self-discovery. Such self-learning does not only connect the individual more closely to him/herself but expresses and remains as an existential striving for which Johannes Climacus notes, '[T]he continued striving is the consciousness of being an existing individual, and the continued learning the expression of the perpetual actualization, which at no moment is finished as long as the subject is existing' (SKS 7, 117/KW 12.1, 122).

Finding identity is, hereby, an active search in which the individual becomes an observer of itself (and its surroundings) and interacts hermeneutically with the overlapping self-aspects and -narrations. As observer of itself, the individual is part of the observed system that changes by the sheer fact of observing and the involved intentions. By that searching, the individual's identity is changing the result. In other words, the identity recognized through a conscious/deliberate self-perception is different from the self-awareness of a non-searching individual. The immanent contingency of the searching process itself shows that identity is always a process with open ends and indefinite results.

If the individual takes the conscious stance that permanent becoming and openness characterise the development of the socially and culturally determined self, he/she is confronted with an ongoing epistemic lack of self-transparency. Identity emerges only through its ongoing self-discovery and actual implementation by the becoming individual, which, by that, never can reach an 'Archimedean point' overlooking the whole personality. Therefore, the individual always has to deal existentially with the expected *and* unexpected, from the external

world as well as from his/her own 'inner world'. Existential self-awareness always includes the negative. One way to handle such lack of self-transparency is the constant negotiation between the external impacts on the own person and one's self-hermeneutical processes, thus all the socio-cultural and personal impacts on oneself have to be balanced out.¹³ Self-awareness and self-understanding occur then as a continuous adding of self-knowledge and simultaneously as a constant denying of what the individual might know about him/herself. By that, the self appears as *palimpsest*, i.e. a multilayered interpretation of what the person is and becomes,¹⁴ which implies furthermore that the individual embodies this multilayered interpretation and interprets such embodiment at the same time; thus one's self-relation occurs as a constant re-interpretation of (lived) self-interpretations.

This point becomes very clear, if we look at the biographical dimension of identity creation. As long as the individual is socially embedded, which includes for Wilhelm also the 'family' (*SKS 3, 207/EO, 518*), he/she is confronted with different stories of him/herself, also from that part of the past of which the individual has no concrete memory. But as long as these stories are reconstructed through the memory of the ones who are narrating them, the individual is confronted with fragments of memory and interpretations. From the existential standpoint of becoming subjective, the individual has to relate him/herself to these interpretations, which purport to understand his/her personality, by interpreting them. This is, of course, also the case in terms of one's own memory, which is always fragmented, reconstructed, coloured by emotions, interpreted. There is no objectivity in memory. To relate subjectively to one's own memories for self-understanding, turns out always as a process of self-interpretation-interpretation.

13 There is a short passage in *Either-Or* in where Judge Wilhelm proposes a striving for self-harmony. 'The person who has chosen and found himself [...] has himself as specified in all his concretion. He has himself, then, as an individual who has these abilities, these passions, these inclinations, these habits subject to these external influences, and who is influenced thus in one direction and thus another. He has himself, then, as a task in a way in which the task in essentials is that of ordering, tempering, kindling, repressing – in short bringing about a proportionality in the soul, a harmony that is the fruit of the personal virtues' (*SKS 3, 249f./EO, 552f.*).

14 Edward F. Mooney underlines this understanding of identity too: 'We can take the self that's found or received as a fluid mix of capacities and aspirations and convictions, of relationships and roles, of character traits and sensibilities, more or less in and out of environing strands of culture and convention' (Mooney 2002, 218).

3 Pseudonyms

From a subjective point of view, personal identity is a multilayered structure of narrations, interpretations, and interpretations of self-narrations and –interpretations: unfinished, never fully transparent, and always impacted by the diverse reality of the individual. Even though the self is, therefore, determined by the socio-cultural context, one’s self-interpretation(s) is not meant to create finished/stable self-image(s) (for oneself and/or the public sphere). The important existential point above all, is to take the personal stance of subjective openness to the openness of the self. That implies simultaneously the awareness of potentiality, the focus on the discovery of the constantly emerging personality, and the awareness that existence is always an interpretation of life-and-self-perception. To conclude in short terms, however, identity is characterised as an *open self-narration*. The interesting point now is that Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous production gives an emblematic example for that. The guiding question is how the individual becomes aware of him/herself, if he/she is confronted with the pseudonymous works. The answer will help us to concretize the structure of subjectively recognized identity. The perspective on the pseudonyms I will take does not examine the poetic role of Kierkegaard’s literature, but looks instead at its existential function.

3.1 Pseudonymity and existential appropriation

In Kierkegaard’s opposition to the philosophy of idealism and its aim to explain the wholeness of the ‘world’ by systematising it thoroughly, he not only implements a philosophy of the concrete individual but presents the subject of concreteness in forms of self-narrations (and not systematisations¹⁵): his pseudonyms.

The relation between Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms can be interpreted foremostly in two ways. Firstly, the pseudonyms are authors within an author: simply different fictional perspectives and positions on the matter of existence and/or juxtaposed approaches to life and its possibilities. The *person* Kierkegaard represents, then, a transcendental subject unifying an array of different texts (see e.g. Adorno 2003, 20). Secondly, Kierkegaard and his fictional pseudonyms are separate writers. The (not very detailed) individualities of the pseudonyms embody various stances on existence by their poetic actuality. This appears firstly in the pseudonyms’

¹⁵ Of course, books like *The Concept of Anxiety* or the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* have a strong tendency of systematisation, but no one should overlook the inherent gaps in their systematisations and the constant performative change between systematic language and narrative passages. See Engmann 2017, 81–95.

self-descriptions, and secondly in their responding to their fictional existence as earnestly and ironically as if they lived concretely. The *name* Kierkegaard becomes, then, one more pseudonymous personality (see e.g. Hagemann 2001, 69).

However, Kierkegaard's communicative aim regarding his pseudonyms lies in his understanding that the idea of human existence inherently implies the interpretation and presentation of its possibilities (see Deuser 1985, 75). In this regard, the reader of the pseudonyms gets confronted with manifold perspectives and positions on how to deal with existence. (This is mirrored by the social narrations which tell the individual how to be oneself.) The textual presentation helps the individual to understand his/her own life-situation, how to read and relate to the world and oneself.¹⁶ The artificial concreteness of the pseudonyms supports that existential effect. Fictionality opens up the possibility of dramatising the inner sphere, and engaging the reader by dramatising the existential thought. On the one hand, the reader mirrors him/herself in the pseudonyms, i.e. one has the impression of finding sides of one's own personality in the pseudonym's descriptions. On the other hand, the reader recognises (unexpected) possibilities of the self. In both perspectives the reader becomes subjectively involved in the intended existential process of thought through an opening up of the reader's frustrations and curiosities; thus the usage of pseudonyms gathers the reader's imaginative capacities and focuses them on the important matter, the complex reality (see Mooney 2013, 206).

For a better understanding we have to consider the fields of existential appropriation and (Socratic) maieutics. Both encourage the reader's free response across a range of affect and content. The reader's own reflection – on the presented existential situation in the context of someone else (the pseudonym) – impacts retroactively the own stance to him/herself: namely by finding new perspectives on and positions to the given life. Existential appropriation is a process to *increase self-awareness* and to *become new* by actualising one's own possibilities, initiated by a guiding example. However, such guidance ultimately needs to be left behind since appropriation is not imitation but a personal articulation of what is read, without actually repeating it. Self-appropriation is an 'act of self-activity' [*Selv-virksomhedens Akt*] (SKS 7, 222/KW 12.1, 244) and implies the autonomy to take a critical position (to the text) with the aim of actualising the *own* self-being.

¹⁶ If the one reads, for example, Constantin Constantius, the pseudonymous author of *Repetition*, then he/she can read the following lines: 'I cannot rise above myself. I cannot find the Archimedean point' (SKS 4, 57/KW 6, 186). Constantin mentions here the important point that was made above. The reader becomes confronted with an idea of existing, which implies a never finished and in-transparent self-understanding.

3.2 Hermeneutics of openness

In the process of personal appropriation, the reader interprets (in a self-reflexive manner) Kierkegaard's interpretations of 'existence' as presented in juxtaposed narrations of poetic individuals and their dialogue.¹⁷ As long as the pseudonyms embody existential possibilities, the reader reaches hermeneutically only possibilities of possibilities of understanding. The reader not only constructs his/her own interpretation of an open narration of 'existence', Kierkegaard intends that particular effect by the pseudonymous form of the presentation of the content. The reader's confrontation with the pseudonymous production contains, then, a specific retroactive effect: the reader recognises his/her own interpretative existence, unattainable in its full potentiality of meaning; an important point we made above.

To support this point, we have to consider firstly, that inner differences characterise the pseudonymous production. The presentation of various viewpoints on existence embodies talk about the same issues in different contexts and situations. Hence, the reader is always confronted with the matter of existence, but in the way of 'heterogeneous thought worlds' (Poole 1997, 159). Each pseudonym talks about existence in a context-dependent manner, which implies that all the given and verbally identical concepts (like 'the ethical', 'inwardness', 'truth', 'faith' etc.) have to be read and understood out of their differences. If the reader is to interpret 'existence' for him/herself, it has to be done out of the specific situation and context of the considered pseudonym. Consequentially, there is no univocal meaning of words, which impacts furthermore the existential appropriation of the reader. The various presented meanings provide a hermeneutics at hand which opens up the horizon of understanding; thus the reader sees him/herself in the light of multiplicity and potentiality.

Another important point emerges from the relationality of the pseudonyms. For our discussion here, it is less important that the pseudonyms are fictional representations of individuals who are always engaged in world-relations.¹⁸ If the reader wants to understand him/herself *through* the pseudonyms, he/she has to consider his/her own cultural and social relations. However, more important is the dialogical structure of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous production. The fictional personalities are not isolated islands of existence-interpretations. They are entangled by commenting on each other. Therefore, the contextualised hermeneutics

¹⁷ In the following I will consider only argumentative points which are related to Kierkegaard's pseudonymity. For a different perspective regarding the hermeneutic status of Kierkegaard's terminology, see Engmann 2017, 81–9.

¹⁸ See, for example, Climacus' self-description: Engmann 2017, 100–8.

of each pseudonym open up to a multilayered and intersectional palimpsest of added, denied, and corrected meaning. Such complex dialogue includes possible perspectives, positions, and attitudes of the reader who interprets the pseudonymous writings. From the standpoint of existential appropriation, the reader is already and always part of the pseudonyms' dialogue and thereby involved in the palimpsestical narration of 'existence'.

If the individual discovers him/herself by reading the pseudonyms, he/she recognises not only the openness of self-interpretation but also its embeddedness in already existing ways of understanding the meaning of life and self.

3.3 Disunited identity

If we consider now that *one* person created the pseudonyms as different perspectives and positions (on the same issue), the latter then represent the contradictory sides of that person, corresponding on and fighting with each other. The pseudonymous production shows, on the existential level, the complex web of inner conflicts of every living person (see Carlisle 2006, 36f.): that no one is fully consistent. Kierkegaard gives an emblematic example for all the contingencies, ruptures, breaks, gaps, more developed sides, suppressed and restrained parts etc. of one's own personality, which appears then – hermeneutically and structurally – as an *open unity*.

If the personality is (systematically) an unfinished *palimpsest*, the self-appropriating individual has to resist existentially the temptation of avoiding contradictions. Such kind of rejection and/or process of harmonisation of one's own personality would undermine complexity and the sheer fact of reality, which is never a simplifiable point of concern. Embracing the openness and recognising the fact of being 'simultaneously old and young, happy and sad, single and legion' (Mooney 2013, 198), the reader of Kierkegaard understands him/herself in all his/her inner juxtaposition and multiplicity. To maintain that in lived consequence expresses an existential honesty (truthfulness) and a responsibility for oneself.

Such way of self-actualisation includes that any conscious and intended creation of public self-images avoids self-honesty and -responsibility (see Stewart 2015, 108ff.). Hence, actualising one's own self-appropriation by sticking to just one of the pseudonyms (a created image) erodes hermeneutically the whole idea of existential self-awareness. Therefore, existential appropriation leads systematically to the personal knowledge of all the different voices in oneself, to recognising them all as meaningful, but accompanied by the awareness that no single voice represents oneself completely, although it says something (limited) about oneself.

Insofar as the different voices represent not only different personal characteristics, attitudes, and convictions, but also different self-narrations, we have to consider two points. As long as the different self-narrations are juxtaposed in oneself, the individual is divided into different self-articulations. At the same time, these self-narrations and -articulations are constantly overlapping in oneself; therefore, the individual constantly lacks self-transparency. Given the fact that nobody knows all the different layers of their own personality, since their mixture is practically too complex, existential self-awareness expresses here again only an epistemic approximation of self-understanding. The interpretation of oneself is never finished and never fixed. And the existential task is to live with that without working against it.

4 Conclusion and outlook

The interpretation advanced by this article underlines the structure of the self as a multilayered web of relations, since subjectively recognized identity is a multilayered structure of narrations and interpretations, unfinished and in-transparent. Kierkegaard's presentation of thought in the literary form of different masks (pseudonyms) not only underlines that point but adds the aspect of direct experience of the inner conflicts in the self-awareness of every individual. The philosophical content of Kierkegaard's work, hereby, mirrors the form of its presentation and vice versa. This is also the case in regard to existential potentiality and determining dependency.

In the light of existential self-appropriation, the individual depends on the meanings of self given by the pseudonyms. Even so, the individual has to 'go his own way' (SKS 7, 251/KW 12.1, 277); becoming aware of the own self is a process of self-discovery, in which the individual reacts upon the given meanings and possibilities of self. The same systematic characteristics arise in terms of social embeddedness, insofar as the self-understanding and identity of the individual depend on the socio-cultural environment, in which he/she discovers him/herself by reacting to the impacting influences.

This kind of reaction to the socio-cultural environment as well as to external meaning sources needs to be seen in the light of freedom, and therefore in the light of self-choice. Regarding existential appropriation, the individual has to reflect and concretise the given self-possibilities of the pseudonyms in his/her own ways. The, hereby, underlined autonomy of the individual, to choose between self-possibilities (or not), mirrors the self-choice regarding social embeddedness, in which the individual has to deal with different self-possibilities in life. Insofar as this article suggested and argued for an understanding of self-choice as

choosing the openness of the self (out of its social and cultural givenness), it takes its own systematic stance between an esthetical understanding of freedom and the ethical quality of self-choice as it is presented by Kierkegaard in *Either-Or*.¹⁹

Given these three main characteristics – the multilayered structure of identity, the self-discovery in dependency, and the freedom in self-choice –, personal identity needs to be seen, then, not only as an open awareness of the self but also as an *organic nexus* of changing and overlapping self-interpretations, concrete self-actualisations, and personal positioning. The identity is never just given and

19 The two pseudonymous voices in *Either-Or*, the *esthetician A* and *ethicist B* (Judge Wilhelm), have different approaches on self-awareness that emerges through the way of living. 'A' is interested in the possibilities which life offers, and he tries out and practises his own personality in those given alternatives of life, but without choosing any of the alternatives as a base for a stable personality. 'A' wants to enjoy the play of different masks (possibilities of personality), because he does not want to betray his freedom of oscillating between different possibilities. 'B' contradicts that, because any kind of mask denies for him the true personality and leads to self-distraction. He insists on choosing, and that can be read as a process of finishing the personality in a stable self-picture that denies further possibilities of the self.

The interesting point for our given interpretation of identity emerges if we consider that the perspective of 'A' productively contradicts the perspective of 'B' (see Gräß-Schmidt 2017, 198–203). 'A's stance, that one should not finish one's own personality by choosing, takes it seriously that the individual is always bound to social roles, personal masks, and different narratives of the own personality. By that, 'A' insists not only on a process of taking over the roles, masks, and narratives. He also recognises the juxtapositions and contradictions in the self. This implies that 'A' refers to the fact of the givenness of identity, and that every individual has to deal with the multilayered expressions and conditions of the own personality. In that way, 'A's point of view represents, on the one hand, very neatly Kierkegaard's play with the pseudonyms, namely the fact of the non-onesidedness of the personality; and he asks, on the other hand, how responsible it is to cut the own self off from its potentiality.

However, such multilayeredness recognises 'B' too. The concept of self-choice is simply the reaction to this awareness. However, as we showed above, ethical choice does not necessarily imply fixating the self. It can also mean to choose, on the one hand, the givenness of self (roles, masks, narrations) and, at the same time, the openness of the self (potentiality). But this specific way of looking at ethical choice seems closer to the stance of 'A' than of 'B', because the earnestness of holding the possibilities of self becomes important. If we combine the matter of (ethical) choice with the stance of 'A' like this, we should not overlook the exegetical fact that 'A' does not want to fixate himself. He wants to keep ironic distance from any kind of willed self-determination. Thereby, he misses the energetic effort to understand truly the own personality, which is in contrast to the existential aim of 'B'.

Precisely in here lies the systematic character of the interpretation of subjectively recognised identity given in this article. It combines the esthetical characteristics of freedom with the existential (inward) quality of the ethical self-choice. Therefore, it brings together the recognition of existential possibilities (the multilayered personality) with the willed and intensive energetic effort to contour the self. By that, this article differs from the offered perspectives in Kierkegaard's *Either-Or*. Nevertheless, it takes these perspectives seriously and brings them into a new systematic conclusion.

never just freely chosen, but a constant interpretation and instantiation of self-views and -stances.

Interpreting Kierkegaard like that gives, thereby, also an idea of how existential striving for truthful self-understanding wants ‘to construct a life which makes sense, but also to gain a sense for one’s life which one cannot construct’ (Campbell 2000, 48). To understand life, the individual has to understand him/herself in life. And if the individual understands that he/she cannot understand him/herself as a whole, the individual understands life equally as a well and web of potential meaning that lies beyond the own understanding. From here, we could refer to Kierkegaard’s understanding of existential religiousness. The permanent becoming and creation of one’s personal identity would, then, turn out to ‘receive’ the self from *the* meaning source as such, God.²⁰

However, we can, finally, examine four important points on the given interpretation of self and identity by drawing lines to more (or less) current philosophy.

Firstly, identity appears as an *inter-esse* (a term used by Climacus: SKS 7, 286/ KW 12.1, 314) between a ‘porous’ and ‘buffered’ understanding of the self. Using, hereby, the terminology of Charles Taylor in a (more or less) associative way, it is important to underline that Kierkegaard insists on the openness (porousness) of the self, since any hermetic understanding of the self cuts down the concrete actuality of human self-relations and their inherent contingencies.

Secondly, identity is never a stable wholeness of self-understanding, a position which was mirrored in the first half of the 20th century by many philosophers, e.g. Heidegger or Dewey. Dewey said, ‘The *whole* self is an ideal, an imaginative projection’ (Dewey in *A Common Faith*; see Joas 2000, 145). Like Kierkegaard, Dewey shows that the individual can never recognise and actualise the whole self since every self-reflection and every (social) action gives only an understanding and an awareness of sections of one’s personality (see *ibid.*, 144f.). This aspect points not only to the self-understanding illustrated through the pseudonyms, but also to the process of self-learning and -discovery in social embeddedness.

Thirdly, insofar as identity represents a web of inter-related and overlapping self-stances, particularly shown by the pseudonyms, the individual does not only recognise an inner plurality or multiplicity, but also recognises the other (not to be confused with ‘stranger’) – or better: the possibility and actuality of otherness – in him/herself. This perspective correlates with Hannah Arendt’s examination of Socrates’ insights into the structure of thinking as such. In thinking, the individual engages in a dialogue with him/herself and is, therefore, in his/

²⁰ On the concept of receiving in a more general perspective, see Ringleben 1983, 101–7. On receiving in Wilhelm, see Mooney 2002; in Climacus, see Engmann 2017, e.g. 278–81.

her thought processes always a ‘split unit’ (see Arendt 2016, 56f.). The individual stays, thereby, in relation to him/herself but cannot be congruent with him/herself. Self-congruence implies the non-actuality of thinking. Therefore, the thinking individual has to be understood as a unity of plural voices. This, by its core conflictual, situation points precisely to the given interpretation of identity as a web of hermeneutic thought processes (self-interpretations).

Fourthly, the inter-relationality of identity with the external reality and inner self-actualisations gives a basis for a systematic comparison with current socio-theoretical philosophy. As long as personal identity is always an actualisation through the embeddedness in socially given ways of living, identity in Kierkegaard can be related, for example, to some aspects of Rahel Jaeggi’s (2014) understanding of *Lebensform* (‘way of living’). Jaeggi argues that *Lebensformen*, such as the family, are compounds of social practices and attitudes which determine the structure of human world relations and offer, therefore, the framework for our social appropriations of values and rules, our actions and self-understanding. Insofar as the individual is always withdrawn from strict control of his/her *Lebensformen* (see *ibid.*, 119), the individual is also withdrawn from the full control of the self-being that emerges through his/her *Lebensformen*. This points to the analysis of this article.

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- KW *Kierkegaard’s Writings*. Ed. and transl. with Introd. and Notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989–2000.
- SKS *Søren Kierkegaard Skrifter*. Ed. by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al., København: Gads Forlag, 1997–2012.

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Shahzad Bashir, Matthias Engmann, Martin Mulsow,
Riccarda Suitner

Afterword: parting the self

This section consists of four case studies in which human selves are either observed or theorised as being subject to disaggregation. Each article highlights a distinctive facet of the interdependence between processes of individuation and dividuality, whereby we see our collective theoretical interest play out in diverse sociohistorical settings. Juxtaposing data spread between sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth-century Europe and seventeenth-century India and Iran, we note convergences while retaining cognizance of historical contingencies and specificities of literary forms.

The articles are concerned with the self's construction as an entity that is, simultaneously, embedded in a social setting and differentiated from it. In our work, dividuality is an especially productive interpretive gesture rather than a straightforward descriptor. This approach allows us to correlate cases that are starkly disparate on the surface. We notice an overarching commonality in that the self's divisibility always indexes freedom of human action to various degrees. Thinking of the self as divisible affords access to the complexity of our historical and philosophical interlocutors that would be obscured if we were to insist on individuality as the primary fulcrum of analysis.

Our cases are concerned with social settings in which human subjects confront a plurality of ideas and practices as a stark quotidian fact. To take up the contributions in chronological order, *Riccarda Suitner's* work is concerned with the religious situation in sixteenth-century Venice, a site where the diversification of religious (and other) thought associated with early modern Europe bubbles up all over the place in the archive. Following stories of individuals – above all belonging to the first generation of Venetian Anabaptists – who confront this world through interaction, absorption, resistance, and continual change, the self's hybridity seems to be a relevant phenomenon in a society still dominated by the principle of religious and confessional conformity. A series of social, economic, cultural and confessional factors made it possible for part (albeit a tiny one) of the population of the Venetian Republic of the mid-sixteenth century to develop the feeling that they had been given the potential to choose the confession most suited to their own inner needs. This interplay of individual choice and an approach definable as 'confessional eclecticism', lacking in dogmatic coherence and loyalty to a single confession, shows that pluralism and the fragmentation of the self could be considered an integral part of individualization.

The massive seventeenth-century work on Persian poets and poetry, written in India and explored here by *Shahzad Bashir*, also showcases a vast world of ideas and literary patterns. In this case, however, the in/dividuality paradigm helps to parse the single-authored work into a multiplicity of self-expressions that are anchored in the difference between prosaic and poetic first-person speech. Bashir's literary analysis raises the important question of how we imagine the author as a human subject. One possibility is to see the prosaic/poetic difference as a formalization of the dividual self that we can presume to have been the author's personality in his lived environment. However, the literary difference has its own logic tied to diachronic discursive continuities in the way Persian literature can be considered a tradition. We then need to be cautious about extrapolating directly between literary topoi and existential and social claims about the author. Concentrating on dividuality as reflected in the literary form cautions against buying into straightforward paradigms for the human subject. Rather, dividuality works as a conceptual intervention that invites more complex ways of understanding the text and the society where it was created; (on the question of the relationship between author and text see also III.2).

The dynamic between literary expression and confessional or personal identity plays out in a parallel but different way in *Martin Mulsow's* analysis of pseudonymous theological works from seventeenth-century Europe. Here authors deliberately operationalize dividuality as a way to contend with the world and to seek advantage within it through highly sophisticated rhetorical means. Mulsow draws on Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism', which has been developed for the analysis of the many voices included in modern novels. In the scholarly field however, Mulsow emphasizes, dialogism does not produce a 'wild' polyphony, as Bakhtin claims for the texts of Rabelais, but a highly controlled, tactically accurate balance. In this sense the dividuality of such authors as Jean Le Clerc, Noel Aubert de Versé, or Theodor Ludwig Lau is to be assessed: it is a very carefully weighted dividuality, which knows all shading from innocent to criminal, as in Jean Aymon. Mulsow complements dialogism and dividuality with the notion of relational authorship, which describes not the several persona in one author but rather the several authors behind one work.

Mulsow ends on a note about Søren Kierkegaard. This provides the transition to *Matthias Engmann's* contribution. Engmann's work on Kierkegaard's conceptualization of the ever-transforming self posits this self as an entity suspended in the interstice between the fragmented experience of ordinary time and space and the felicitous unity attributed to God. Kierkegaard's advocacy, aimed at processes of self-reflection, is manifested in both his theoretical work and in his famous pseudonymous practice that deliberately leverages the self's dividuality as a basis for his philosophy.

Our cases highlight individuation and dividuality as co-constituting processes. Using these terms heuristically allows us to bring the interdependency between self and society into higher relief. Transplanting theoretical insights between the articles illuminates common topics, such as: the relationship between migration and identity formation; literary ingenuity as a means for inventing, or escaping from, selves; notions of connections between the interior and exterior parts of the human person; and the effort to simultaneously authorize and de-authorize the self that is a pervasive feature of the human condition. While there is a ‘prosaic self’ in Balyani (Bashir), there is an ‘editor self’ in Le Clerc (Mulsow), and in Kierkegaard pseudonymous selves frame the interaction between the different possible existential positions (Engmann). While the Italian heretics of the sixteenth century were still overwhelmed by the plurality of possible dogmatic deviances and reacted with eclectic and fluid theological views (Suitner), the late seventeenth century theologians deliberately mirrored the complex discussions in their works and strategically chose sides or changed allegiances (Mulsow). In Kierkegaard, the play with pseudonyms is employed in order to make the search for truth ‘fluid’ again in a static Biedermeier situation of external Christianity (Engmann). In Persianate India, the ‘poetic self’ in Balyani finds the freedom to talk in an antinomic and embodied way (Bashir).



Section 2.3: Porosity, corporeality and the divine

Harry O. Maier

Paul's Letter to Philemon: a case study in individualisation, dividualation, and partibility in Imperial spatial contexts

1 Paul the impresario

Paul's letter to Philemon (composed in c. 55–56 or 56–61, depending on whether Paul is writing from an Ephesian or Roman prison) is a virtual laboratory for a discussion of themes of individualisation amongst Pauline Christ believers in the first century. As we will see, it also furnishes useful data for the discussion of dividualation, that is a study of the ancient individual as partitive, or a composite of social relations, supernatural powers, and material objects (Mosko 2010; Strathern 1988). Philemon offers a useful case study in processes of both individualisation and dividualation in a Roman imperial period emergent religious movement we today call Christianity.

In 25 short verses (335 words), Paul becomes an impresario managing an elaborate set of roles into which he casts the letter's three chief protagonists: the apostle Paul, Philemon, and a slave named Onesimus. The letter shows Paul's role as a religious entrepreneur who marshals a set of cultural codes and expectations to articulate a set of prescriptions that result in an unanticipated reversal of social norms. To the degree that this is the case, we can see that Paul is engaging in what Rüpke (2013, 3–38) identifies as de-traditionalisation, a *sine qua non* of processes of individualisation in ancient contexts.

As the letter unfolds, Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus (as well as a few other minor characters) find themselves occupying different positions on the apostle's stage in a rhetorical *tour de force* in which the imprisoned narrator masks a command in the form of an appeal to pursue a course of action that Philemon may otherwise have been reluctant to carry out. As this piece of rhetorical deliberation proceeds, the players find themselves clothed by the narrator with one costume in one or two verses, only to find themselves in new ones for a quick scene change in the next. As the rhetorical deliberation develops we discover a host of characters trying on the clothes of a shifting set of identities. The play, however, takes place on the larger stage of what our director sees as a cosmic drama. In this drama, roles must quickly change because all things are subject to a dynamic refurbishment that renders old ways of conceiving of identities and selves obsolete and requires a whole new imaginary of persons and their roles

in a new work of divine creation. Here human actors are remade and given new scripts to follow. It is this that makes Philemon such a fascinating study in the forms of religious individualisation and dividuation that arise from an eschatologically oriented religious movement.

2 A brief history of interpretation

Traditionally the letter has been read as a response to a situation in which a slave, Onesimus, has run away from his master, Philemon, to seek refuge with Paul, a prisoner. The slave has been converted to Christ belief while with the apostle, who is now sending him back to his master with a letter pleading on his behalf not to punish him but to receive him as a new convert, and to free him to help with the Gospel mission of the apostle to the Gentiles (for the traditional reading, following Luther, Lohse 1973, 187, 188). In recent years, the traditional reading has been contested, with some arguing that there is no compelling evidence that Onesimus was a fugitive, only that he was sent at Philemon's bidding, was converted by Paul, and then returned to his master with a letter asking that Philemon free (or loan) his slave for the mission (Arzt-Grabner 2010, 113–42; 2004, 131–43; Lampe 1985, 135–57; Harrill 1999, 135–8; Bellen 1971, 18,78; Wolter 1993, 229–31; 2008, 169–80). Certainly, the letter remains a topic of debate amongst those who use it to argue that Paul accepted or rejected the institution of slavery (Barclay 1991). The writing has also served an important role in a kind of entangled historical reading amongst some African American biblical interpreters, who, following a liberationist strategy of a hermeneutics of retrieval, have tried to show how the Letter to Philemon forms part of a long tradition in which Paul is seen as tolerant of slavery (Barton 2016, 47–58). African American scholars point out that the epistle nowhere portrays Onesimus as a fugitive slave and that such a reading reflects more the social position of an interpretive tradition than it does the text itself. Further, they note, the apostle thus does not use the logic of his Gospel to demand Onesimus' release but instead assumes that Philemon can be both brother and master. Callahan (1997) has proffered the case that the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon was not that of slave and master but, rather, that of brothers, and that Paul's letter seeks reconciliation rather than manumission.

The more traditional historical debate has focused on whether Paul endorsed slavery. In the period before the American Civil War, Philemon functioned as an important piece of evidence for both sides of the anti-slavery/pro-slavery debate (Callahan 2012, 143–56). Pro-slavers argued that the letter, taken together with

the Household Rules (Col. 3.18–4.1; Eph. 5.22–6.9; 1 Pet. 3.18–3.7; 1 Tim. 2.8–15; 3.2–13; Tit. 1.5–9 – a hierarchically arranged list of duties assigned to husbands, wives, children, master, slaves), in which Paul (both parties assumed Paul wrote everything the New Testament ascribes to him, a position many scholars contest) exhorts slaves to be obedient to their masters, shows that the apostle tacitly endorsed, if not directly promoted, slavery. Abolitionists pointed out that Paul urged Philemon to release his slave and encouraged slaves to seek their freedom where possible (1 Cor. 7.22), thus showing his opposition to slavery. In fact, this debate could itself form the backdrop for an interesting case study in questions of the individualisation of slaves in the slavery debates of the 18th and 19th centuries, and of how the Epistle to Philemon played a crucial role in de-traditionalising slavery to affirm the rights and individuality of every person. Here, however, we focus on the place of the letter to Philemon as a letter in its first century context, since it furnishes us with a fascinating case study of first-century individualisation and notions of divine presence in constituting religious identity more broadly.

3 The anthropological turn

There is a school of New Testament scholarship that would contest the very possibility of evidence of individualisation in a document of the first century. Starting in the 1980s, a group of biblical interpreters, who went on to form a seminar called The Context Group, turned to the tools of cultural anthropology to study the Bible.¹ Arguing that biblical scholars too often import modernist assumptions into ancient data and thereby misinterpret ancient evidence with a contemporary mindset, they turned to cross-cultural comparison with modern Mediterranean and contemporary peasant cultures in order to create models appropriate for the interpretation of the Bible, whose texts, they argued, were far closer to traditional peasant ways of seeing the world than they were to those of the Enlightenment and the industrial west (for a general introduction, Esler 2000, 3–25). The members of the Context Group were, and continue to be, extraordinarily prolific authors who together have published dozens of monographs, commentaries and scholarly articles, convened international seminars, and supervised scores of doctoral theses. The result has been a transformation of the field of biblical studies, especially in North America and Great Britain. Today, if one picks up a

¹ For the Context Group, 'The Context Group: A Project on the Bible in its Socio-Cultural Context', <http://www.contextgroup.org> (cited 31.12.2016), of which the author is a member.

New Testament introduction in the English-speaking world one sees evidence of leading concepts of the Context Group invoked without citation as received scholarly wisdom.

In 1981, Bruce Malina, one of the pioneers of this approach, published *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. In it he distilled an array of anthropological field studies, largely by scholars publishing in the 1960s, in order to identify what he described as ‘pivotal Mediterranean values’. These, he argued, were the coordinates that should guide any exegetical study of biblical texts that seeks to avoid cultural anachronism and remain faithful to the probable meanings of ancient texts. The values include honour and shame, the dyadic personality, the idea of limited good, kinship structures, and concerns over purity and impurity. In Malina’s treatment, these are what define a Mediterranean peasant society and what we can generalise as the primary characteristics of the contemporary cultures of the Mediterranean Basin, which in turn furnish us with the means to engage in culturally appropriate investigations of the first century. Behind his approach is Braudel’s representation of the *longue durée*, presented in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949), although Malina pays little attention to the shifting dynamics of Mediterraneanism (the *many* Mediterraneans, the French historian insisted) of the Braudelian enterprise. It is notable that although anthropologists have for decades now contested an idea of ‘the’ Mediterranean (Herzfeld 1984; 1987; de Pina-Cabral 1989), Mediterraneanism and the abstract totalising generalisations that marked an earlier generation of anthropologists now passes *wie es eigentlich gewesen* within the New Testament guild and reproduces itself through its many media.

For our purposes here, we will attend to Malina’s pivotal value of the ‘dyadic personality’. For Malina and others, this phrase refers to a notion of the individual and the self that characterises pre-industrial, peasant culture. Applied to the ancient Mediterranean context, the central insight of the concept is that, unlike in the case of modern people for whom individualism and introspection form central aspects of their social identity, the ancients had neither an interest in, nor indeed a capacity for, introspection, and had no notion of the individual. Instead, ancient people conceived of themselves as occupying social roles and carrying out the obligations associated with them. They were relationalists, not individualists. While the modern self is a bounded unit, the ancient self was social and inter-related. Thus performance dictated by the traditions associated with time-sanctioned societal scripts is what created social identity. As people were governed by codes of honour and shame, this meant that there was little deviation from these prescribed relational roles without the severe consequences of social marginalisation.

On this account, we can only speak of individuals in the ancient world as people governed by psychosocial roles – more or less flat characters practicing their daily lives in the company of others without reference to an interior life. The exclusive reference point for the ancients was to the others outside oneself and it was by reference to these that one knew oneself and undertook daily practices. Mediterranean dyadism contrasts with modern individualism through its determinative group orientation.

A dyadic personality is one who simply needs another continually in order to know who he or she really is [...]. Such a person internalizes and makes his own what others say, do, and think about him because he believes it is necessary, for being human, to live out the expectations of others. That person would conceive of himself as always interrelated to other persons while occupying a distinct social position both horizontally (with others sharing the same status, moving from center to periphery) and vertically (with others above and below in social rank). Such persons need to test this interrelatedness, with the focus of attention way from ego, on the demands and expectations of others who can grant or withhold reputation. Pivotal values for such persons would be honor and shame, not guilt.

(Malina 1981, 55)

Malina's mention of guilt here refers to a modern theological sensibility that reads ancient biblical texts, especially those from Paul, as a solution to the human dilemma of how a guilty sinner can stand before a righteous God. On this model, Martin Luther and, before him, Augustine, possessed the quintessential introspective religious consciences of the west (Stendahl 1963). As ancients had no interest in, or perhaps even capacity to experience, guilt and had their entire psychosocial make-up dedicated to what others thought of them, any attempt to discover first-century people as individuating selves must be anachronistic at best. Malina goes on to state,

The dyadic personality is an individual who perceives himself and forms his self-image in terms of what others perceive and feed back to him. He feels a need of others for his very psychological existence, since the image he has of himself must agree with the image formulated and presented by significant others, by members of significant and person-sustaining group like family, village, even city and nation.

(Malina 1981, 55)

We can freely acknowledge the obvious point that ancient people were not like us moderns and that we cannot step into the past with our understandings of personhood. However, when stated in as bald a form as that offered by Malina, it is a gross distortion of the evidence to replace guilt-ridden modern individualists perpetually given to existential crises with a set of ancient cyphers who had no real capacity to conceive of themselves except through menus of social roles and the perceptions of others. The strength of Malina's approach is to draw attention to the role of social expectation and codes of honour as important 'sources of

self' (Taylor 1994) in Antiquity. Michael Trapp (2007), in his survey of personhood and its relation to ethics and social identity in the Hellenistic and Roman period, confirms some of what Malina contends, albeit without reference to social scientific models in the service of a Braudelian Mediterraneanism. Trapp points to the importance of conformity in the making of ancient selves and to the kind of quirky individualism modern people celebrate as a problem to be overcome rather than an identity to be nurtured and promoted in others. What Malina fails to perceive, however, is that actors always have choices about how they will conduct the practices that belong to the duties and obligations they are tasked with living. Nor does he appreciate that psychosocial interactions are, while relational, far more complex than the 'dyadic' model permits. It is true that ancients were members of collectives such as families, cities, and social strata, and that they negotiated their lives by reference to social scripts. But it does not follow that they did not do such things in idiosyncratic ways. The problem is that while Malina's dyadic person resolves the problem of not reading ancients as moderns, it creates another, even more serious, problem by turning ancients into little more than individualised versions of group stereotypes. Further, while we cannot speak of ancient selves as modern individuals, neither should we turn them into simple functions of social expectations and exchange.

Charles Taylor's (2007, 35–41) notion of the porous self of the pre-modern period is useful here. The phrase describes a non-bounded self that is subject to and constituted by innumerable phenomena (spiritual powers, powers of objects, religious rituals, magic, relationships with physical surroundings and natural phenomena, shifting identities in varying situations, gift exchange, and so on) as well as interpenetrating others through different kinds of media (spells, prayers, sacrifices, gifts, invisible transference of parts of oneself into another, etc.). The porous self is one capable of interpenetration and relationships that moves far beyond the enacting of traditional roles. Instead of speaking of selves as dyadic, as Malina does, we should therefore consider them 'polyadic', polypositional, and multifaceted. They were not at all like modern selves and individuals, but they were selves and individuals nonetheless.

This is where attention to Paul's letter to Philemon is helpful, because it invites us into a world that is neither modern nor flatly 'Mediterranean' but, rather, points to forms of agency that unfold within a set of culturally expected roles. The value of Paul's letter to Philemon is not that it assures us that honour and shame are guiding categories in the life of ancients (which they surely were), nor that we can see people governing themselves by reference to the perception of others (which they most assuredly did). Such notions can readily be detected in Paul's letter to Philemon and thus could be invoked to sustain Malina's overall model. It is rather that we see creativity in how a set of religious beliefs create new

possibilities for social performance and for casting those performances within a new set of narratives. We see the agency of a religious entrepreneur negotiating social codes and expectations in new ways to bring about ends that conform to a novel set of religious beliefs and practices.

4 Dividuation and partibility

A more promising and valid avenue for cross-cultural anthropological discussion of individualisation in the Letter to Philemon can be found in a recent study of dividuation and relationality in Melanesian culture. Here the self is not comprised by a static set of psychosocial roles but rather by interpenetrating relationships with people, places, and objects. Strathern (1988), in her study of gender in Melanesian culture, deploys the term dividuation in reference to persons 'frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of relationships that produce them' (13). The dividual is both single agent and cause of effects, but it is also multiple. 'The singular must also be seen with respect to the two forms out of which unity is composed – the multiple or composite person and the dividual. Here what is taken for granted are the multiple external relations in which a person is embedded [...]' (275). This means that when a person acts as an in/dividual s/he is also acting as a plurality: 'a person in the form of a dividual, is potentially one of a pair [in taken-for-granted relationships], or may know him or herself as a composite microcosm, potentially bounded as a unit' (275). On this model, a person acts as a subject but does so self-reflexively, that is, in view of the observation of others (whether real or imagined), such that an in/dividual act also becomes a united act of a group that the actor performs and is judged thereby to be successful or not. Strathern furnishes the example of a woman giving birth, which is an action by an agent but also a microcosm of social relations:

what gives the event its unique character is how well or in what manner a particular relationship is made "to appear" on that occasion. That evaluation defines the occasion. The event thus submits the self, the agent, to scrutiny in its capacity as a person from the vantage of another and thus subjects it to aesthetic judgment (278).

The notion of a Mediterranean dyadic relationship is thus too simple and restricted. On the model of dividuality, the role of the other is not simply to script a stereotypical set of performances and behaviours according to which one knows oneself and the other. On the contrary, there is a rather more dynamic relationship: 'The character of the other provides the context that determines whether the agent perceives her or himself as effective in a dividual and multiple mode' (278).

A further feature of dividuality, where there is both individual agency and a microcosm of social relations, is partibility, that is the constitution of a person through gifts, contributions, and the splitting off of or detachments of others. Mosko (2010, 215–40) has studied the manner in which conversion to Christianity is effected in particular Melanesian cultures ‘through elicitive exchanges involving parts of their persons and corresponding personal detachments of God, Jesus, Mary, Holy Spirit, the Devil and so on’ (215). He describes how, in conversion or other forms of religious transformation, a person’s composition changes through attachments to the contributions of others or through detachments from one agent to another.

Through acting, partible persons are *decomposed*, anticipating and evincing recognition of their externalized capacities through the responses of corresponding patients (or victims [i.e. in magical spells]). For me to detach the appropriate part of myself so that it will be effective in drawing forth a desired part of another person (i.e. his or her sister in marriage, a shell valuable, or a ritual spell) I must be able to conceptualize the internal capacities of both myself and my exchange partner so that I can strategically externalize that part of me which will be successful in uncoupling the part of the other person which I desire. Through these kinds of elicitations, persons stimulate one another to action and reaction. Every action – or *transaction* – is in this way both conventional and innovative.

(Mosko 2010, 218)

Thus dividuality and partibility offer a way to conceptualise a non-western form of in/dividualisation wherein selves are not buffered but porous, and are found in roles and practices even as they are constructed from a variety of causal agents, including those of gift exchange. This last point is especially important for an understanding of the kind of individualisation under investigation in this treatment of Philemon.

5 Narrative worlds and personae in Philemon

Such cross-cultural social scientific studies prove especially useful in the interpretation of ancient biblical texts. Distant comparisons between New Testament writings and other pre-industrial cultural systems free one from modern assumptions and allow one to enter imaginatively into other cultural social worlds. While one cannot simplistically impose the anthropological study of Melanesia onto ancient Mediterranean Christ religion, there is nevertheless sufficient ‘fit’ to allow comparison and thereby to bring aspects of biblical texts and the religion they represent into relief. In what follows I present first an account of the narrative world of the letter to Philemon and then draw on notions of a dividual and partible self to explore aspects of the correspondence that have not yet been explored.

Norman Petersen's notion of 'the sociology of narrative worlds' (Petersen 1985, 17–29) provides a valuable approach to the evidence for, and forms of, individualisation, dividuality, and partibility in Paul's letter to Philemon. With the help of the sociology of knowledge, he invites a study of Paul that considers the apostle and his letters as belonging to intersecting narrative worlds: the narrative we create as historians looking onto the past, Paul's narration of the world around him, and the implied narrative that lies within, embedded and behind each letter in his corpus. This implies a dynamic set of relations at multiple levels of investigation. What he means by a 'sociology of narrative worlds' is a study of 'the symbolic forms and social arrangements that sustain the lives of the actors who inhabit such [narrative] worlds' (17). Petersen goes on to consider two features of such forms and arrangements, namely the structures of social arrangements within a group and the meanings maintained by the group. My own predilection is to speak of roles and drama, rather than 'groups', because there is a tendency by Petersen – under the influence of the sociology of knowledge – to reify social performance and render it too static. This follows as well from his use of Geertz's (1973, 87–125) notion of symbol systems as models of and models for reality. Without diminishing Geertz's anthropological insights concerning the importance of attention to how symbols create and prescribe actions within reality, it is more fruitful when considering the issues of in/dividualisation in Philemon, and arguably the *corpus Paulinum* more generally, to consider lived practices, competing commitments, and creative appropriations of symbol systems. Cultures are dynamic lived realities that are remade in each encounter in sometimes-unpredictable ways (de Certeau 1984). To put it differently, while a set of symbol systems may serve to define reality and ethical codes, not all people will interpret reality identically or act uniformly. A host of factors, such as gender, social status, and psychological factors, result in idiosyncratic ways of seeing and acting within the world. This calls for a more dynamic model for the interpretation of narrative worlds and the roles that unfold within them.

To follow Rüpke (again), Philemon points toward practices de-traditionalisation, namely the reconfiguration of behavioural norms, cultural patterns, and religious beliefs for new purposes.. The net result is new modes of performativity that result in individualisation, here understood as the emergence of new modes of action and practice guided by a particular religious narrative and its differing, and by no means always internally self-consistent, interpretations amongst various social actors. To put it differently, even those who inhabit the same religious narrativisation of the world will not occupy it in the same way, or even tell the same story at all times to themselves or to one another. The Letter to Philemon is one moment created by one storyteller and directed towards others who will receive and retell the story in their own ways. However, when considered

from the perspective of dividuality and partibility, the letter also creates selves and others, both via detachment (the letter as expression and token of self) and attachment (the letter's arrival and its effects – considered to elicit a transformation of self-identity – in reading).

Paul pitches this re-traditionalisation in the particular modality of one patron/religious entrepreneur communicating with another with respect to a third party. At one level the social codes are maintained, but this serves as a backdrop for their deconstruction at another level. It is within a shifting narrative configuration of identities that social roles are de-traditionalised, thus creating actors for new roles and self-understandings. Here there are others who help to shape the perceptions of a self and by reference to whom one sees and interprets oneself. To consider this self-other interrelation in a kaleidoscopic narrative fashion avoids the error of Malina, who would make Paul's letters all stage setting, props, and cultural generalities, but leave no room for real actors. It also avoids the limitations of the approach taken by Petersen, who would make of Paul and his audiences all group and no individuals. My interest is in the way Paul furnishes us with people to place on Malina's stage and within Petersen's group, and on the unique roles he gives them to play in a surprising narrative twist that serves to individualise them, as well as on the way the letter conceives interpenetrable and partible in/dividuals. We will see directly that the Letter to Philemon reflects the acting out of a small scene in a larger apocalyptic drama, into which Paul inserts his characters, thereby seeking to transform the broader setting. Here there is a capacity for the actors to detach parts of themselves and to attach to others, resulting in new constructions of what constitutes an individual and relationships amongst actors. To demonstrate this, we will need to look beyond the confines of our 335 verses to the larger Pauline corpus and the sources of self the apostle identifies there.

First, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the players in the particular scene represented by the Philemon letter. In order to get the full measure of Pauline de-traditionalisation and in/dividualisation in the epistle, it is helpful to chart the set of roles Paul invokes and how he (usually implicitly) reverses them by bringing them into association with one another. What I mean by roles is a set of more or less stable cultural codes and prescribed practices that an ancient might expect someone inhabiting the role to perform in the accomplishment of their duties. I begin by offering a table of the roles the letter invokes. I want to conceive this more as a list of *dramatis personae* than 'roles' because, following de Certeau's theorisation of daily practice as well as Strathern's observation concerning agency that is simultaneously constituted by the individual and the group, I want to show that we are dealing with practices and dynamic relations that have the power to affect one another rather

than with static identities. The following lists these practices and relationships, following the NRSV translation of the Greek, together with the verses in which they appear.

1. Paul
 - a. prisoner of Christ Jesus (1, 9, 23)
 - b. prisoner for the Gospel (1, 9)
 - c. brother of Philemon (7, 20)
 - d. old man/ambassador (9)
 - e. father of Onesimus (10)
 - f. Onesimus as 'my own heart' (14)
 - g. master (13)
 - h. partner with Philemon (17)
 - i. patron of Onesimus (18)
 - j. author (19)
 - k. 'in Christ' (20)
 - l. client of Philemon (20, 22)
 - m. master of Philemon (21)

2. Philemon
 - a. dear friend (1)
 - b. co-worker (1)
 - c. house church host (2)
 - d. love for the saints and faith (5)
 - e. evangelist (6)
 - f. patron (2, 7, 19, 20, 21)
 - g. brother of Paul (7, 20)
 - h. brother of Onesimus (16)
 - i. servant/slave (8, 21)
 - j. slave owner (11, 16)
 - k. partner (17)
 - l. Paul's client (19)
 - m. 'prayer' (22)

3. Onesimus
 - a. Paul's child (10)
 - b. once useless now useful (11)
 - c. servant/slave (12, 16)
 - d. Paul's heart/proxy for Paul (12, 17)
 - e. proxy for Philemon (13)
 - f. brother (16)
 - g. 'in the Lord' (16)

4. Others

- a. Timothy – brother (1)
- b. Apphia – sister (1)
- c. Archippus – fellow-soldier (1)
- d. Epaphrus – fellow-prisoner in Christ (23)
- e. Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke – fellow workers (24)

The table, as abstract as it is, offers occasion for a few preliminary observations. First, it reveals the plurality of roles Paul ascribes to the characters of his letter and the speed with which he exchanges them. Second, these roles can be broken down into a set of categories that relate to solidarity (the frequent use of ‘co’ or ‘fellow’ and ‘partner’); friendship, patronage (host, owing of self), clientship (guest), the household (father, sister, child, master, slave), the body (‘heart’), religious belonging/location (‘in Christ’), government (ambassador), imprisonment, and the army. Third, we can see here that Paul is playing at a register of keys and following a score not directly visible in the letter itself but presumed throughout it. Finally, and most importantly, this is what makes the letter such a fascinating case study in what might count as individualisation, as well as dividuality and partibility. The letter provokes Philemon to realise Paul’s desired outcome, which is to receive Onesimus as Paul’s *own self* and then to free (or loan) him for the apostle’s (that is to say, God’s) task of proclaiming his Gospel.

One witnesses a straightforward script that combines notions of friendship together with those of patronage, but also a social account of one giving a piece or part of oneself to another that results in a change in the other. Thus, on one level, Paul addresses Philemon as a social equal when he refers to him as co-worker, dear friend, and partner. He is cognisant of the fact that since Philemon welcomes an assembly of believers in his household, Philemon is also a patron. Indeed, the apostle is bound to him on the basis of a cultural script of exchange of favours: Paul will reimburse Philemon for anything the return of Onesimus may cost the master and he relies on his hospitality, even as Philemon owes to Paul his own self as a convert to Christ belief.

From the perspective of dividuality and partibility, the gift exchange of hospitality, patronage, friendship, and favours binds both actors together and, in doing so, also changes them. When Paul describes himself as Onesimus’ father and Philemon’s brother he is describing a changed set of relations that go far beyond the metaphorical status of religious roles and practices. This language describes transformations of relationships both through the imparting of spiritual gifts from God and through attachment to spiritual gifts that are tokens of the presence of a partible deity that inhabits believers, as well as of partible selves. In sending Onesimus, Paul sends Philemon ‘his heart’ – that

is to say a part of himself that now enters into Philemon's social world and changes him through a ritual of eastern Mediterranean gift exchange. Such gift exchanges establish both equalising and hierarchical relations between these actors. In offering Onesimus welcome, Philemon welcomes Paul as a friend as welcoming a part of Paul's own self; in sending him, Paul expresses his fatherly presence and reminds Philemon that he too is the host's father, indeed Philemon owes Paul his very life ('you owe me your very self' – v. 19). Do these obligations cancel each other out? Or are they arranged hierarchically so that any bonds of gift exchange that might exist nevertheless appear in a hierarchy of benefits and returns? Without saying it, Paul clearly wants to affirm such a hierarchy. Thus it is that he can command by requesting that Philemon does what Paul wishes. Paul (as a proxy for Christ) retains the privilege of a primary locus of agency, even as such privilege is disavowed by his repeated self-representation as a prisoner.

Yet if there is a hierarchy of gift exchange, it is an inverted one that can be seen in Paul's inversion of normal indices of status. There are two stage sets in this letter: the one is Philemon's house church and the other is Paul's prison. Between these settings, selves are imparted and reconstituted in a unique new microcosm of a recreated social world. The presence of the house church looms large as the epistle's backdrop. The epistle is a personal letter to Philemon but, as v. 3 indicates, the recipient is also host to the Christ assembly that meets in his house. The other setting, the prison, is more important for the apostle's rhetorical purposes: Paul represents himself as a prisoner four times (vs. 1, 9, 10, 13), thus making his imprisonment a critical motif in his epistolary character. The social shame of imprisonment is, however, inverted when Paul describes himself as a 'prisoner of Jesus Christ' (vs. 1, 9) and his jail time as 'imprisonment for the gospel' (v. 13). The fourth reference (v. 10) makes the prison the locale of Paul's exercise of patriarchal authority in becoming father to Onesimus, 'my child' (v. 10). It is clear that this is no normal Roman jail: Paul is not Rome's prisoner but Christ's, and his cell is a setting for adoption into a new family of believers. This makes for a topsy-turvy identity, as can be seen in the inversions of v. 8: '[T]hough I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love – and I Paul, do this as an ambassador [*presbytēs*], and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus [*desmios Christou Iēsou*]' (my translation). This imprisonment has changed Paul in the same way that detachment from a divine power that now inhabits him changes him: he is not a prisoner of Rome, but of Jesus Christ (1, 9). Location imparts to him a new status which creates a modality of self that allows the imprisoned apostle to issue commands from a superior social location. Here he is in prison but, more critically, he is also 'in Christ' (v. 20). With the apostle is 'his heart' which he has sent in the guise of

Onesimus to Philemon to refresh is an extension of this identity: 'I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart' (v. 12); 'refresh my heart in Christ' (v. 20).

Modern Western notions of the buffered self quickly lead one astray when encountering this language. This is a world in which agency is distributed through gift exchange that makes selves partible and dividual, as well as interpenetrable. The setting here is, thus, not neutral but, rather, a locus of agency; it inhabits Paul even as he is within it. Here, in his oxymoronic representation of himself as ambassador/prisoner, Paul undertakes a wholesale revision of cultural expectations. This allows him to reconceive whatever duty Philemon the slave master has towards his property Onesimus as a new set of priorities that reflect Paul's own reversal of identity, inscribed by the overlay of his narrative world onto his physical setting of imprisonment. This helps to turn Onesimus into a brother of his erstwhile master, even as both are brothers with Paul. The apostle creates a new set of fictive kinship relations in that all the players in our drama are children of their heavenly father, God. Indeed, how they will be a father and brothers is the product of their own idiosyncratic behaviours. But *whether* they will be such is ultimately determined by their audience, namely God, who witnesses the outcomes and behaviours of these exchanges. We are not, of course, in the village of a woman giving birth in Melanesia. However, the transactional observational culture of that setting offers an interesting means for making a cross-cultural comparison that we might otherwise miss when confined to study that is strictly lexicographical and oriented towards the sociology of knowledge, or indeed towards outmoded 1960s anthropological analysis.

Agency and identity here are much more sophisticated than traditional avenues of interpretation usually permit. In the case of our characters, it remains only for Philemon to get up to speed on Onesimus' new status as a believer and to receive him no longer as slave but also as brother, 'both in the flesh and in the Lord' (v. 16). They share an interpenetrating transactional set of relations made possible through divine habitation. Under such a new set of relations, it is hardly appropriate for Paul to invoke his right to command Philemon (as though an apostolic master over the person who owes him his life). Rather, he should appeal to Philemon to act voluntarily (v. 14). Here Paul borders on the language of master and slave himself. He does not want to compel or force Philemon to do anything (v. 14) and he wants Onesimus to act as proxy for Philemon: 'that he (Onesimus) might be of service to me *in your place* during my imprisonment for the Gospel' (v. 13) – again marking the capacity of selves to fuse with others in new constellations of dividuality.

The way that the letter flips relations between patrons and clients, slaves and masters, freedom and imprisonment, shows a complex revision of social identities and protocols even as it communicates a set of dynamic dividual identities.

Paul as religious entrepreneur improvises on social hierarchies and practices of exchange, as well as indices of honour and status, in a way that both inscribes and undermines traditional understandings and relocates actors within a constellation of new interpenetrating realities. The result is a dynamic social script that cannot be apprehended by reference to a simplistic notion of dyadism but requires instead attention to the subtle reworking of cultural scripts in the particular social situation created by a slave, a master, an assembly of religious adherents, and a religious founder. It is practice and both individual agency and collective identity that together create a process of in/dividualisation, not a timeless and static cultural phenomenon. Porous selves practice a set of social interactions and are in turn changed by them.

6 Cosmic in/dividuation

The letter attests to the importance of a religious imaginary in processes of individualisation (Fuchs 2015, 333–5). The letter to Philemon, as indicated above, is but a scene in a much larger drama that Paul conceives of for himself and those around him. It is on the basis of a larger imagined drama that the forms of de-traditionalisation of social roles, created by Paul's appeal to Onesimus' master, take shape and create new possibilities for social performances and identities. It is to this larger social and religious imaginary that this essay now turns.

There is debate as to whether Paul is an eschatological (Wright 2013; 2015) or apocalyptic thinker (Beker 1982). While appeal to an Inter-testamental form of Jewish apocalyptic has been used with too heavy a hand to interpret Paul's uncontested letters (thus, Sanders 1977), it is important to recognise that, for the apostle, there is a radical refashioning underway that will be realized through a reformulation of human relations in an impending advent of Christ. 'For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God' (1 Thess. 4.16). Paul conceives of an old age passing away and a new one arriving (2 Cor. 5.17), even as he anticipates the second coming of Jesus with all the fanfare one discovers elsewhere in Second Temple apocalyptic literature. Because of the in-breaking of this new order, social horizons are being reformed.

'[T]he appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away' (1 Cor. 7.29–31).

Perhaps one might gloss this text with an additional phrase: and masters treat slaves as brothers and sisters, and those imprisoned in Christ Jesus as ambassadors of the Gospel. For Paul, all traditional arrangements are in a process of being recast: 'For as many of you were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3.27–28). Slaves and masters are brothers and sisters, those imprisoned are most honoured, traditional gender arrangements are recast, and imperial powers are being swept away in favour of a new means of governance and human sociality.

It falls outside the strict confines of this essay to chart all the nuances of this recasting of social relations. Suffice it to say that, in the light of this renewal that is 'even now but not yet', Paul represents a profound de-traditionalisation of social roles and hierarchies in favour of a new set of possibilities for exercising social agency and identity. Paul does not see a gradual coming of a new order but a radical break in the present social order and a sweeping away of old realities in favour of a new ones. An old creation in bondage to sin and death is being renewed and is indeed groaning with birth pangs as the new one is arriving (Rom. 8.22–23). This allows Paul to prescribe new sets of social relations in the midst of a passing order: male-female relationships are not defined primarily by marriage and the household (assuming that Paul did not write Colossians or Ephesians), men and woman should not marry if they can help it, there is no longer slave and free, Jew or Greek, male and female. A new thing has come and old things are passing away. This creates the stage for the de-traditionalisation of social roles and behaviours and the emergence of new personae living out roles in unique and unanticipated ways. In terms of the composition of selves and identities, for Paul this reality that is passing away is marked by the penetration of the self by the Spirit. Paul conceives of identities that can be possessed by a partible and dividual God, as well as identities that can at one and the same time be 'in the Spirit' and 'in Christ', and even joined to the death of Jesus in crucifixion.

We are all too familiar with this language and, from a modernist theological point of view, tend to overlook the way in which it marks dynamic identities being constructed by powers that are detached from God and which inhabit Christ believers. Paul uses the language of 'the gifts' or 'fruits of the Spirit', which moderns are inclined to understand with a rationalist mind-set as qualities or characteristics. But as the gift of glossolalia and 'the tongues of angels' indicates, this hardly conforms to the modest Protestant ideals of good behaviour. When Paul speaks of spiritual gifts, he means divine powers that inhabit a porous self and take it over, activate it, and constitute it. Nor is this

a momentary possession through ecstasy; it is clear that Paul means that this is an ongoing spirit possession through which behaviours are shaped and that one can call others to obey by resisting that other form of possession, namely possession of 'the flesh'. The 'flesh' is also for Paul a resident that is a hostile reality in a partible property (Rom 7.14 – 'of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin'), with which the apostle and his believers battle. They know both 'the fruits of (or from) the Spirit' and 'the works/fruits of (or from) the flesh' (Gal 5.16–26). Both are impartations of the divine and semi-divine that inhabit and motivate them. By the same token Paul can talk about his 'heart' coming into Philemon's household qua Onesimus. Bi-location is, on this account, a capacity that not only the gods possess, albeit in the apostle's case it is possessed in the form of gift exchange. Paul as entrepreneur is creating this order even as he reveals it, in the form of the letters he sends to communities advising, admonishing, and encouraging forms of behaviour consistent with a developing series of visions for a new set of realities. These letters are also physical objects which mediate God's presence, since they are transmissions from Christ via the apostle (Rom. 1.7; 1 Cor. 1.3; 2 Cor. 1.2; Gal. 1.3; Phil. 1.2), even as they are instantiations of the apostle's own presence.

The Letter to Philemon offers both a snapshot of de-traditionalisation in a process of the individualisation of actors as well as a window into a way of conceiving divisible and partible selves. It is unclear how these identities were practised on the ground. Paul leaves Philemon with the authority to do what he will with his slave, even as he crafts a rhetorical case that suggests otherwise. How can one be both brother and master/slave? Is it the case that de-traditionalisation only occurs in particular ritualised contexts of Eucharistic celebrations and baptism? Or is it that brotherly affection forms an incentive for masters not to treat their slaves harshly, thus investing them with an identity they might not otherwise achieve until manumission? If Philemon manumits Onesimus as an act of patronage, thus turning his slave into a client, what on-going obligations will the freedman now owe his master? Or, if Onesimus purchases his freedom, will he still share a social bond in a new form with his former master? In other words, does de-traditionalisation relate only to certain salient conditions and, if so, how does it spill over into the practices of other traditional identities and leave its mark there? Religious imagination, religious entrepreneurship, ritually conceived identity, and the practices of daily life in a new spatial imaginary (the form of the world passing away; the prison cell as agent of a new identity; a world undergoing birth pangs even as a creation comes into being) – all of these work together to reveal divisible and partible selves and to offer new possibilities of in/dividualisation in old settings.

7 Appendix

Paul's letter to Philemon²

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and co-worker,² to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house:³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴ When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God⁵ because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus.⁶ I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.⁷ I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.⁸ For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty,⁹ yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love – and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.¹⁰ I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment.¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me.¹² I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you.¹³ I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel;¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.¹⁵ Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever,¹⁶ no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother – especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.¹⁸ If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.²⁰ Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ.²¹ Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.²² One thing more – prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.²³ Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers.²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

² Unless otherwise stated I cite the NRSV.¹

¹παῦλος δέσμιος χριστοῦ ἰησοῦ καὶ τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν ²καὶ ἀπφία τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ ἀρχίππῳ τῷ συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν καὶ τῇ κατ' οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ· ³χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ. ⁴εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε μνεῖαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, ⁵ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους, ⁶ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς χριστόν· ⁷χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου, ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπαιται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ. ⁸διό, πολλὴν ἐν χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἀνήκον, ⁹διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ, τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς παῦλος πρεσβύτης, νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος χριστοῦ ἰησοῦ ¹⁰παρακαλῶ σε περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς ὀνήσιμον, ¹¹τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον νυνὶ δὲ [καί] σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐχρηστον, ¹²ὃν ἀνέπεμψά σοι, αὐτόν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα· ¹³ὃν ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν κατέχειν, ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ¹⁴χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα ποιῆσαι, ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ἦ ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἐκούσιον. ¹⁵τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὦραν ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτόν ἀπέχῃς, ¹⁶οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί, πόσῳ δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ. ¹⁷εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν, προσλαβοῦ αὐτόν ὡς ἐμέ. ¹⁸εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα· ¹⁹ἐγὼ παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ, ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω· ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοι ὅτι καὶ σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις. ²⁰ναί, ἀδελφέ, ἐγὼ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ· ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν χριστῷ. ²¹πεποιθῶς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου ἔγραψά σοι, εἰδὼς ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις. ²²ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἐτοιμάζε μοι ξενίαν, ἐλπίζω γὰρ ὅτι διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν. ²³ἀσπάζεται σε ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν χριστῷ ἰησοῦ, ²⁴μάρκος, ἀρίσταρχος, δημᾶς, λουκάς, οἱ συνεργοί μου. ²⁵ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν.

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Esther Eidinow

Self as other: distanciation and reflexivity in ancient Greek divination

1 Introduction

This essay examines some of the ways in which the practice of oracular consultation in ancient Greece – as both an individual experience and a cultural institution – expressed and, in turn, reinforced the sense of the mortal self as individual and subject to uncertainty. It argues that both those who were possessed and gave oracles, and those who received oracles would have experienced a sense of ‘distanciation’, that is, a reflexive sense of distance from self. In the space created by that sense of distance was located the potential to perceive oneself as intersubjective, prompted by an understanding of the role of the divine in mortal life, and a strong sense of irony, generated by comprehension of the contrast between divine and mortal knowledge. This was linked, in turn, to a profound acknowledgement of the persistent presence of uncertainty in mortal experience. The sense of distanciation was, in the case of both oracle giver and oracle receiver, generated not only by the embodied experience of openness to the divine, but also by participation in the shared narratives of such experiences – and by the relationship between the two.

In making this argument, I am building on two previous articles, details of which I include here at the request of the editors, because it will help to make more apparent the connections between this essay and others in this publication, as well as give a fuller overview of this essay’s argument (Eidinow 2013; 2019a respectively). The first article, ‘Oracular Consultation, Fate, and the Concept of the Individual,’ sets out to explore how those who consulted oracles perceived themselves as ‘individuals’, examining the conception of the self that they held, and how this influenced their expectations of the oracular process and its outcome. As a first step, the article seeks to make explicit common models of the self in current Western culture, which tend to picture the self as ‘more autonomous from other people and outside influences [...] than in other times and places’ (Strauss, Quinn 1997, 28). Indeed, Clifford Geertz has suggested that this idea of the self, as ‘a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background’ is ‘a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures’ (Geertz 1983, 59). The article raises some alternative models of the self, which will also be relevant to the essay in this

publication: specifically, it focuses on the idea of the ‘dividual’, which conceives of the body and self as comprising a ‘microcosm of relations’ (Strathern 1988, 131). While this is most starkly seen in analyses of conceptions of self in non-Western cultures (for example, and in particular, in Marilyn Strathern’s research in the Highlands of Papua, New Guinea), as others have argued, this kind of relationality with others can also be observed as an element of self-conceptions in Western cultures: the self emerges in different cultures, ‘*precisely from that tension between dividual and individual aspects/relations*’, as Edward LiPuma has suggested (LiPuma 1998, 56–61, and quotation 57; his italics). The article goes on to explore how a relational model of the self could be useful in understanding the process of oracular consultation: it argues that there is evidence that ‘ancient Greek men and women conceived of the self in relational terms, and that this relationality included interdependence with supernatural forces (and, in turn, their inter-relations) with regard to both individual character and life-course’ (Eidinow 2013, 37). Looking more specifically at the evidence for oracular consultations, it posits that ‘those who consulted Oracles perceived themselves to be engaged in working out their circumstances in communion with supernatural forces’ (ibid., 32).

The second article, ‘τύχη at the Oracle of Zeus, Dodona,’ develops these ideas: from an analysis of the Dodona oracle question tablets, it argues that among those supernatural forces, *T/tyche* appears to have played a particularly significant role in the framing of possibilities by consultants of that oracle. Rather than providing evidence of the attempt to master *T/tyche*, the explicit references to it can be argued to indicate acknowledgment of the continuing presence of uncertainty in daily life – even in a context of oracular consultation and the attempt to seek answers from Zeus (Eidinow 2019a). As that article argues, while, at one level, being simply an expression (and reinforcement) of uncertainty about the future, the appearance of *T/tyche* across the corpus of texts also evokes a key epistemological contrast inherent in oracular consultation, insofar as it juxtaposes divine foreknowledge with mortal lack of knowledge about future events.

The present essay sets out a further strand of this overall view of the ontological (and experiential) framing of oracular consultation in ancient Greek culture. Looking at oracular consultation from the points of view of both those who gave and those who received oracles, this essay will explore the interactions between narrative and action, the ways in which these prompted processes of distancing and reflexivity, and how these shaped, and were shaped by, the perception of self.

2 Distanciation

The concept of ‘distanciation’ can best be illustrated through a case study of spirit possession made by the anthropologist Michael Lambek (2003). The individual in question, a young man called Ali, was from the Western Indian Ocean island of Mayotte. During an initial period of training in the French army at Nantes, he became very ill ‘every time he put on his uniform or set foot on the military base’ (ibid., 45); he identified the illness as rheumatism, and described how he became almost unable to walk. His mother, who was upset and frightened by Ali’s decision to join the army (the Gulf War had just begun at this time) explained to Ali that the symptoms were sent by the family spirit, the *trumba ny razaña*. *Trumbas* are Malagasy spirits, who usually belong to the royal Sakalava descent group (dating back to before 1700); they ‘occupy’ specific mediums (ibid., 57 n. 7; see Lambek 1981; 1993; 2002). Ali’s mother’s *trumba* was a male spirit and had inhabited a number of members of the family (Ali’s mother, his wife’s father’s older brother, several of Ali’s older sisters).

Lambek has noted how the *trumba* ‘serves, in part, as a sign of the unity, distinctiveness, and continuity of the family’ (Lambek 2003, 47 and citing Lambek 1988). But there are other implications of possession that are important here. Observing the effects of his experience on Ali, Lambek argues that lives that are lived in the presence of, or with the experience of, possession are lives that ‘become objects of contemplation, interrogation, identification, and edification for those around them’; the process of possession is both an immediate – and painful – experience and one that is ‘distanced and objectified sufficiently to be available to others in the form of a narrative’ (Lambek 2003, 54 and 55, respectively). He goes on to observe that this is an ‘intrinsically ironic’ experience, in which irony is understood as ‘a disconnection between a speaker and his interlocutor, or between the speaker and that which is spoken about, or even between the speaker and himself’ (ibid., 51 quoting from Trilling 1971, 12 for the definition of irony).

Although Lambek does not use the term ‘distanciation’ in this chapter, Janice Boddy’s afterword to another collection on this topic (in which Lambek’s contribution discusses the possession of a young man by a sailor spirit) offers a helpful and apposite reflection on this theme (Boddy 1998 [she discusses Lambek 1998]). Boddy notes how the process of relating to spirit(s) and the experience of possession mean that both spirits and host are increasingly objectified: she observes how the ‘complex interplay between distinctive persons housed in a single material body creates a potential for “absence” or detachment of body from person that is productive of reflexivity’ (ibid., 258). Moreover, those who witness or participate in the episode of possession may also experience distanciation, presumably because

of the way it prompts both reflection among those observing on the potential for them to experience something similar themselves, and, therefore, reflexivity, that is, consideration of the nature of their own personhood.¹

Drawing on these ideas, this essay suggests that ancient processes of divination may have prompted a similar experience of ‘distanctiation’. The parallel works most obviously for those who were described as being possessed and delivering oracular pronouncements, such as the Pythia. However, while I will discuss this aspect first, I will suggest that recipients of oracles also experienced distanctiation, engaging in a resulting process of reflexivity, specifically because of their participation in the entextualization of their own and others’ experiences.² This shaped their engagement with and understanding of the oracular process as ironic; and, as such, it also played a key role in establishing the self as crucially, even dangerously, relational in its composition, and indeterminate in its future.

3 The possessed

The idea that the Pythia was considered to have been possessed is not generally cast into doubt. The answer to the question of how this occurred, however, has been theorized in a variety of ways. Indeed, scholarship on the role and behaviours of the Pythia can be described as reflecting the cultural frames of those providing the analysis, with a particular emphasis on the factor of her gender in dictating assumptions about her role and activities (as Lisa Maurizio has clearly analysed: see Maurizio 1995, esp. 70–72). In contrast, Maurizio has demonstrated in detail how parallels from anthropological explorations of possession in different cultures may offer a different perspective, which returns agency to the figure

¹ Lynch (2000, 27–34, cited in Stausberg 2006, 628) has ably demonstrated how widely the term ‘reflexivity’ has been used across the humanities, and the potentially problematic breadth of its meaning. However, there are some basic meanings that are helpful in exploring the possible interaction between oracular consultation, oracular narratives, and people’s sense of self. In this essay, I draw on Babcock’s helpful differentiation between reflection and reflexivity, which is, appropriately, first introduced through consideration of the myth of Narcissus. She observes of the mythic figure (Babcock 1980, 2): ‘He is reflective, but he is not reflexive – that is, he is conscious of himself as an other, but he is not conscious of being self-conscious of himself as an other, and hence not able to detach himself from, understand, survive, or even laugh at this initial experience of alienation’.

² In this latter group, I include both the individual or group making the divinatory enquiry, and the individuals or groups who will have heard or read about the enquiry and its result in some other (narrative) context, be that an oral or written account.

of the Pythia ‘as the conduit of divine knowledge’ (Maurizio 1995, 84). This essay accepts her argument that the Pythia’s was a culturally mediated form of possession, not one that was physiologically induced by substances or gases, and was most likely an altered state of consciousness.³

This still leaves open, however, what has become one of the key questions to beset scholarship on the oracle at Delphi: the extent to which the Pythia was responsible for her own pronouncements. Again, it is possible to chart the changes in scholarly responses: earlier scholarship asserted that the Pythia’s utterances were incomprehensible and incoherent, reflecting her (it was assumed) frenzied state (e.g., Bouché-Leclerque 1880, 96f.; Flacelière 1938, 104f.; 1965, 50–52; Parke, Wormell 1956a, 33; Whittaker 1965, 26; Burkert 1985, 116). More recently, scholars have observed that the ancient sources suggest rather that the Pythia spoke directly, and coherently, to those who came to consult her (e.g., Flower 2008, 217 adduces the accounts that tell of the Pythia being bribed). Important variations to this argument have been made: for example, some propose that the Pythia gave answers directly to consultants, but these were likely to have been brief (e.g., a straightforward yes or no, or a selection of one of two alternatives), and were then developed into elaborate hexametrical poems by poets employed at the sanctuary for these purposes (Fontenrose 1978, 11–57; McLeod 1961, 320; Bowden 2005, 22–5, and 33f.). In contrast, other scholars have observed that there is no reason why a woman, living in a culture in which she was used to hearing and speaking epic poetry and prayers, could not have composed these lines herself (Maurizio 1995, 84–86.; Flower 2008, 221).

It is helpful here to consider why the question is so difficult to answer. In part, obviously, this is because there is no evidence that illuminates for us the Pythia’s own experience of her role and possession (as for Lambek’s Ali, above); reflections on this aspect must be drawn, as best we can, from observers’ descriptions of these consultations. In turn, it is important to note that for the Greeks themselves, it appears not to have been an issue.⁴ Evidence shows that the god himself was understood to have spoken: this includes epigraphic records of oracles delivered at Delphi; while literary references to consultations are phrased in a similar

³ See Lehoux 2007 for discussion of the evidence for and against the idea that the Pythia was drugged. See Chalupa (2014) for an assessment of the Pythia’s state during consultations as exhibiting many of the symptoms of (intentionally and routinely) induced patterned dissociative identity disorder and Deeley (2019) on ‘a cognitive reconstruction’ of the Pythia’s possession.

⁴ At least that is, until Plutarch writes a dialogue on ‘The oracles at Delphi no longer given in verse’ (*Mor.* 394D–409D).

way.⁵ Fuller descriptions of the process of consultation offer further detail. As an example, consider the story of Croesus' so-called 'test' of the oracles, as given by Herodotus.⁶ The Pythia's response to Croesus' initial question is well known:

I know the number of the grains of sand and the extent of the sea,
 And understand the mute and hear the voiceless.
 The smell has come to my senses of a strong-shelled tortoise
 Boiling in a cauldron together with a lamb's flesh,
 Under which is bronze and over which is bronze. (Hdt. 1.47.3; trans. Godley)

Exactly who is understood to be speaking – woman or god – is not made clear: the ambiguity surrounding the identity of the giver of the oracle is maintained by Herodotus, who observes that the ambassadors enter the *megaron* (where the Pythia is seated) and ask their question of the god; the Pythia then replies with these words, which claim a set of more-than-mortal abilities (Hdt. 1.47.2). The response focuses on the speaker's physical senses and emphasises how far they reach: the verses proclaim their owner's capacity to see detail (grains of sand) and distance (the sea's measures). It then boasts of the speaker's capacity to hear the voiceless, and understand what is senseless.

The story is, of course, a traditional tale, and as other sources suggest, the imagery it employs was proverbial (Pind. *Ol.* 2.95–10; Pind. *Ol.* 13.43–46; Pind. *Pyth.* 9.43–49). While it offers little information about the process of oracular delivery, it may, nevertheless, give some insight into how this culture understood some aspects of the experience of possession. The invocation of the senses – sight, smell, hearing, and comprehension – indicates that human physical functions continue, but are, as it were, extended to discern what (to all intents and purposes) is not normally perceptible by mortals.

Are we to understand that the Pythia herself undergoes these remarkable sensory experiences? Again, this is part of the puzzling intersubjectivity of the Pythia, as Herodotus evokes it. Something similar is described as happening to the prophetess Cassandra, as she is depicted in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, although in her case, the information she receives, which leads her to prophesy, comes in the form of visions and smells of events that are temporally,

⁵ Epigraphic examples include: *IG* II² 4969 (Attic, mid-fourth century BCE; [ὁ] θεὸς ἔχρησεν); *I. Epidamnos* T 514 (decree of Epidamnos, erected at Magnesia on the Maeander, third century BCE; ὁ Ἀπόλλων ὁ ἐν [Δελφοῖς] ἔχρησεν); *IG* II² 3178 (Attic, early imperial period; ὁ Πύθ[ι]ος ἔχρησεν). Literary examples: Thuc. 1.118.3 (with 2.54.4) and 126.4. (While the god is referred to as giving the oracular pronouncement, the verb used is distinctive – ἀναίρω, e.g. ὁ δὲ ἀνέλειν; see discussion Fontenrose 1978, 219–23).

⁶ Scholarship has generally condemned Croesus' behaviour, but see Eidinow 2019b.

rather than physically distant, that is, they have yet to happen (Aesch. Ag. 1214–41, 1256–94 [visions], 1309 [smells]). Cassandra introduces her experience of prophesy in terms that suggest she finds it unpleasant.⁷ Her seeming reluctance to prophesy seems to be accompanied not only by distress at what she is seeing, but also by physical pain: she mentions her ‘agony’ and the ‘fire’ that comes upon her. But we must be cautious in drawing any general conclusions. This is, of course, a character for whom the gift of prophecy is difficult (her prophetic powers were a gift; but her punishment, for refusing sex with Apollo, was that her prophecies were not believed): we might expect it to be unpleasant (Aesch. Ag. 1207).

Indeed, the idea of being ‘possessed’ or *entheos* (meaning literally, ‘the body has a god within it’) was also, in some other tragic cases, portrayed as a result of divine punishment, in the form of extreme emotional or physical illness.⁸ For example, in Euripides’ *Hippolytos*, Phaedra is sick with passion – and the chorus ask her if she is *entheos* or ‘possessed’; the gods who are named as potentially responsible include Pan, Hekate, the Korybantes or Kybele, or even Dictynna, who may be punishing Phaedra (for an unknown error).⁹ This vision of erotic possession is atypical, or rather, it is characteristic of its (tragic) genre; as suggested by Xenophon’s comments in the *Symposium*, when he describes how those possessed by gods, ‘have a tendency to be sterner of countenance, more terrifying of voice, and more vehement’, in comparison with those inspired by Love who have ‘a more tender look, subdue their voices to more gentle tones, and assume a supremely noble bearing’ (Xen. *Symp.* 1.10; trans. Marchant).

Nevertheless, the potential for prophetic possession to become pathological is suggested by the account by Plutarch of the frenzied response (followed by her death) of a Pythia at Delphi who was forced to prophesy unwillingly. Various physical symptoms are provided in the description: the priestess’s harsh voice is a sign that the ritual is not proceeding as it should, along with a comparison

7 Aesch. Ag. ll. 1214–16 (trans. Smyth): ‘Ah, ah! Oh, oh, the agony! Once more the dreadful throes of true prophecy whirl and distract me with their ill-boding onset.’ ἰοὺ ἰοὺ, ὦ ὦ κακά./ὕπ’ αὖ με δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας πόνος/στροβεῖ τάρσσω φρομιῶις δυσφρομιῶις. Cf. l. 1256: ‘Oh, oh! What fire! It comes upon me!’ παπαῖ, οἶον τὸ πῦρ: ἐπέρχεται δέ μοι.

8 The question of the meaning of *entheos*, and the closely related term *enthousiasmos* and their many manifestations, is greater than the remit of this essay can support; but see discussion Dodds 1951, 64–101 (87, n. 41 for the phrase ‘the body has a god within it’); see also Bremmer 1984, 267–86; Burkert 1985, 109–11; Graf 2009.

9 Eur. *Hipp.* 141–50; I am not here discussing the possession of the maenads, which uses the same term (e.g., Soph. *Ant.* 964, also, in a simile for martial frenzy, Aesch. *Theb.* 497), and see Lyk. *Alex.* 28 with n. ad loc. in Hornblower 2015.

of her physical response to ‘a laboring ship [...] filled with a mighty and baleful spirit’ (Plut. *Mor.* 438B-C; trans. Cole Babbitt). In the end, Plutarch describes how the woman becomes frenzied and runs towards the exit, before throwing herself down, and dying a few days later. If we are trying to understand better the experience of possession, then this account seems to describe the feeling of an inner force with which the woman was struggling. The focus on the Pythia’s voice is also noteworthy, especially since, in a passage close by, the Pythia, when she is in the right mood to surrender to the god, is compared to a musical instrument, prepared and tuneful (Plut. *Mor.* 437D-E).

As noted, these passages provide an observer’s perception of mantic possession, and perhaps are better described or understood as revealing to us something of how ancient Greek society imagined the possible gamut of experiences involved. The insights they offer are further reinforced through descriptions of mantic possession that, while engaging less impressive supernatural entities, offer further detail. The chorus leader in Aristophanes’ *Wasps* introduces one rather surprising example, in which the poet is cast as the possessing spirit. In a description of how the poet has behaved in the past when practising his craft, he compares him to a possessing spirit called Eurycles: ‘At first it was not openly but secretly, giving assistance to other poets, slipping into other people’s stomachs in imitation of the prophecy and method of the seer Eurycles, that he poured forth many comic words’ (Ar. *Vesp.* 1019f.; trans. Sommerstein 1983). Eurycles was, according to a scholiast, a prophet who manifested himself through others; in this passage, the name may be meant to indicate the mouthpiece of the spirit, or, indeed, the spirit itself. Indeed, that it is impossible to tell which is meant – the spirit, or the body that is possessed by the spirit – may also provide some insight into the cultural perception of the phenomenon of spirit possession.

Either way, Aristophanes’ description offers a rather vivid image, albeit, a brief, and above all, a comic image, of one way in which a possessing spirit may have been understood to inhabit a mortal body. But to explore how this picture of the possessing spirit actually being within the body was more than simply a literary image, we can turn to other references to possessed seers. In particular, it appears that the mention of the ‘belly’ as Eurycles’s hiding place is for more than comic effect. It is surely a reference to the *engastrimythoi* (lit. ‘belly talkers’, also often translated as ‘ventriloquists’), who were seers who gave prophecies from their stomachs and are mentioned, in passing, in a Hippocratic treatise, *Epidemics* (see Hipp. *Epid.* 5.63, 7.28; the case studies are the same). The passage gives some idea of what belly-talking looked or rather sounded like: the patient, Polemarchos’ wife, is said to have ‘breathed like a diver who has surfaced. She made a noise from her chest. It was something like the so-called belly talkers make’ (trans. Smith).

Further information about the behaviour of individuals who claimed to be possessed is given by an admittedly later source: Lamprias in Plutarch's dialogue *De defectu oraculorum* (Plut. *Mor.* 414E). He describes the so-called *Pythones*, who were once called *Eurycleis* – a change of name that suggests that the cultural framing of 'possession' had by now begun to elide the idea of Delphic possession with other similar phenomena. The *Pythones* were seers who claimed that the god would enter their bodies and speak through their mouths and voices 'as instruments'; the Greek term (*organois*) suggests a tool (an inanimate object) but can also be used to indicate an organ 'of sense or apprehension', which indicates a more interactive relationship with the divine in this instance (see LSJ s.v. for references); it also brings back to mind the earlier description of the Pythia herself in terms of a musical instrument – and the harshness of her delivery when the timing of consultation was awry.

This brief overview of descriptions of mantic possession is not intended as an explanation of the physical or mental states of the Pythia and other possessed seers. Rather, it is intended to provide some insight into the larger cultural framing of the divine-mortal interaction understood to take place during such possession. It suggests, through a variety of imagery, a picture of the possessing spirit and the mortal body as separate entities, which somehow must find a shared material space. It may be that another reference to Eurycles, which we find in Plato's *Sophist* can further our understanding of how that sharing was imagined. In that passage, the Eleatic Stranger is using possession by Eurycles as an analogy for the position of the so-called *opsimaths* (or 'late-learners'), and their arguments concerning the impossibility of the many to be one and the one to be many.¹⁰ While the surrounding argument is complex, the simile is straightforward: again, as Alan Sommerstein has observed, it indicates that Eurycles was a spirit that others carried within them (Pl. *Soph.* 252C).

Because they are obliged in speaking of anything to use the expressions 'to be', 'apart', 'from the rest', 'by itself', and countless others; they are powerless to keep away from them or avoid working them into their discourse; and therefore there is no need of others to refute them, but, as the saying goes, their enemy and future opponent is of their own household whom they always carry about with them as they go, giving forth speech from within them, like the wonderful Eurycles [*ton atopon Euryklea*]

The language of Plato's description is also helpful here, specifically, the phrase *ton atopon Euryklea*. This is translated here as 'the wonderful Eurycles' (Sommerstein

¹⁰ Pl. *Soph.* 252B: They are 'the very men who forbid us to call anything by another name because it participates in the effect produced by another' who 'would be made most especially ridiculous by this doctrine' (trans. Fowler here and below).

1983, *ad loc.* translates as ‘the weird Eurykles’). This underlines how extraordinary is or was the behaviour of this spirit (or, as above, the prophet that possessed him), but perhaps there is some further word play involved, as well. The term *atopos* can also mean simply ‘out-of-place’. This would perhaps be a more fitting adjective for the context: the Eleatic Stranger points out that the arguments of the *opsimaths* mean that they cannot use the term ‘is’, which puts them in an impossible position, ‘Because they are obliged, in speaking of anything, to use the expressions “to be”, “apart”, “from the rest”, “by itself”, and countless others; they are powerless to keep away from them or avoid working them into their discourse.’ The Eurycles analogy thus provides an image for the way in which the sophists’ own language carries the arguments of their opponents within it, and, in that context, the description of Eurycles as *atopos* or ‘out-of-place’ reinforces this argument. But it also inadvertently further illuminates the concept of possession, since (drawing here on the language used in this passage to describe the *opsimaths*’ arguments) it is an image of something ‘apart’ and ‘by itself’, which is, simultaneously, intermingled with what surrounds it. This image of possession, by drawing attention to the presence of the supernatural body as both embodied and disembodied, also creates the objectification of the mortal body. Moreover, in this formulation, the alien and threatening nature of this idea is powerfully reinforced by the image of the enemy who already dwells within the household, and how this presence makes it impossible to avoid, in the end, betraying oneself.¹¹

Altogether, these passages suggest that the idea of possession was one that prompted both individual and broader cultural reflection and reflexivity. In these narratives, we find a possessed character depicted as disconnected from their own words and actions, perhaps even threatened, by the presence of a supernatural entity. We cannot of course describe the individual characters as they experience distancing, as Lambek does Ali, since we do not have evidence that provides such first-person insights. But it is possible to argue that these narratives model a process of distancing, providing powerful descriptions that evoke aspects of the experience, be they observable physical indications, such as heavy breathing or frenzy; or reports of internal symptoms, such as pain; or imagery, for example, comparing the presence of another individual within the body to an enemy within the household.

¹¹ This naturally also prompts thought of the rhetoric of *Lysias* 1, in which a man pleads to be found not guilty for killing his wife’s lover. In that speech, the enemy within the household is not only the lover who has inveigled his way into the home, but also the child he may potentially engender in the defendant’s wife.

A number of these narratives also provide examples of reflexivity around the phenomenon of possession. The nature of this reflexive discussion varies, as we might expect, by genre: tragedy, in particular, has a form that encourages reflexivity, especially, but not only, through the meditations of the Chorus. For example, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra herself demonstrates reflexivity, considering her own role in the divine plan that she foretells.¹² Witnessing her possession prompts the chorus to meditate on their own situation and the nature of man and his fate (Aesch. *Ag.* 1331–42). Comedy, too, is able to provoke reflexivity, using similar dramatic techniques, albeit to different ends. In the passage from *Wasps*, the Chorus Leader appeals for the audience's support for the playwright, who is compared first with an inspiring spirit, then with a mythical hero, facing down politicians, who are in turn, described as monsters (Sommerstein 2002). The Chorus Leader's initial comparison of the poet to a possessing spirit, inspiring other writers, positions the poet as secretly, almost supernaturally, powerful, and again implies the objectification of the body of the possessed, inhabited by the possessing; person and speech are separated. But in this analogy, the disembodiment of possession is reversed: the connection between the person and their words is remade, when the poet is writing his own poetry openly (*phaneros*), running risks on his own account (*kath' heauton*), 'holding the reins of Muses of his own, not someone else's'. Indeed, not only is he thus reintegrated, he is also whole in the sense that he is courageous, a guardian against evils (*alexikakos*) (Ar. *Vesp.* 1043).

Whether presented for comic, tragic, philosophical, or medical purposes, narratives of possession reveal a cultural understanding of how the presence of the supernatural could splinter the self. Insofar as they evoked the objectification of mortal and supernatural bodies, these narratives modelled for their audience the process of distanciation, with all the risks that entailed; in turn, through the forms provided by their different genres, they provoked, I would argue, both reflection and reflexivity on the relationship between mankind and gods. But the experience of possession was rare: a more common experience was the consultation of the possessed. In what follows, I want to argue that those seeking oracles would also have experienced the distanciation created by the co-presence of the supernatural.

¹² E.g. Aesch. *Ag.* 1314–20 (trans. Smyth): 'Nay, I will go to bewail also within the palace my own and Agamemnon's fate. Enough of life! Alas, my friends, not with vain terror do I shrink, as a bird that fears a bush. After I am dead, bear witness for me of this – when for me, a woman, another woman shall be slain, and for an ill-wedded man another man shall fall. I claim this favor from you now that my hour is come.'

4 The consultant

In trying to understand what the process of oracular consultation offered its users, scholars have tended to argue that it provided a sense of reassurance and control.¹³ While there is much to be said for this argument, it is interesting to note how it resonates with current ideas of the self – as an autonomous, decision-making agent, who aspires to increasing self-direction – and posits an understanding of ancient Greek selfhood that may be of marked appeal to our modern-day sensibilities. Indeed, it elides a puzzling dilemma posed by our ancient sources, which suggest that while individuals sought some direction from an oracle, they did not necessarily understand it as providing them with greater autonomy. As an example, consider the interaction between Socrates and Xenophon at the beginning of the *Anabasis*: Socrates makes it clear that Xenophon has asked the oracle the wrong question, but will nevertheless have to carry out its instruction (Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.5–3.1.8).

In this part of the essay, and building on the arguments of my previous articles (as described above in the first section of this essay), I would like to challenge the current characterization of oracular consultation, and suggest instead that the process of consultation did not, or not only, move options into the world of enquirers – as one commentator has put it (Iles Johnston 2005, 301). Rather, or in addition, it ‘moved’ the self, or rather, the self-perception of the self. I will argue that this was achieved, at least in part, through processes of distancing that encouraged individuals to consider themselves in objectified terms within the process of oracular consultation – a process that drew particular attention to the role of the divine in crafting the course of a mortal life.

It could be argued that such a re-perceiving of self would begin as soon as an individual set out to consult an oracle: the decision was one that demonstrated a move from reflection to reflexivity. It revealed a capacity to detach oneself from a simple awareness of self-in-a-state-of-uncertainty (reflective), requiring one to envision oneself as an individual who might enter the process of seeking divine help and be changed (reflexive). The separation of self-as-ritual-enquirer from self-as-everyday-actor was also an embodied process, marked by a series of ritualized actions, including preparation for travel to a sanctuary, as well as those rituals, more strictly defined, that took place within the sanctuary, such as purification and sacrifice. In this context, oracle stories might be regarded simply as records of previous consultations; in some cases they would have provided

¹³ For example, and drawing from recent literature: Johnston 2005, 301; Burkert 2005, 30; Dillon 2017, 37 highlights reassurance, hope and guidance.

guides to correct ritual behaviour and attitudes. But I want to suggest that they played a further crucial role: helping to generate the self as oracular consultant. By providing a narrative structure within which to frame the experience of oracular consultation, they created what we might think of as a feedback loop, drawing those who were consulting an oracle into a process of reflexive self-textualization.

4.1 Self and other (self)

We start with the evidence of the oracle stories: exegetical narratives that circulated in both oral and written forms. These narratives were created, in the first instance at least, either as part of the ritual that took place within the oracular sanctuary or as part of the ritual of transmission by means of which the oracles were transformed into oracle stories and then transmitted across wider society.¹⁴ As noted above, we may argue, with Lisa Maurizio, that the verse-oracle type of oracular statement that is recorded in, for example, Herodotus' *Histories*, was produced by the Pythia (Maurizio 1995; 1997); or we may prefer (with Hugh Bowden, for example), to think of this type as the product of the telling of an oracle story, developed after a consultation event that had in fact produced a much simpler response (Bowden 2005).

The details of the process of production of these stories are of less importance to the argument of this essay than the fact of their circulation, on which I will focus here.¹⁵ However they were originally formulated, the oracle stories were, through their repetition and transmission, repeatedly reconstituted in a new context, where they demanded a novel engagement from a broader audience (Barber 2003, 326). The circulation of these stories suggests that they were themselves sources of reflection: their existence suggests, as Barber puts it (in discussion of African oral genres), 'a consciousness of text as something created in order to be expounded, recontextualized and reflected upon' (ibid.). But we can also argue that they were prompts to a crucial reflexivity. Within the texts themselves, the

¹⁴ Of course, the process of their production is significant: in the case of the former, that is, if these are the words of the Pythia, then this is a process of entextualization, in which these oracle verses are reconstituted in a new context, where they demand a novel engagement from a broader audience (see Barber 2003, 326); in the case of the latter, the development of stories from simple monosyllabic responses by the Pythia would add a significant layer of exegesis to the process of entextualization, but exegesis that includes riddling is exegesis that obscures rather than explains, and which, in turn, requires further exegesis (the resolution of the riddle).

¹⁵ If these verses do represent the words of the Pythia, then this is a process of entextualization, defined as 'the process of rendering a given instance of discourse as text, detachable from its local context' (Silverstein 1996, 21).

content of these stories, even those of clearly mythical origin, resonated with real-life concerns. As an example, consider the many questions posed by individuals at Dodona about their hopes for children, and how these same anxieties appear in the stories of Kings Aigeus, Laios, Akrisios, Xuthos and Kephalos.¹⁶ But as well as drawing out shared experiences, these stories set the individual in a larger cosmological context than the everyday, since they also described, implicitly or explicitly, the intersubjectivity of mortal and divine. Not only did these stories describe episodes of possession (in the person of the Pythia), but they also made it clear that the gods and other supernatural forces were profoundly involved in the co-creation of the course of each mortal life.

As grist for this reflexivity, oracle narratives conveyed a strong sense of the resulting indeterminacy of the oracular consultation. These narrative framings of the experience of oracular consultation juxtaposed mortal concerns and mortal ignorance with divine knowledge, and underlined the gulf that existed between the two. In these stories, the oracular solution did not necessarily respond to the question that an individual had asked; what an individual heard at an oracle, he or she might well not understand. Indeed, in these stories, the central message could even be phrased as a riddle, from which the ‘hidden meaning’ must be elicited.

This aspect in particular resonated with both the context and the form of actual oracular consultations. By this, I do not mean that the responses to real-life consultations were (necessarily) delivered as riddles. Rather, the complexity (whatever its form) of oracles in oracle stories indicated that actual oracular pronouncements might also have needed to be ‘worked out’. This narrative element reinforced the cosmological context of consultation, specifically the distance between mortal and divine knowledge.¹⁷ In turn, as I have argued (see above), there is a surprising emphasis on the presence of *T/tuche* in the oracular question

16 Aegaeus of Athens: Plut. *Thes.* 3.5; Apollod. 3.15.6; Eur. *Med.* 679, 681 (cf. for detailed references Fontenrose L4). Laios: Eur. *Phoen.* 17–20 (1598 f.); Soph. *OT* 713 f., 853 f., 1176 (906–8) (cf. for detailed references Fontenrose L17). Akrisios: Pherekydes 3.10J (cf. for detailed references Fontenrose L23). Xuthos: Eur. *Ion* 70 f., 534–7, 787 f., 1533 (cf. for detailed references Fontenrose L28). Kephalos: Arist. Fr. 504 (Rose) (cf. for detailed references Fontenrose L82). For examples of the questions asked at Dodona see Eidinow 2013.

17 Maurizio 2001, 40, n. 14 suggests that only a third of the oracles we possess are likely to have been ambiguous. It is worth noting that even a ‘yes/no’ response from an oracle will require discussion of meaning in the sense of what actions should follow. A similar observation is made by Karin Barber in her analysis of Yoruba divinatory texts (1999, 31; her italics): ‘Yoruba texts [...] are made up of free-standing elements that signal that they *require* or are *capable of* completion or expansion that is not necessarily performed within that text at that moment. That is, they function as citations of something larger which is not actually present.’

tablets from Dodona, suggesting that those who visited the oracle did not expect the outcomes of their consultations (i.e., the responses they received) simply to be fulfilled. The idea that the gods' meaning or intent might emerge unexpectedly was also reflected in the form taken by real-life consultations, which in their formulation, acknowledged the broader unseen forces shaping future events.

The implications of these observations are that, while an individual may have turned to an oracle for guidance about the future, we should be cautious in suggesting that their aim was simply and straightforwardly to acquire a sense of control. Indeed, the aesthetic of the oracle narratives was intrinsically ironic, and I would suggest that it was matched in actual oracular consultations by a strong sense of reflexivity and (related) indeterminacy.¹⁸ Turning back briefly to Lambek's work, we see how, in the example of his case study's illness (which he regards as an art form equivalent to a narrative), this 'invites all who encounter it to contemplate agency and its limits, dignity and its vicissitudes, individuality and its relational entailments, hope and contingency, the essential uncertainty of life' (Lambek 2003, 55). Such moments of reflection on and dialogue with oneself are opportunities for questioning the status quo, with regard to both the natures of oneself, or selves – the self that observes and the other that is observed – and the structures within which those selves operate. In Lambek's case study, an illness could raise questions for his subject (Ali), indicating how his life could be different if his physical body was different. An oracular consultation is, in a similar way, likely to have been an occasion that provoked reflexive consideration about the self as other, and on the multiple, possible other lives – and other selves – that might emerge as a result of interaction with the divine.

5 Conclusion

This essay is part of a larger argument that oracular consultation was not, or not only, a way of achieving self-mastery or a greater sense of agency, as is commonly argued in scholarship. Rather, it suggests, oracular consultation would have involved acknowledgment of the intersubjective nature of the self, and engagement with a sense of uncertainty, especially in situations of risk. I have argued elsewhere that an oracular consultation was an event that marked the multiple different social and cosmic forces that shaped who a consultant was and the course of his or her life. Here, I have tried to explore the possible experiences

¹⁸ Babcock 1980, 5. As Babcock has observed, there is an 'intimate connection between reflexivity and indeterminacy.'

of those who participated in these rituals, examining possession and oracular consultation as activities that resulted in processes of distancing and reflexivity. As a result, rather than (or as well as) eliciting a sense of control, oracular consultation was an experience through which an individual, who conceived of herself as embedded in a larger social and cosmological nexus, would confront the indeterminacy of her future and the forces shaping it.

Realising that this argument goes against current trends in scholarship on this subject, I end with a final suggestion, which includes some consideration of contemporary views of the self. One of the reasons why we, in modern times, find oracle consultation so compelling is that it challenges the overriding cultural conception of the individual – as an autonomous agent exercising rational choice. It would be easy to accept this characterisation and, in response, to dismiss ancient Greek ritual practice as ‘superstitious’, but the answer may not be so simple. Instead, I would like to suggest that the fascination that oracles still provoke arises, at least in part, because they reveal a more uncomfortable possibility: our underlying sense of ourselves as composite, that is, as constituted by a network of visible and invisible relations, and the resulting limits of our own agency and knowledge.

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Aditya Malik

The swirl of worlds: possession, porosity and embodiment

*A boundary is not that at which something stops,
but as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which
something begins its presencing.*

Martin Heidegger

1 Possession: mixing bodies and selves

Janice Boddy, in her wide-ranging review of the scholarly literature on possession, begins with a concise definition:

Spirit possession commonly refers to the hold exerted over a human being by external forces or entities more powerful than she. These forces may be ancestors or divinities, ghosts of foreign origin, or entities both ontologically and ethnically alien [...] *Possession*, then is a broad term referring to an integration of spirit and matter, force or power and corporeal reality, in a cosmos where the boundaries between an individual and her environment are acknowledged to be permeable, flexibly drawn, or at least negotiable. (Boddy 1994, 407)

But what exactly does it mean to say that ‘the boundaries between an individual and her environment are acknowledged to be permeable’? Is it even conceivable as ‘modern subjects’ to know what this means not just in a theoretical sense but in real, experiential terms? Is it possible to *understand* rather than reduce and explain away possession within the ideological and discursive framework of modernity? – Modernity defined as a series of rejections, acts of distancing, and binary oppositions: mind–body, secular–religious, public–private, individual–community, nature–culture, rational–nonrational, Occident–Orient, and so on.¹

What are the implications of Boddy’s statement for our understanding of the ‘I’ that seemingly constitutes the core of a person? It could be argued that the dominant mode of experiencing *self* in the context of recent modernity is defined by the category of the individual who is an entity bounded above all by their body and mind. Moreover, the category of the individual marks off a *self* that is forged

¹ Included in its many rejections is the notion of religion: ‘of a sacramental view of reality and of anthropomorphic conceptions of the divinity, as well as even more radically [...] any notion of transcendence’ (Benavides 1998, 190).

out of an irreducible set of irreplicable circumstances. Individuals are both singular and unique, determining their destiny through the application of will that makes them active *agents* rather than passive on-lookers of the passage of their lives. The 'I' that simultaneously occupies as well as produces the category of the individual is constituted by *thought*. This shift in the notion of *self* occurs through the epistemic radicalism of Descartes whose thought is founded on the idea of profound doubt through which '[he] can affirm that he is not nothing because he is conscious of being something in and through the very act of consciousness itself' (Winquist 1998, 227). Thought causes the notion of 'I' to arise which then in turn views itself as a separate, bounded entity consisting of a body and mind with singular and unique thoughts and experiences. Within this framework, the thinking, conscious 'I' begins to occupy a place of primacy over *being* as 'the point of reference for the determination of meaning [...]' (ibid.). However, this dominant mode of identifying the question of *self* is radically challenged by the phenomenological enquiry of Heidegger that seeks to reinstate the ontological question of *being* as the fundamental question of philosophy. What does 'I' signify in the context of an enquiry into *being* rather than *thinking*?² What would an understanding of possession mean in the latter context?

The following case study from the Central Himalayas will show that the 'I' and its corollaries of the person, of the individual, of singularity, and of agency cease to have primacy as points of reference. They seem to be on 'hold' or in suspension as other forces 'take over' and operate, as boundaries dissipate allowing for ever widening circles of divine or malevolent agency in which, as Becker notes, 'persons suddenly and inexplicably lose their normal set of memories, mental dispositions, and skills, and exhibit entirely new and different sets of memories, dispositions, and skills' (Smith 2011, 3). The acknowledgment of permeability between the individual and their environment has fundamental implications for *self* and its *other*. Clearly, an acknowledgement of permeability of 'flexibly drawn' boundaries implies that self and other are not simply oppositional, nor complementary, nor even relational. The relationship may involve all of these possibilities, and yet go beyond them to be identified through equivalence, enmeshing, continuity. It may involve a Moebius-like quality in which the inner and outer merge seamlessly, creating only a mirage-like impression of separate surfaces (Handelman, Shulman 2004, 44). On one level, the difference between self and other appears real, but on another level it may become illusory. Thus we require some other, radical way of imagining the conundrum of self and

² Although Heidegger does talk of Thinking (Denken) that belongs to or arises from being (Sein). See Heidegger (1954).

other that seems to lie at the very nucleus of the phenomenological enquiry into *being*, particularly in relation to possession. It is insufficient to explain such distinctive articulations of self and other implicit in possession in terms of ‘culture’, since this relativises the theoretical force of these formulations, devolving them to the status of objects rather than *instruments of thought* (Das 1995, 33). To put this in perspective, should we say that the philosophical conclusions of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Levinas with regard to the question of *being*, and of self and other are *culturally situated*, and arise, to rephrase Boddy, ‘in a cosmos where the boundaries between an individual and her environment are acknowledged to be impermeable, inflexibly drawn, or not negotiable’? The reversal of the ‘anthropological gaze’ toward the ‘demystification’, for example, “of ‘universalist’, ‘objectified’ categories of Western sociology [or anthropology, philosophy etc.]” (Das 1995, 33) raises several deeply problematic yet critical issues if we are ever to move beyond being ‘culturally solipsistic’ while legitimately formulating alternative theoretical frameworks derived from the philosophical speculations of ‘other’ cultures.

2 Alterity: the possibility of *being another*?

The foregoing discussion brings me to an examination of another, for the purposes of this paper, critical term: *alterity* – perhaps the very cornerstone upon which religion and religious experience is grounded. As Csordas (2004, 164) states: ‘Alterity is the phenomenological kernel of religion. Insofar as alterity is part of the structure of being-in-the-world – an elementary structure of existence – religion is inevitable, perhaps even necessary.’ But what does alterity mean, and how am I using the word? Alterity has most recently been employed in post-colonial studies to indicate the existence, and condition, of the colonised and culturally ‘other’. ‘Otherness’ therefore pertains to the linguistic, political, epistemological, and imperial mechanisms through which the culturally and colonised ‘other’ is constructed. From an anthropological perspective alterity is understood ‘as referring to political, racial, ethnic, gender, class, religious otherness – the otherness that is the occasion for identity politics, war, conflict, violence’ (Csordas 2004, 173). Amongst these many divisive and colonising aspects of otherness, there is also the important sense in which it is used to describe the condition of women in both first and third world situations as being the ‘other’ of

men.³ But as Arendt points out: ‘*alteritas* or otherness belongs to everything not just to the marginalized [...] difference is our human condition.’ Moreover, “‘alterity” reconceived in terms of multiplicity opens the possibility for the community of plurality [...]’ (Cutting-Gray 1993, 41). The re-conceptualisation of alterity as multiplicity brings us to a further philosophical differentiation of the term. Christopher Macann develops an extended and nuanced threefold understanding – an ontological alterity (human being–being), an ontic alterity (subject–object) and a reflective alterity (consciousness and what it is consciousness of) – that distinguishes difference from distinction:

Difference always presupposes a whole that is differentiated. Distinction begins with isolated entities that then have to be related. So distinction takes its start in a world that has already been differentiated to the point that the whole has been lost sight of and all we can see is analytically reducible objects. (personal communication; see also Macann 2007)⁴

Following on from this, I use the term in a layered, stratified sense that carries traces of the meanings outlined above, but also applies a different sense. Since my case study involves an aspect of South Asian culture which speaking from a colonial context can be regarded as ‘other’, my use of alterity includes the meaning it has as describing the ‘culturally other’. I also use it in the sense of women being ‘other’, as the event I will be recounting from the Central Himalayas reveals. The fact that women are viewed as ‘other’, is particularly relevant to the discussion of possession when we take into account the seemingly overwhelming preponderance of the participation of women in rituals of possession in the vast majority of scholarly materials collected from different cultures (see Bourguignon 2004, 557). As Bourguignon and others attempt to explain, women – because of their lesser status to men and the concomitant condition of emotional, financial, social, and domestic oppression – utilise the complex ritual, narrative, as well as somatic and psychological mechanisms of possession to regain and reinstate their voice through socially and religiously legitimate means. The embodied state of alterity expressed through the ritual processes of possession then becomes, in this explanatory model, a channel for *symbolic action*. The religious or spiritual views expounded by the women (or men) in such ritual contexts are in reality

³ See also Hannah Arendt’s study of Rahel Varnhagen, a Jewish woman who presided over a premier intellectual salon in 18th century Berlin, as a dual issue of otherness; in Cutting-Gray 1993, 38.

⁴ Further, in Levinas’ work and also in the work of Hegel, the ‘other’ becomes the foundational reference for the possibility of ‘self-consciousness’. To be self-aware means being aware of the ‘other’. Alterity may also refer to that which in a Judeo-Christian context is wholly other – a divine presence, the infinite, or God.

not what they are being stated as (the presence of divine or malevolent beings); rather these are mostly ‘unconscious’ strategies adopted by socially deprived actors. Bourguignon’s (2004, 558) view of possession as symbolic action, with its heavy bias toward ‘etic’ explanations, is problematic inasmuch as it endorses a particular view of the ‘other’ (both in the sense of culture and of gender) while propping up a set of values and possibilities germane to modernity.

And, finally, most critically, I use the word alterity to describe the possibility of multiplicity (and permeability) in the phenomenal world *and* the possibility of divine presence in human life. But there is a radical departure from the usual philosophical understanding of the ‘other’, whether human, non-human, or divine. In fact, I would like to bring in the notion of ‘*another*’, rather than ‘other’. Ghassan Hage (2009), for example, talks about the anthropological gaze as being about the possibility of *being another*. This idea, he suggests, implies the idea of *excess* that is grounded in potentiality rather than actuality. Any given social situation or identity has the promise of being more than what it appears to be, is represented as or perceived to be. Actuality, on the other hand, is grounded on a notion of ‘what is’ or of *stasis* and ‘predictability’ rather than in a dialectic that can result in an unpredictable (re)configuration of ‘what is’. Hage calls the ability to *be another* ‘radical alterity’. Radical alterity thus moves beyond the chasm between self and other upon which much of anthropological, historical and philosophical thought is based. It is important here to acknowledge the powerful persuasiveness of ‘actuality’ as a pervasive perception of what is considered to be *real*. The ‘real’ as that which is limited, immovable, bounded.⁵ The ‘real’ as a commitment to fixity and petrification under the paradoxical guise of progress, change, and modernity – as the justification for cynically continuing to operate in the way ‘things have always been’. The ‘real’ is based on what our senses tell us and on what the social conversations around us tell us. Not only do our senses and their filtration through social conversations tell us what is real but also what is *true*. There is a ‘collapsing together’, so to speak, between the real and the true in the world of actuality. Hage points out that the markers of this world are both fatalism and naturalness. In other words, the actual world is presented as though it is a given and naturally existing condition in which events take place in a pre-determined and therefore fatalistic manner. And yet, it is only on the basis of the recognition of the existence of ‘actuality’ and of its limitation that something more can be felt, conceived and imagined. The recognition of the power of limitation inherent in pledging oneself to actuality, in fact, simultaneously transforms

⁵ I am using ‘real’ in contradistinction to Lacan’s use of ‘*The Real*’ that denotes the unnameable, authentic, infinite, *being* or self that is prior to language and independent of our sensory experience.

into the realisation of a deep ‘misrecognition’. Only then can the world of potentiality and possibility be created and experienced.

Thus, for example, in Upanishadic and Vedantic thought neither divinity nor other sentient and non-sentient entities are *fundamentally* ‘other’ (*anya*). The perception of difference or ‘otherness’ rests on objects possessing name (*nama*) and form (*rupa*), but not on ontological difference. On the level of Being or Self (*atman-Brahman*), there is, in fact, no ‘other’. Ultimately, all there is, is ‘Self’, ‘Consciousness’ or ‘Being’, although this cannot be directly apprehended through language, and is not based on a distinction between objects within the world. It is ‘not this, not this’ (*neti neti*). The philosopher Shankara, however, states that Brahman or ‘It’

can be indirectly designated for example, by the word “I”. The word “I” directly denotes my ego (*ahamkara*), but since the ego is a reflection of the true Self, as the mirror image is a reflection of the fact reflected in it, one can use the word “I” nonmetaphorically to indicate the Self. But all such usage presupposes [...] the operation of ignorance, a failure on our part to discriminate the true Self from the *jiva*, ego, or whatever. (Potter 1981, 60)

Therefore, while on a purely phenomenological and linguistic level there is an ‘I’ and a ‘you’ and a ‘world’, on an ontological and experiential level these distinctions dissolve leaving no separation between me, you, and the world. In other words while our everyday experience and perception based on our senses (*indriya*) tell us that there are ‘others’, these are not as radically different and unreachable as some of the philosophical traditions outlined above would have us believe:

One has to recognize a difference in levels of understanding, between reality and appearance. On the highest level, on which awareness of reality [...] occurs, there is no possibility of difference. From the lower level, the level of appearance, myriad distinctions are of course apparent, but this is entirely the work of *avidya* or ignorance [...]. At the heart of our confusion is the notion, due to *avidya*, that my consciousness is different from yours or from anything else at all. (ibid., 62, 70)

While this perspective may seem historically and culturally antiquated, being ascribed to ancient India, it is a perspective that is found, at least on a discursive level, amongst many members of India’s contemporary population both rural and urban. As both a philosophical position and as ‘popular’ discourse it needs to be taken as seriously as the philosophical traditions of Descartes, Heidegger and others. In Vedantic thought alterity is reconceived as multiplicity, but this multiplicity encompasses more than the immediate arena of human relationships, more than the multiplicity of cultures and individual perspectives. In theory it covers all possible entities, and all past, present and future possibilities. It approaches Arendt’s notion of a ‘community of plurality’ through the simultaneous acknowledgment of the reality of multiplicity on the one hand, and its dissipation, dis-

solution and illusory nature on the other, through ‘non-duality’. Can we state that this philosophical position also informs, to a large extent, the predominant cultural understanding of the relationship between self and other in the Indian context? This claim should not come as a surprise, since Cartesian thought, which has its roots in abstract and complex philosophical debate, also permeates the dominant structuring of the social and political world in the post-Enlightenment era. Modernity as an ideological discourse and institutional foundation itself is in many ways a product of the divisions created by Cartesian thought: mind–body, religious–secular, organic–mechanic, analytic–synthetic, subject–object and so on. And, while non-philosophers may not be aware of the intricacies of Descartes’ and subsequent philosophers’ thought, their ideas occupy an elemental, and yet largely unreflected place in the world of everyday transactions and discourse.

Pertinent for our understanding of these differently constituted parameters of selfhood, are also Piatigorsky’s (1985, 217) observations on a phenomenology of Indian religion in which he discusses, among other categories, ‘*the structure of religious consciousness*’ which ‘can be defined as a complex whole, the related elements of which produce in their totality a complete model of religious behaviour, i.e. of the religion’. Piatigorsky applies the idea of ‘the structure of religious consciousness’ to various aspects of Hindu religion, including that of the concept of god (*deva*) that ‘implies a specific kind of differentiation fundamentally different from the concept of God (and from pagan gods) in Mosaic religion’ (ibid.). The concept of ‘*a god*’ is particularly relevant for our conceptualisation of possession in the Indian context, since

[t]aken at a given time and in a given place [...] a god is present as an *istadevata* (chosen deity), that is, a phenomenon in which the idea of the god momentarily present coincides in time and space with that of his devotee and is merged with him in the context of a particular subjective religious situation. As in the case of *atman-brahman*, the subject and object of worship are not opposed to one another but seen as two instances of manifestations of the same entity. (ibid., 219)

This notion of identity or equivalence between subject and object, particularly in the instance of worship and ritual, is crucial to how we view ‘possessed bodies’ in the Indian context. The body is the *middle ground*, so to speak, in which both the dual and the non-dual manifest, in which human and divine interchange, swap around, merge, become one, but also become two. The interactive, ‘in-between space’ is the *space of ritual* in which presence is urged and drawn out into existence but is never taken for granted.

Following on from this, I contend that non-duality is a framework within which to place our understanding of possession in the Indian cultural and religious situation. Non-duality is a context in which the question of self and other,

of alterity, is addressed in a fundamentally distinct manner from how ‘Western’ situated philosophical ideas address the question. It may be counter-argued that the philosophical position of non-duality briefly outlined above is merely indicative of a single standpoint within several other divergent philosophical systems in India, and that the former represents an elite if not exclusive view that has little bearing on the so-called level of folk or popular religion and culture to which possession rituals belong. However, it can be asserted with good reason that the manner in which the question of multiplicity in the phenomenal world and diversity within the social universe is ‘explained’ on a popular, non-elite level, is through precisely the same philosophical discourse: the ‘*many*’ is the ‘*one*’.⁶ Difference, while ‘real’ on the level of everyday transaction, is ‘illusory’ on a transcendental level. This transcendental level becomes immanent if the misrecognition of the reality of the ephemeral person-individual is acknowledged.

What this implies is the possibility of a multi-dimensional, porous, permeable, fluid identity, self, even ‘no-self’ or self as ‘no-thing’ that not only reinforces but also elicits a full engagement with the world. The notion of a ‘decentred’ or even non-existent self approaches the phenomenological and existentialist view of self and of being that is carved out against the background of *nothing*. However, the existentialist view of nothing and of self as ‘no-thing’ is accompanied by a fundamental mood of anxiety, fear, and dread, and an angst-filled, nihilistic response. This mood can be broadly described as a condition of alienation which itself can be likened to being ‘ensorcelled’ or ‘diseased’ in an ontological sense: ‘Becoming “ensorcelled” is a slow process of [...] devolving toward an alien “otherness” [...]. All forms of objectification contribute to this process’ (Handelman, Shulman 2004, 213f.). Thus we have somewhat overlapping conclusions regarding the nature of self or being. The responses to and scope of these conclusions, however, diverge and vary (see also Sax 2002, 9). The existential view overlays *nothing* with a particular pessimistic meaning: that life has no purpose as such (Sartre), but it also reinstates *nothing* as the ontological background for the creation of all possibility, and of something (Heidegger). The focus is primarily on

⁶ The matter of what constitutes folk or popular religion within Hinduism, both on a conceptual and ethnographic level, is one that has received considerable attention through the work of Sontheimer (2005) and Fuller (1992). Stereotypically, folk Hinduism has been considered as being devoid of the kind of metaphysical and philosophical reflection that signifies Brahmanical Hinduism. However, this is indeed questionable, as this view mirrors the prejudices ‘elite’ forms of religion might harbour toward ‘non-elite-folk’ forms of religion. It is important, though, to note the sheer corporality and immediate presence of gods or goddesses in folk religious ritual and practice, unlike in the Brahmanical situation in which deities may exist in a separate extra-terrestrial location (*svarga*) (Sontheimer 2005, 315).

the being of human being, and on the possibility of inter-subjectivity as framed by social and political relationships between human individuals. In the Indian context, in contrast, the constructed nature of the social, phenomenal self is seen as the source of an existential condition of bondage which in turn gives rise to feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, greed, power, violence etc. because of a fundamental misrecognition involving the illusory, ephemeral nature of the bounded, therefore limited, individualised, egocentric self that is concerned with its own immediate survival (this can be extended to include community, religion, tradition, territory, nation). Freedom from these forms of constraint lies in the admission of the primordial misrecognition in which the ‘deconstruction of the phenomenal self is only a necessary step toward coming to know the real Self, which is not to be confused with the phenomenal personality or ego’ (Sax 2002, 15). Brahman, like Being (*Dasein*) in the phenomenological enquiry of Heidegger, is also *nothing* as it cannot be circumscribed through language nor identified through objects, and yet it is the non-existent ground from which *something*, i.e. the phenomenal world, arises.⁷ The Self or Brahman is thus not limited in any way by the conditions of the four-dimensional world consisting of the co-ordinates of space and time. Thus there is no need or indeed possibility to ‘protect’ or ‘defend’ ‘It’, as ‘It’ has no boundaries. This misrecognition or ignorance (*avidya*) applies not only to the being of human being, but equally to the being of all sentient and non-sentient entities. The re-conceptualising of alterity to encompass multiplicity, as Arendt suggests, is not confined to human inter-subjectivity, but to an ever-widening orbit in which both human and non-human, living and non-living participate. But even the condition of complete self-knowledge that Brahman represents is not – as pointed out earlier – a constant. This knowledge, to take the Shaiva Siddhanta view which both coincides with and diverges from the Advaita perspective, is fragile, tending toward rigidity and brittleness and, in fact, a loss of self-knowledge that is counteracted through a dynamic interactive process in which Shiva (as non-dual) unfreezes aspects of himself that have succumbed to closure, limitation, and a lack of movement (Handelman, Shulman 2004, 212). Ritual action involving the body, particularly in the form of *dance* (see below), is the movement through which divine knowledge and presence is re-created or ‘unfrozen’.

The possibilities of ‘self’ explored above are intertwined in any discourse of possession, particularly in the South Asian context. Thus, for example, to return

⁷ Heidegger’s notion of Being, like the concept of Brahman, is peculiarly disembodied. As Christopher Macann points out: ‘Heidegger investigated the question of being from the standpoint of a *Dasein* that was never allowed to be its body. One has to bring Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty together to allow for an investigation of being from the standpoint of a human being whose being is defined in terms of its being a body’ (personal communication).

to Boddy's brief definition, she uses the term 'individual' in the sense that, as we have seen, is grounded in Western notions of person and self. Linked to this is the idea of 'permeability' and 'flexibility' when it comes to boundaries between individuals and their environment. The latter possibility is grounded in non-Western notions of self and of person that, at least in the Indian context, have no fixed, lasting reality. The hermeneutics of possession therefore uses a hybrid language, crisscrossing – perhaps unconsciously – between the notions of individuality and fixity which researchers themselves carry and 'blurred', fluid boundaries and identities encountered in the field. I argue in this essay that our understanding of possession and of alterity as divine intervention involves a mixing together of different voices, ideologies, and 'life-worlds' in a dynamic, 'swirling' conversation. These entangled, hybrid, perhaps fused, and yet oftentimes divergent views of self are a crucial component in arriving at a critical, and possibly radical new understanding of what we have been calling 'possession', and how we talk about it.

The discussion of 'modern' and 'pre-modern' notions of subjectivity outlines the framework in which I will present the following ethnographic case study of a Hindu deity in the Central Himalayas. Before presenting these materials, I found it necessary to first lay bare the categories and concepts that are inextricably tied up with the colonial and post-colonial enterprise of scholarship, particularly the scholarship dealing with South Asia. As Peter van der Veer, in his review of Asad's work, points out:

the project of modernization, which is crucial to the spread of colonial power over the world, provides new forms of language in which subjects understand themselves and their actions [...] it is almost impossible to escape these categories of western history, such as "public" and "private", "religion" or "history" when writing the history of other societies.

(van der Veer 1995, 366)

Much of what I am exploring then is my own attempt to unravel the taken-for-granted conceptual underpinnings and biases of the way I perceive the powerful experiences I have encountered during my fieldwork with regard to Goludev, the Central Himalayan 'God of Justice' (*nyay ka devta*).

3 Central Himalayan possessions

Goludev is the principal deity (*istadevata*) of almost all 'high' and 'low' caste communities, including Thakur (Rajput), Brahman and Dalit, located in the northern Indian province of Kumaon, a mountainous region that borders on Nepal in the east and Tibet in the north, flanked by some of the highest peaks in the Indian

Himalayas. There are several shrines and smaller temples of Goludev scattered over the region, but the deity's main temples are situated in Chittai (Almora dist.), Ghoda Khal (Nainital dist.), and Champavat (Pithoragarh dist.). The location of these temples is linked to Goludev's biography, with each temple being connected to different incidents in his life. For example, the temple in Champavat, which is the smallest of the three temples, is linked to Goludev's birthplace, and the capital of his father, King Jhal Rai. The temple in Ghoda Khal, where the incident described below involving the young woman embodying the Goddess takes place, is associated with Bhagoli Mehra, a woman devotee of Goludev who draws the deity to this location to deal with the abuse she is encountering from her in-laws.

The journey from Champavat to other locations traces a movement of the deity, driven by the pursuit of justice, across the region, which then gets established as the kingdom of Kumaon under his jurisdiction. Significantly, his powerful sense of justice derives from his own experience of injustice as a child.⁸ Goludev's devotees are able to solicit his intervention in matters of justice (a category used here to cover a wide range of life concerns) in two predominant ways. The first way of requesting his mediation is through the submission of written petitions (*manauti*) in his main temples mentioned above that are also described as 'courts of justice' (*kaccheri*). The second manner of soliciting his advice and intervention is through an oracular ritual called *jagar* (see Malik 2009; 2011; 2015; 2016).

The petitions can be written on official stamp paper but also on blank sheets. These are offered to the deity in his temples, where they are hung together with hundreds of brass bells that are gifted to the deity if the petitions are successfully dealt with. The petitioners' concerns are varied: conflicts over land-ownership and property, success in examinations, health, business deals, marriage, divorce, children, mental problems, addiction, enemies, lotteries, elections, success with job applications (see Agrawal 1992; Malik 2015; 2016). The second important manner, besides petitions, in which Goludev deals with matters of justice (and indeed healing) is through what may, in conventional terms, be described as an oracular trance ritual, but which I will refer to as a ritual of embodiment called *jagar* (see Malik 2011). *Jagar* means 'waking', 'staying awake', and is sometimes translated as 'night vigil'. The *jagar* can therefore be described as an intense ritual of 'awakening' for both deity and devotees (see Kregel 1999, 281).

⁸ For a synopsis of Goludev's biography, see Malik 2016.

The *jagar* has two main actors: a singer or bard called the *jagariya* (literally ‘awakener’) and the person entering into a so-called trance who is called the *dangariya* (see Malik 2009). Both *jagariya* and *dangariya*, in contrast to the high-caste priests of the larger temples of Goludev, may often, though not always, belong to low-caste Dalit communities. The *dangariya* is, more importantly for the questions that will arise below regarding the young woman’s embodiment as the Goddess, also called *nacnevala* (dancer). Like written petitions, the concerns of devotees during a *jagar* can vary, though often the presence of the deity is used to establish the hidden causes of illness, misfortune or injustice (see Kregel 1999; Leavitt 1997).⁹

4 The woman who is goddess

My case study focuses on a young woman who is ‘spontaneously’ possessed by the Goddess in the temple that was established through Bhagoli Mehra, the woman devotee of Goludev mentioned above.¹⁰ The young woman embodies the Goddess (*Devi*) during the *Navaratra* festival, the festival of nine nights, which celebrates the deeds of the Goddess ending with her slaughter of the buffalo-demon, *Mahishasura*, who has usurped control of the universe from the gods. By slaughtering the buffalo-demon, the Goddess is able to restore balance – *dharma* – in the world. This narrative dealing with the Goddess’s warring deeds is first found in a Sanskrit work from the 6th Century CE called the *Devi-Mahatmya* (see Coburn 1991). It is subsequently narrated along with extensive instructions for the ritual propitiation of the Goddess in a 12th Century CE Sanskrit work called the *Kalika-Purana* (see van Kooij 1972). In addition, the story has almost universal occurrence across the Indian sub-continent in the form of narratives, and ritual enactments often involving animal sacrifice.

⁹ *Jagars* are most often performed in the environment of a devotee’s home into which the singer and dancer are invited. Immediate family members, but also a wider public from the village participate as the audience.

¹⁰ While this incident happens outside the ritual framework of the *jagar*, it is not uncommon that a person may embody a deity within the sacred space of the temple.

4.1 The setting

Several hundred families and pilgrims are visiting the temple and performing *puja* (worship) in front of the shrine of Goludev. Diagonally opposite the shrine, in front of a set of three-pronged trees, is a *dhuni* (sacred fire) that is smouldering with large logs, and halves of dry coconuts that have been split open for pilgrims to take home the tender kernel as *prasad* (consecrated food). A few metres behind the *dhuni*, along the outer wall of the temple, there is a small newly erected room with pictures of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman. Inside the room, whose doors are wide open, the uncle of the priest of the Goludev temple sits reciting the story of Rama from the *Ramcaritmanas*.¹¹ The recitation continues uninterrupted during the day over the entire 9–10 days of the *Navaratra* festival. Pilgrims visit the priest's uncle, who is himself a priest of the temple of the goddess in another village, for blessings. A family performs *kanya puja* with a group of young girls.¹² It is perhaps the third or fifth day, perhaps even later into the festival. It is late morning, approaching noon.

4.2 The incident

Suddenly there is a young woman, in her mid-twenties, who arrives at the *dhuni*. She has a large, scarlet rhododendron flower in her mouth. She begins to circle the fire. People milling around move away to give her room, forming a circle of on-lookers. The elderly drummer who is sitting with his back to the wall of the small room beats his drum; there is a distinctive but somewhat weak rhythm. The young woman begins to dance to the rhythm, all the while circling the fire. At one point she trips over one of the logs and falls badly on her side, almost into the fire. A middle-aged woman – her mother perhaps – tries to help her up. She continues around the fire one more time, then she drags a large log that is partially burning to the edge of the temple floor to the left of the drummer and the small room. She is handing out coconut halves to pilgrims who come up to her to accept the *prasad*. ‘Who is this woman?’ I ask people standing near me. ‘It is Devi, the Goddess’, they answer.

The young woman moves away after a short while from where she is sitting and positions herself in an area about two metres in front of the main shrine.

¹¹ This is a retelling of Ramayana in Avadhi-Hindi by the poet Tulsidas: 16th Century CE.

¹² This involves the worship, feeding and giving of gifts to seven pre-pubescent girls who are treated as manifestations of the Goddess (Shakti).

There are crowds of people either sitting or bending under the low-lying roof of the shrine. A priest sits inside the shrine and another stands in front reciting in Sanskrit, conducting *puja* for groups of families clustered around the narrow opening of the small shrine. There is a lot of bustle and noise from the people talking, the recitation, the ringing of bells. Amidst the loud recitation and ringing of bells, the young woman speaks in a clear, strident voice that is audible above all the clamour. She asks a straightforward question that initially flusters the priest: 'Who are you worshipping? Do you know who you are worshipping?' The priest stops his recitation and begins to answer hesitantly that it (i.e. the *puja*) is for Goludev. But she continues asking questions in an even louder, more penetrating voice: 'For whom are you performing *puja*? If you don't even know for whom you are doing *puja*, then what exactly is it that you are doing? You should perform *puja* for each individual family in a clear manner, not collectively for everyone!' After a short time, the young woman moves from her position near the shrine to the room in which the elderly priest is reciting episodes from the Ramayana. She begins to take slow steps around the priest, sprinkling consecrated water over the white cap he is wearing. The priest does not look up or stop his recitation. She sits down in front of the priest, swaying slightly to the rhythm of his recitation. Before I enter the small room, I have a brief conversation with the priest of the temple. He asks me whether I have had *darshan* ('seeing', audience) [of the young woman]? I answer in the affirmative, but he continues in a somewhat derisive manner that he's not sure about this *darshan* – he doesn't quite understand what's going on here... it could be anything, he can't say. I ask him: 'Is it Devi?' He says one can't say for sure...

4.3 The conversation

After a while the young woman stands up and begins to have a conversation with her family members:

I'll tell you after six months. No one has asked me yet! If no one has asked me what should I say? No one has come here. People from the family should come here. If anyone dies in your family, if someone's head gets cut off, it's not my responsibility... even if I come into anyone's body... if anything happens... if anyone gets killed. I told them to phone up and call people [from the village]. Now I'm going to fulfil your wishes and everyone else's in the temple [but not those who haven't come here]. I came to the temple to tell you this. This temple has [only] one rule, which is, if they get money they will perform *puja*, otherwise they won't. [i.e. they are only interested in money]. If they get money they will perform *puja*. This drummer only plays if he gets money in his pocket. The temple stays open for 24 hours and so should the drummer [be here and play]... this drummer's desires will never be fulfilled... his stomach will never be satisfied... I'm telling you this... If anything happens to anyone else, I'm not responsible. I'm responsible for the family who came with me.

5 The swirl of worlds

Whereas possessed bodies were likely to be approached as anachronistic bodies influenced by beliefs that the scholar did not hold, I have argued for an approach that both acknowledges that the possessed body is powerful and that scholarly studies of possession are produced by a desire to be in proximity to alterity, which is often masked as an intellectual desire to explain the possession...
 Mary Keller (2002, 103)

How do we frame, represent or understand this ‘incident’? Can we claim that this is indeed *divine embodiment*? Or is this the only way an otherwise socially oppressed young woman can articulate her ‘voice’?

Let us look at what she is saying and doing. Her words seem all along to be unflinchingly critical. There is a quality of straightforwardness to them as she speaks both to the temple’s priests but also to her own family. Her comments about the temple and its custodians are biting and precise, uncovering their corrupted and lax operation of what, according to her, ought to be a pristine location of worship and service. Her speech toward her family is reproachful and threatening, pointing out that they and others have not granted her the attention she deserves: But then she also turns to blessing the family who has gathered around her, while making it clear that people from the village who did not heed her call to come to the temple on that day would not be blessed. Moreover, her speech has the nature of a foreshadowing, of a prophecy; it is even oracle-like. She expresses a purposefulness and foreknowledge of her actions. At the same time there is a cryptic quality to what she is saying, a sense of some purpose that is still hidden from the view of her family and onlookers: a purpose to her presence at the temple that will be revealed only in time. These pronouncements and their implicit but simultaneous meanings as being threatening, revealing, hidden, critical, reproachful, benevolent, and foreknowing taken together create the conditions for authority, power, and sovereignty that she, as Goddess, exemplifies. Her pronouncements also make it clear that the Goddess is aware of her own capacity to ‘occupy’ a body for the purposes of such a visitation. By virtue of this self-conscious statement, the Goddess is also making a vital distinction between herself and the body she ‘instrumentalises’. The Goddess’ pronouncements importantly represent a *prophetic* voice. Prophetic not just in the sense that it alludes to something in the future being revealed or a prefiguration of present events, but also in that it represents a voice from within the religious institution itself that is intensely critical of the corrosion that has crept into the structures of that very institution. The Goddess’ statements are both dissenting and rejuvenating at the same time, with the explicit rationale of restoring the original purpose – indeed *dharma* – of the temple and its functionaries. She mirrors the objective of the Goddess in texts such the *Devi-Mahatmya* and *Kalika-Purana* toward the restitution of a cosmic

order that has degenerated on account of the entropy-creating usurpation of power in the world through demonic forces. In addition to the force of her speech, the Goddess' movements with regard to her own body but also through different spaces of the temple compound are significant. Her actions are designated as *nacna* (dancing), which is also used to describe the actions of a person appointed to embody a deity during a *jagar*. Her movement across different spaces of the temple involves a circular motion around the sacred fire and the priest who is reciting the Ramayana. But it also involves her sitting directly opposite the deity's image in front of his shrine, and, after she has circled him, sitting opposite the priest. The circular movement around the fire, and the priest, are indicative of the clockwise circumambulatory steps (*pradaksina*) that pilgrims or devotees undertake while paying their homage to a sacred object or person as the case may be. While the sacred fire is an obvious choice in terms of importance in the geography of the temple, the reason for her election to circumambulate the priest is not immediately apparent. This seems to be connected to the strong, yet 'invisible' charismatic attraction of the priest who single-mindedly and passionately pursues his uninterrupted chanting of the story of Rama. Throughout this event, the priest does not waiver in his concentration or allow himself to be distracted, even though the young woman walks closely around him, laying her hand on his head as a form of blessing, and even sprinkling consecrated water over him. Later she sits down facing him in close proximity, just as she has done in front of the main image of the deity, although there the crowds of devotees keep her from getting as close as she does to the priest. The Goddess' presence is thus made known through a series of significant utterances but also bodily movements identified as dance resulting from her circling the sacred fire and the priest.

Returning to the questions put at the beginning of this section: How do we explain what is going on here? Is it divine embodiment? Or is the young woman expressing her 'voice'? In other words, does it involve the Goddess' agency or the woman's? I consider it worthwhile at this point to introduce some ideas put forth by Mary Keller (2002) who uses Asad's work on the 'Genealogies of Religion' to critically appraise the question of possession, agency, and women. There are several important issues that Keller raises, particularly with respect to the notion of agency that in post-colonial scholarship is 'cheerfully' attributed to third-world subjects, in particular to the 'rediscovery' of women as agents. Keller (2002, 62f.), while emphasising the need to historicise scholarly discourse in terms of culture and power – particularly with regard to the concept of 'religion' – signals the peculiarity of the attribution of 'voice', that is both withheld and granted by the same instance of authority, namely, 'imperialism' (in the colonial context) and 'global capitalism' (in the contemporary political context). Keller, following the work of Asad, suggests that the notion of a bounded or 'buffered' person only arose in

the post-Enlightenment epoch in which several radical divisions were made, the most significant being perhaps the division between the state and the church, but also, through the work of Descartes, as pointed out previously, the division between mind and body. Within these far-reaching alterations to the view of society and human beings' place in the world, the foundations for the idea of an autonomous individual or rather *agent* were also laid. Asad argues that the idea of an autonomous individual in charge of her/his destiny replaces the 'pre-modern' understanding of person and of body that was not as an autonomous agent but as an instrument through which divine power (*disciplina*) could flow. He states that the modern, privatised notion of religion specifically, and modernity in general, 'extinguishes various possibilities', one of them being perhaps a notion of the religious body and 'human subjectivity to be at the disposal of God's will' (ibid., 56). Furthermore, he argues that agent does not equal subject ('where the former is the principle of effectivity and the latter of consciousness'); they 'do not belong to the same theoretical universe' (ibid., 63f.). Keller develops this idea in a new framework for understanding possession, particularly possession involving women, in her notion of *instrumental agency*. Instrumental agency, in distinction to the idea of autonomous agency, suggests the possibility of agency not based on the idea of a bounded, discreet individual, but rather on that of the body as a field upon which various socio-biological forces converge, and that is open to the work of divine power: 'The body that navigates these systems is understood to be instrumental rather than self-constituting; it is tempered by social and biological forces' (ibid.). Consequently, Keller argues that '[p]ossession is not a symbol for action; it is action or *disciplina* that produces knowledge in the bodies of the possessed. The possessed body is an instrumental agency – a body marked by its activity'. Simultaneously, Keller suggests that instrumental agency, rather than being a matter of individual volition and intentionality, is created through the agreement of a social group or community. Here again, agency shifts from being located in the private, and perhaps even isolated realm of the individuated self, to that of the shared space of the public realm. The critical issue then of how we view and approach the phenomenon of 'possession' rests on our conceptualisation of what constitutes agency and person or rather 'subject'. As I have already pointed out, in the Indian context, the reality of the social subject is deconstructed because it is based on a false apprehension of the concreteness of a bounded, individualised self.

I maintain that it is valuable to use Keller's idea of instrumental agency as being created through a set of 'social and biological forces' by taking this further to include, in a deeply constitutive manner, different voices making up a *conversation* that embraces divergent pronouncements: those that affirm the presence of the Goddess, those that are sceptical or doubtful of it, and even those that

downright deny its possibility. For example, the young woman's family and several visitors to the temple affirm the presence of the Goddess; the main priest of the temple occupies an ambivalent or sceptical position. Scholars, however, are unsure, since to agree with the devotees' perspective would be tantamount to surrendering scholarly distance and objectivity. But to completely deny the possibility of the 'reality' of what is happening would amount to *too much* objectivity, and the extinguishing, as Asad puts it, of 'various possibilities'. All these perspectives – those of the young woman's family, the devotees, the drummer, the priest, the Goddess, the scholars – constitute the 'reality' of the Goddess' embodiment-presence. Her embodiment is made up, so to speak, of a 'swirl of worlds': each given by a different set of concerns, but none, however, being necessarily privileged over another.

6 The play of conversation

The notion of a 'swirl of worlds' is inspired by Hans-Georg Gadamer's exposition of 'Dialogue' and 'Conversation'. Gadamer uses the metaphor of conversation to describe how we can enter into a dialogue that leads to understanding (*Verstehen*).

[It] is a process of two people understanding each other. Thus it is a characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual, but what he says. The thing that has to be grasped is the objective rightness or otherwise of his opinion, so that they can agree with each other on a subject. (Gadamer 1979, 347)

Gadamer maintains that knowledge is not fixed or static but that it arises out of a dialogic process of interaction. This dialogic process requires each 'speaker' or 'participant' to both acknowledge and 'unconceal', so to speak, their inherent prejudices or 'horizons'.¹³ Without engaging in this process of revealing or 'unconcealment' of prejudices, there can be no fruitful dialogue or understanding. While Gadamer (2004, 361) stresses the importance of texts and their interaction within a history of interpretation, his idea of conversation is particularly crucial because it suggests the aural and spoken nature of dialogue and therefore

¹³ See also Smith, M. K. (2001). I prefer to use the word 'concern' rather than prejudice to indicate the issues or questions speakers are dealing with in their lives that they then bring to a conversation.

'emergent' nature of knowledge. Gadamer's idea of conversation – like his notion of play (*ibid.*, 104f.) – can be likened to a medial plane in which the subjectivity of the speakers (or players as the case may be) is not in the foreground. It is the conversation (or game) that is in the foreground, having an existence that is almost independent of the speakers; the speakers' subjectivity is held in abeyance, much like the subjectivity of a possessed person. The speakers, in fact, enter and explore the emerging terrain of the conversation that unfolds as they speak. This is quite distinct, for example, from a discussion or debate that involves one speaker convincing the other speaker through argument or persuasion of the validity of their point of view. A dialogue, on the other hand, involves a willingness to be open such that third possibilities emerge from the conversation that may or may not have the quality of a conclusion. In fact, the 'end' of a conversation may be 'inconclusive': the point being one of revealing or 'unconcealing' a series of insights or questions that the theme of the conversation calls upon or draws out from itself. Following on from Gadamer's notion of a conversation, I elucidate a 'swirl of worlds' as follows.

Individual human beings or communities represent 'points of view' or horizons (to put it in Gadamer's terms) that are constituted by inherent and often unexamined interests or concerns that determine the constraints or limitations of any given horizon. Each horizon represents a world that is constituted by ideas (language) and actions (practices). In encountering a phenomenon like 'possession' we are confronted by a convergence of points-of-view or horizons, each carrying its own set of concerns. Assuming that the body in possession is played upon by 'social and biological forces', that are themselves constituted by a chorus of voices, the 'reality' of possession is made up of a set of hybrid discourses and practices consisting of academic and non-academic ideologies concerning self, body, power, agency and so forth together with academic practices (fieldwork) and non-academic practices (ritual). I am describing this as a swirl because of the shifting, indeterminate, and fluid nature of the interactions between these horizons, which, like spoken conversation, is constantly moving or changing, is sometimes fragmented like utterances, and is both ephemeral and unpredictable. Moreover, the notion of a swirl also suggests an interplay of voices that coalesces into an unconscious eddy that is not always self-reflective in the sense Gadamer suggests of 'unconcealing' hidden prejudices and given, 'always-already' ways of perceiving.

The scholar's perspective is given by a set of concerns that are philosophically grounded in the binary categories of modernity, some of which I mentioned earlier (private–public, religious–secular, mind–body, human–divine, subject–object etc.). The woman's family's and the devotees' concerns, on the other hand, are certainly not given by this set of concerns. There is no primary philosophical

concern with the division between the religious and secular or mind and body or human and divine; rather it is about ‘seeing’ the Goddess and gaining her grace and blessings for everyday matters. The main priest’s perspective is given by a concern to maintain the manner in which he runs and administers the temple. It is not beneficial for him to have a young woman (or Goddess for that matter), publicly proclaim that the temple is a purely financial enterprise not seriously interested in being what a temple ought to be: a place of service, worship, and refuge for devotees.

Gadamer also argues that dialogue is about suspending the notion that any one perspective is more privileged (or more ‘right’) than another. Each horizon is equal inasmuch as it simply represents a particular horizon and nothing more. The critical point is that scholarship, particularly the scholarship on possession, attempts to ‘escape’ this swirl of (equal) worlds by assuming an ‘objective’ position. By participating in a secular, rational, scientific discourse, scholarship is, in fact, that construction of knowledge which attempts to put an *end to the swirling* by claiming it occupies more than just the status of an *interpretation* (in Gadamer’s sense): that it is elevated to the position of scientific *truth*. By presenting itself in this manner it precludes us from seeing the multiple potentials inherent in different situations. But if we are to take the idea of dialogue seriously, then we must consider that scholarship itself is but one perspective within a ‘swirl’ of perspectives, interpretations or points-of-view. The point of the foregoing exploration is to make Gadamer’s notion of dialogue applicable to our understanding of possession: a dialogue, in its most open form, can lead to the formulation of something that is beyond the initiatory statements of each speaker, and the horizons of what they initially know. Thus can we – as scholars – imagine an emergent and continuously expanding context which acknowledges a world in which we can *be another?*

7 Possession as radical alterity

I began this paper by saying that I would examine the possibility of alterity in the context of what is commonly called ‘possession’. ‘Alterity’ as the possibility of the participation and intervention of the ‘divine other’ in human life, I have indicated, exists because of, and through a social *conversation* involving several voices and perspectives belonging both to the scholar and also devotees. I will conclude my presentation of materials from the Central Himalayas by some further remarks about ‘possession’, and about ‘alterity’ in the context of ‘possession’. First, I would like to point out again that there is a steady pre-

occupation, indeed almost fixation, with possession within several scholarly disciplines including anthropology, religious studies, sociology, linguistics, and medical disciplines.¹⁴ Both the desire to study possession and to explain it within frameworks that objectify it and are, in fact, experientially disengaged from it, I am arguing, stem from the challenge that possession poses to the dominant view that religion itself is separate from the public domain permeated by the secular, being rooted in the private domain of individual belief. But more than that, possession occupies one of the significant interstices of the modern age by transgressing and transcending binary categories with which modernity so dearly identifies itself. Modernity crystallises through a series of acts involving critical distancing: the individual from community, community from cosmos, culture from nature, equality from hierarchy, mind from body, and so on. These acts of distancing, furthermore, necessarily result in sets of binary, oppositional categories since modernity itself is predicated and defined on the fundamental distancing between the modern–innovative–new and ancient–traditional–old. We cannot know whether we are the ‘*moderni*’ unless we can contrast ourselves with that which we define as ‘*antiqui*’ (see Benavides 1998). The discursive category of modernity therefore must continuously create, and, in its political manifestations also *intentionally* perpetuate the existence of antagonistic dualities without which it loses legitimacy and force as an intellectual and political ideology. To continue along the lines mentioned previously, to be modern then is to both live and fervently believe in a society that values and, indeed, sustains divisions between public–private, human–divine, human–nonhuman–animal, secular–religious, individual–community, mind–body, and last but not least, bounded/buffered self–porous/permeable self. While these dichotomous categories may seem neutral on paper, in practice they are far from impartial. Thus these oppositional categories involve a suppression in many instances of one of the pairings: the secular is clearly valorised over the religious, which may continue to exist, but only in the private sphere; humans are valorised over non-humans, especially animals, such that their survival can take place at the cost of the extinction of several thousand other species; the mental (mind) is valued over the biological (body) that it can presumably control, understand and analyse; individuals are given priority over the community in their quest for personal success and so on. It is to live in a political state that administers fixed categories of social identity in which *excess* is undermined and even denied. Moreover, individuals are driven by

14 As Boddy (1994, 407) notes: ‘In contrast to anthropological accounts of the body or of time, spirit possession has [...] rarely missed a theoretical beat [...] the subject is thematic for the discipline as a whole in its confrontation with the Other, continuously affirming our identity as anthropologists.’

an inner capacity to shape and manage their lives. Responsibility and cause are redirected almost totally in all possible domains – psychological, legal, social, financial, educational – to the individual or to extensions of the individual such as parents, siblings, peer groups. There is little recourse in the context of modernity to invoke forces or powers that lie beyond or even hidden within individuals' capabilities when it comes to the explanation of their actions.¹⁵

Possession, however, challenges these precise yet value-laden categorisations that lie at the source of modernity and its expression in the modern secular, nation state, and therefore there is a necessity to explain possession through reductionist categories. Possession is somehow that very 'vestige' of the past (the 'pre' or 'non' modern and traditional) – like its larger problematic counterpart religion – which shocks, amazes, and perhaps even embarrasses us in its continued, even thriving, survival within the realms of the scientific, technological, and rational. To allow possession to represent what it is, that is, the possibility of a multi-dimensional self in which self and other are identified through 'equivalence, enmeshing, and continuity' while operating in a public rather than private ritual domain, and the possibility of alterity in the sense of divine 'intervention' as such (whether in the public or private domain), is to question the foundations of a modern secular state built on the notion of the bounded, separate individual who is in complete control of her/his life and destiny. Possession, therefore, in a fundamentally distinctive manner forces us to rethink modern notions of agency and subjectivity. As the possibility of quite literally *being another*, possession thus represents the tangible prospect of a 'radical alterity' which goes beyond even its social, secular meaning. In view of the somewhat uncertain status of the ideological arrow of modernity and of progress in terms of the ecological and political disasters we are encountering today, divine embodiment represents one possibility of an alternative understanding of 'self', and of other ways of being for human beings, that we can take seriously if we are to authentically explore new possibilities for the future of being human.

15 The idea of a subjectivity that is not solely rooted in 'conscious', personal volition, is, of course, close to the experience of many artists, writers and creative individuals including scholars and scientists. Although creative insight may be often experienced as spontaneous, 'unexplained' or even 'channelled', this fact rarely enters scholarly discourse, as the latter has to do with the very opposite of 'insight' and spontaneity, namely reason, logic, argument, and rational thought.

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Christine Dureau

‘Greater love ...’: Methodist missionaries, self-sacrifice and relational personhood

In recent years, the relationship between conversion, culture and personhood has been a key issue in anthropological approaches to Christianity. From one perspective, the force of Christian ideation stimulates reflection on existential and ontological truths. Working with recently converted Urapmin people, Joel Robbins (2002; 2004) argues that conversion prompts or compels a shift to more individualist understandings of the person and erodes relational values because of Christianity’s premise that individual souls have discrete fates. For Robbins (2007), with whom the individualising argument is most famously associated, anthropologists have been prone to ‘continuity thinking’ in depicting conversion in terms of cultural resilience and disregarding the very real impetus for change represented by Christian ideas. For others, such claims risk overplaying the efficacy of exogenous ideologies, underplaying the hermeneutic possibilities of Christian texts, discourses and principles, side-lining social forces and contexts and ignoring the extent of cultural interplay in conversion and later contexts.

Discussion of the issue is often constrained by overdrawn contrasts between Western and non-Western personhood, vague deployments of ‘dividual’ and ‘individual’¹ and limited historical and denominational contextualisation. Anthropological discussions of personhood also articulate with, but pay limited attention to, longstanding questions about Christianity’s relationship to personhood in the Western heartlands whence emanated the great proselytisation projects between the 18th–20th centuries.

I turn the lens back towards one group of European missionaries (see also Lindstrom 2013), analysing published and unpublished materials associated with the late 19th–early 20th century Australasian Methodist Missionary Society (AMMS), based in Sydney, Australia, which oversaw Methodist missions in the

¹ Relationships between the concepts individual, individuality and individualism is often obscure. For my purposes, the *individual* is the particular person, who can be thought of independently of others and, in Christian cosmology, as having a unique soul. They reveal themselves in their *individuality*, that is their persona and particular characteristics, an understanding that Mauss suggests is universal.

Individualism and *individualist*, by contrast, suggest an elevation of the individual as cultural value, as in libertarian political histories, sociobiological reductionism, or ideological celebrations of self-interest.

Pacific and, to a lesser extent, more widely.² To the textual impetus stressed by some and the cultural and political contexts adduced by others, I ask about models of personhood among some of those who tried to convey Christian messages. I touch on relationships between missionary and indigenous outlooks on Simbo, Western Solomon Islands, at the end of my chapter, but my primary focus is on European Methodist missionaries' understanding of moral personhood. I suggest that late 19th–early 20th century Methodist values of self-sacrifice, and their markedly corporeal religiosity, evince aspects of individualist personhood, despite the denomination's close association with individualism, and challenge simplistic associations of Christianity with a single form of personhood.

I particularly focus on two key figures associated with the mission in the Western Solomons, Rev. Dr George Brown (1835–1917) and Rev. John Francis Goldie (1870–1955). Brown, with long missionary experience in Samoa, New Britain and New Guinea, had served as President of the NSW Conference before becoming General Secretary of the AMMS Board of Missions. He had long advocated a mission in the Solomons and, in 1902, led the inaugural mission there before leaving Goldie as Chair, a position the latter then occupied for 48 years.

The two men, who fell out bitterly within a few years, were radically different. Brown was a gregarious hail-fellow-well-met character, making friends with natives, traders, government officials and journalists alike, and generally managing convivial relationships with missionaries of diverse persuasions. Goldie, almost his diametrical opposite, was infamously problematic – egocentric, ungenerous in interpreting others' actions, power hungry, self-interested, unrelentingly hostile to other missions and at odds with colonial officials and other

² Until 1922, when the New Zealand church separated, the AMMS operated on behalf of Australia and New Zealand. Missionaries of European origin came from both countries, and, in German colonial fields, Germany. In the Society's earliest days, most missionaries of European heritage were British, but by the period covered here, most were born in Australia or New Zealand or had immigrated while very young. Of the two I consider, Brown arrived in New Zealand as a young man and married into a prominent missionary family there following his conversion. Goldie, 35 years younger, grew up in Tasmania.

My focus is solely on missionaries of European origin, who are overwhelmingly privileged in the archive, almost silencing the voices of Islander missionaries. Throughout AMMS history, Polynesians, mainly from Samoa, Tonga and Fiji, constituted by far the majority of missionaries, although they were rarely granted that title. Once missions were well established in Melanesian regions, missionaries from those areas also moved to newer fields. My sense is that an account of their understanding of Methodist personhood would reveal an even stronger stress on relationality, porosity and self-sacrifice.

colonial actors (e.g., Carter 1985; Garrett 1982). Yet, different as they were, they shared an understanding of self-sacrifice as key element of Christian personhood and missionary practice.

1 Dividual and individual persons and anthropologists

As Marcel Mauss (1985 [1938], 14) phrased it, those societies that 'have made of the human person a complete entity, independent of all others save God, are rare'. His essay on the person and self, published in English in 1985, sketched a historical account of how the self became, not just 'rational substance, indivisible and individual', but, eventually, 'a consciousness and a category [...] identified with self-knowledge and the [sic] psychological consciousness' (ibid., 20). For Mauss, this individual self was exclusively Western: 'It is formed only for us, among us' (ibid., 22). Marilyn Strathern's *The Gender of the Gift* (1988) apparently demonstrated this point.

Strathern posed a heuristic contrast between Western and Melanesian notions of the person, opposing a Western conceit of the individual as bounded, complete and possessing their own selfhood to hypothetical Melanesian models of the person as dividual, constituted as a composite being out of the totality of their relationships with others and made so through partibility. For Melanesians, she posited, the person was made as corporeal and social being through exchanges of parts of selves.

Strathern adapts McKim Marriott's (e.g., 1976) concept of the Hindu 'dividual' to carry her critique of anthropological approaches to gender relations in Melanesia, which she saw as constrained by problematic grounding in Western individualist presumptions.³ In particular, she argues, feminist analyses of Melanesian persons are unreflectively informed by the proprietary expectations of

³ Strathern describes her focus as Melanesian gender relations but the book is largely directed against interpretations of those Papua New Guinea (PNG) Highlands societies said to be characterised by gender antagonism and female exploitation. It is with this in mind that she repeatedly asserts that she is not claiming that Melanesians see things as she outlines them, so much as developing an imaginative heuristic opposition between 'Melanesia' and the 'West' in order to challenge the ways 'we', her ubiquitous construct, conceive of relationships in Melanesia. As such, it is, as much as anything, an exercise in adamant relativism.

The book develops her earlier concerns with the tension between anthropology's disciplinary cultural relativism and the political commitments of feminism (e.g., 1981; 1985). For a severe critique, see Kirby 1989.

Western personhood in which persons own or control their own activities, identities, bodies, etc. She also criticises ‘society’ as a flawed abstraction because scholars conceive of it as composed of relationships between (ideally) autonomous individuals. These understandings, she asserts, lead scholars to depict situations in which individual persons clearly do not possess themselves as forms of inequality and exploitation, interpretations which she sees as inapplicable to dividualy-oriented Melanesia.

For Strathern, the dividual, as a composite person, is constituted out of parts of others, corporeally made through directly or indirectly ingesting their substances, for example, when women transmit their husband’s seminally-conveyed patrilineal substance through their breastmilk or when the food that they produce is gifted to, and consumed by, others. Here, elements of the self are detachable and passable to others, constituting transformations of land, substance and labour, just as the self is made through others’ detached and conveyed parts in the kin, affinal and wider social exchanges of quotidian and ritual life.

Like Marriott, Strathern’s analysis was definitively regionally focused. However, while her gender analysis was criticised (e.g., Biersack 1991; Jolly 1992; Josephides 1992), the idea of the dividual was widely taken up as anthropologists noted its utility in diverse contexts and the value of its challenge to Eurocentric perceptions that the individual is universally taken to be the fundamental human agent. This dissemination has depended on significant conceptual slippage (see also Robbins 20015, 178 n. 4). In particular, it is often stripped of key elements. For Strathern, relational values – a stress on persons as properly enmeshed in relationships with others, rather than individually autonomous – are a necessary premise to ideas of giving and taking substance, but insufficient in themselves to constitute dividualism. Her dividual is not only relational, but definitively composite and partible.

In much literature deriving from Strathern, though, ‘dividual’ refers more generically to properly relational persons. The dividual is variably painted as permeable, open to other forces or the forcefulness of others, corporeally open through the senses, emotions, etc., morally judged according to their participation in sociality. This synonymising sometimes risks bleeding out the conceptual traction of the ‘dividual’ ideal type, suggesting the need for careful conceptual delineation (Weber 1977 [1904]; Gerring 1999).⁴

⁴ A further consequence of the concept’s wide application is that Strathern’s West–Melanesia distinction is transformed into a West–Rest binary: the individual distinctively Western, others dividualist. In fact, her ‘Melanesia’ was unduly generalised and conceptually problematic (Keesing 1992), largely drawing upon a limited range of societies in inland PNG New Guinea. While she addresses other Melanesian ethnographic data, she consistently returns to those inland and

Still, the concept's diffusion opens up productive questions about relationships between personhood, culture and social and cultural change. In many ways, the disciplinary debate about Christian in/dividualism is now void. Many scholars have noted that the dividual–individual distinction is overdrawn and observed the frequency of relational forms of personhood in the heartlands of individualist ideologies. And the point that both individualist and relational modes of personhood can be found in any given cultural world has been widely taken up (e.g., Conklin, Morgan 1996; LiPuma 1998; Kusserow 1999). Most would now agree that forms of individualism and dividualism are best treated as 'dynamics that mutually implicate each other' and are variably present and available to individuals in different contexts (Bialecki, Daswani 2015, 272).

As Bialecki and Daswani (2015, 285) note, the challenge now is to problematise the dividual–individual binary while avoiding the banal 'milk-and-water claim that all humans are admixtures of both'. Even Robbins, who, in a sense launched the debate, has moderated his early depiction of Christianity as 'unrelentingly individualist' (2004, 293) to more recently (e.g. 2015) stressing the tension between collective and individual personhoods in some forms of Christianity. The continuing salience of the distinction, then, lies in the ways in which it enables us to more fully map the scope and variability of personhood and, within Christianity, the social and historical dynamics of relationships between dividualism and individualism as they manifest in different times and places. It is in this context that I consider one of the reputed heartland religions in the development of individualism. I characterise Methodist missionaries as both individual and quasi-dividual, suggesting that their efforts to enact the ideal of Christianity as a global community of fellow believers, each possessing unique souls, reflect both understandings.

2 Methodist in/dividuals: 'heart, soul, and mind'

Scholars have long noted affinities between Christianity, the emergence of individualist understandings of the person and the contraction of collective forms of sociality in Euro-American societies (e.g., Weber 2001 [1905]; Mauss 1985 [1938]; Dumont 1985). Mauss links the long unfolding of cultural emphases on individual

highlands societies for the drivers of her argument. Elsewhere in the region, such as the Western Solomons, some of the characteristics she attributes to the dividual are arguably discernible but, as Robbins (2015, 178 n. 4) notes of Urapmin, the concept is inapplicable 'in its canonical Melanesians sense'.

being to early Christianity and sees Protestantism as particularly contributing to its consolidation. Max Weber famously developed a complex account of the relationship, rejecting the idea that Protestantism *tout court* seeded modern individualist orientations. Surveying a range of denominations and historical periods, he insisted that the particular implications of particular theologies at particular historical moments (Calvinism in 16th-century Europe and Methodism in 19th-century North America) were crucial elements in the web of capitalism, modernity and individualist personhood. E. P. Thompson (1963), singles out English Methodism as playing a distinctive part in taming worker intransigence, undermining communal life and nurturing capitalist worldviews and a worker persona compatible with the needs of emerging capitalism, depicting the two as co-emergent.⁵ These formulations contain little sign of Christianity as a monolithic thing that, in and of itself, generates a single mode of personhood, albeit Mauss' brief account threatens it. Even Thompson, with his sometimes simplistic treatment of religion as a justifying ideology, insists on the significance of particular Christian forms.

Methodism, itself, was incredibly diverse in its forms and emphases. It was characterised by what David Hempton (2005, 7) portrays as a fruitful 'dialectical friction'. Among the several apparent contradictions that Hempton notes, two are particularly germane to my argument. It was, he says, 'a movement of discipline and sobriety, but also of ecstasy and enthusiasm [...] [and] a voluntary association of free people, but also specialized in rules, regulations, and books of discipline' (ibid.). Theologically, too, it drew on only partially compatible influences: Lutheran authoritarianism, Calvinist guilt, disciplined asceticism and 'obsession with personal salvation', and Arminian insistence on universal salvation, among others (van Noppen 1995).

Members juggled the dangers of backsliding with the hopefulness of salvation, a tension partially resolved by its stress on self-improvement (ibid., 701). Although this was ideally directed at the inner life, many Methodists interpreted social success as indices of spiritual standing. But the idealisation of self-improvement also informed the sense of ethical imperative to engage in good works for many Methodists, such as the AMMS missionaries, in a religion with a longstanding missionary orientation. These multiple simultaneous dialectics go some way to explaining the religion's many schisms as well as its capacity to adapt to diverse circumstances (cf. Hempton 2005). And they gave shape to the ways in which Methodist personhood could partake of both individualism and

⁵ Weber's and Thompson's accounts are as infamous as famous. Both are widely criticised for empirical inaccuracy and Thompson for his hostile attitude to the Methodism in which he was raised. Yet, they remain crucial contributions to understanding the historical/cultural location of personhood.

dividualism. As Hempton (2005, 34) notes, it 'tempered enthusiasm with discipline and rugged individualism with communal accountability'.

Methodism was famously individualist. Each member was understood to have been personally saved and converted. Testimonials, presented in collective contexts and showing archetypal features, were taken to be personal accounts of direct relationship with God, a relationship furthered through personal bible reading and private prayer in order to '[work] at their own salvation', as one of Brown's and Goldie's contemporaries, Joseph F. Anderson (1920, 69) phrased it. Further, the expectation that Methodists strive for self-improvement as a manifestation of their salvation, a self-growth that spilled over to worldly life, was frequently articulated in terms of individual responsibility and achievement.

Missionaries reflected this orientation. Applicants were understood to have been individually called and expected to give an account of their personal conversion and to teach personal responsibility and industriousness in the field (Dureau undated [a]). The hagiographies, biographies, autobiographies and biographical snippets in Methodist media highlight individual as much as collective achievement. Brown's autobiography, for example, is very much an account of a famous individual, clearly intended to vindicate his own actions and stances and sustain his reputation (e.g., 1908, 250–87). And self-sacrifice, as the term suggests, was understood as autonomous, personal endurance of the hardships of their calling. But, in understandings of the ideal Christian, notions of an individual soul and self-owned body were imbricated in relational, open forms of personhood, self-sacrifice being one instance of this only partially-bounded individual.

Methodism was assertively a religion of experience, drawing on Wesley's perception that 'experience leads and theological reflection follows' (Skuce 2012, 17; cf. Rall 1920). Ritual practices like united prayer, revival, exhortation and testimony, passionate hymnody and love feasts,⁶ generated a 'feeling, penetrable self' in the *communitas* of collective effervescence (Anderson 2012, 8; Turner 1969; Turner 1971/72). 'Such were the places, par excellence, where the Methodist message moved from print to voice, from individualism to community, from cognition to emotion, and from private to public' (Hempton 2005, 79).

Methodist hymnody and love feasts exemplify this intersection of ideation and embodiment. Hymnody was how 'the followers of the Wesleys learned their theology', 'an expression of individual and corporate affirmation, an aid to memory, a trigger of religious emotion, and a creator of spiritual identity' (Chilcote 2014, 157;

⁶ Anderson described the love feast as a 'simple meal, or feast of love [...] kept by the early Christians, which, [...] was revived by Mr. Wesley, and is observed now by the Church [...], largely as a preparation for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper' (1909, 58; see also Bucke 1963; on longstanding criticisms of love-feasts for reputed licentiousness, see Hempton 2005).

Hempton 2005, 100; see also van Noppen 1995; Wallace 2009). And well into the 20th century, an American Methodist, Emory Stevens Bucke (1963, 11), described the love feast as ‘a place of joyous witness for Christ’ which ‘affects some hearts more deeply than any formal sermon’.

While revivals and love feasts were occasional, even the less intense weekly services, with their hymns, preachers’ rhetorical skills and build-up to the sermon as the highpoint of the service (Wood 2015), reinforced a spirituality marked by both intellect and passion. Such experiences, explicitly intended to provoke emotional and spiritual intensity, a passionate embodied sense of oneness of community and spirit, and leaving individuals with a sense of openness to their fellows and penetration by the Holy Spirit, challenged the self-possessed individual.⁷ In significant part, then, Methodist personhood was properly entangled with others and experienced as porous. As the American Episcopalian Methodist, Harris Franklin Rall (1920, 486), put it, ‘its [early] constant stress on the indwelling and enabling Spirit of God was a real preparation for the God of our present faith, working not as irresistible power exercised from without, but in the immanence of a moral and personal presence’.

In an address to novice missionaries in 1901, Brown reflected this porosity, admonishing them to be open to spiritual forces:

[Y]ou must have the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, dwelling with you and *in you*, you must be strengthened with might by *His Spirit in the inner man*, that Christ may *dwell in your hearts* by faith, as the essential condition of the faithful ministry. [...] *Filled with that Spirit*, you, too, in His name and by His power, can and must seek and save that which is lost, and point them to the Lamb of God. (AMMR 1901, 5, my emph.)

⁷ The extent to which Methodists embraced emotive rituals varied historically, denominationally and geographically. Turner (1971/72, 197; see also van Noppen 1995; Hempton 2005) points to processes of gradual routinisation as it became a more middle-class religion, entailing a progressive ‘[inhibition] of the expression of emotion and enthusiasm [...]’. A propensity to sing hymns loudly is probably the only survival of past emotions’. My sense is that he overstates the totality of the decline. At least as late as the 1960s, for example, the then-chair of the Methodist Mission in the Solomons, Rev. George Carter, instigated a revival there. In the early 20th century Australasian Methodism, with which I am concerned, styles and expectations of ritual performance and experience varied according to denomination – Wesleyan, Methodist, Primitive Methodists, etc. – and were patterned by state, class and local histories (O’Brien, Carey 2015).

The mission’s historical remainders distort the mix of emotion and sobriety in favour of the latter. Archived materials reflect administrative requirements and legalistic regulation. Publications, more inclusive of subjective material, are phrased in more reasoned terms than events were experienced or they deploy symbolic shorthand, such as referring to opening a meeting with ‘a hymn’ or to preaching from a particular text. Such materials drew upon the semantic–emotional domain of their community but are opaque to later readers (see also Hempton 2005, 7, 56).

While such accounts of openness are easily read metaphorically, there is literalness to Methodists' innumerable evocations of spiritual penetrability (cf. Turner 1971/72). All of this suggests that the person was understood as tripartite. Anderson (1909, 60), citing Wesley, asserted that a Methodist 'is one who [...] loves the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, and mind, and strength', a phrase he used repeatedly. In this understanding, Methodists must be filled with God's love and driven by it; they must think on things religious and improve their knowledge through education and cultivating rational thought; they must be open to the Holy Spirit. And their good works must be informed by all three. As Brown (*AMMR* 1901, 3) put it in his address to new missionaries, 'You must serve him with all your powers bodily, intellectual, spiritual, and to do this effectively you must take care that all are in the highest possible state of healthy efficiency'.

This conception of an enmeshed, open person of body, mind and soul was reflected in Methodism's social and missionary orientation. As Anderson (1909, 62) phrased it, the 'building up of the Church by leading men into its communion and fellowship' was indissolubly tied to 'the development of activity in all that relates to social, civic and industrial betterment', an imperative expressed in the social gospel.⁸ Stressing Christian responsibilities in the world, the universal potential for salvation and Christ's ministry of healing (Langmore 1989; Stanley 2009), social gospel advocates envisaged the truly Christian person as oriented towards both self-improvement and nurturance of the inner self (an individualist stress) and outwards, away from introspection, and towards the betterment of others (a relational stress).

In 1910, the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, with representatives of Protestant churches from Britain, Europe and North America, proclaimed the theme that had driven the enormous missionary effort of the previous 150 years, 'The world for Christ!', encapsulating a shared aspiration to see humanity encompassed in Christian community. But, as demonstrated by the intense pre-conference debates and negotiation about which denominations might be included and the conference wrangles and compromises, denominational (and other) differences generated as much disagreement as agreement about that envisaged Christian world (Stanley 2009). For Methodist missionaries, the Christian ecumene valorised by the Conference was a vision, not of individuals individually converted and committed, but of intimate oneness arising

⁸ The Solomons mission was established as an industrial mission, the pre-eminent form of social gospel to those who were thought of as primitive or savage peoples, incapable of receiving the gospel directly (Dureau undated [a]; Stanley 2009).

from shared faith, understandings, sentiments and experiences in collective gatherings and the imagined emotional community (Rosenwein 2002) of their religion.

So, the individual was simultaneously individually saved and in individual relationship with God; they were penetrable, open to spiritual force and emotional fellowship; they were relationally entangled with others. And, impelled by Methodism's missionary orientation and expectation that salvation be expressed in good works, missionaries sought to convey the Word to, and radically transform the social worlds of, others. With their often-intransigent insistence on radically remaking local moralities, aspirations and worldviews, the AMMS missionaries promoted individualism against indigenous forms of moral personhood, which they typically disdained as communistic (Dureau undated [a]). But what strikes me is the extent to which such concerns with promoting individualist native characters coexisted with ideals of bringing others into fellowship through self-denial.

3 Sacrificial suffering

Methodist missionary literature of the time is notable for the frequency with which the missionary life is represented as one of self-sacrifice. For Brown (1892, 9), speaking as retiring President of the New South Wales and Queensland Conference, 'a daily manifestation of the spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice, which He [Christ] demands are essential to the possession and development of a true spiritual life', a position that he sustained during his years abroad. In 1875, writing to a cousin about his decision to remain in the mission field instead of returning home to his wife and children, Brown expressed this understanding: 'I feel it to be a great sacrifice and feel it still, but one who is not ready to deny himself has certainly not learned the lesson of self-sacrifice which the life of our Lord teaches us' (quoted in Reeson 2014, 85). Within five years, he made a far more devastating sacrifice.

In 1880, Brown returned to his station in the Duke of York Islands in New Guinea after several months travel, looking forward to reuniting with his wife, Lydia, and the three young children he 'had left so well and strong' (Brown 1908, 346). However, he found the station deserted, the house in disarray and two small new graves the only indication as to why. As became obvious, two of his children had died, and Lydia, shattered, had left with another missionary couple. Re-joining her, they united in their grief and accepted their children's deaths as God's will (*ibid.*, 345–51).

In 1907, Goldie and his wife, Helena, suffered a similar loss: a dysentery epidemic had hit the area, leaving Helena and their daughter, Nellie, near death. And, although probably not due to dysentery, his 10-month old son, 'just the bonniest little chap that ever lived – as strong and well as could be up to last Sunday week' – had died (*AMMR* 1908, 2). Like the Browns and others, the Goldies submitted their grief to God who 'never makes a mistake' (*ibid.*, 3) and remained in the field to continue evangelizing. Missionary publications are replete with accounts like Brown's and Goldie's, the theme of the suffering, and occasionally dying, evangelist suggesting their sense of the immensity and value of their task of evangelizing the world.

As Maya Mayblin (2014) suggests, sacrifice is far from restricted to the ritual and destructive instances, like animal sacrifice, on which anthropologists have classically focused. Describing the unmarked, undramatic form of much self-sacrifice in the lives of the Brazilian Catholics with whom she worked, she calls on anthropologists to consider its frequent mundanity. John Dunnill (2003) makes a similar point about confluences of sacrifice with blood offerings, despite the extent to which biblical accounts are marked by 'the ordinariness of most sacrifice from the perspective of those who practice it [...], a set of practices embedded in the commonplace business of life' in order to integrate 'life into a relation with divinity' (2003, 81f., *passim*).

In the missionary literature, too, undramatic experiences, scattered through diaries, letters and published materials, are frequent. There are innumerable references to years of separation from older children repatriated for their education; of repeated ill health, death scares and complicated childbirth without medical help; of missionary wives' arduous domestic work with limited resources in primitive conditions and loneliness far from kin and subject to their husbands' prolonged absences; of the myriad discomforts of stations and travels and the frustrations of trying to communicate across linguistic and cultural differences. These accounts are often markedly corporeal, evoking bodily suffering – pain, tiredness, illness, etc. – as emblematic of self-sacrifice. AMMS missionaries saw themselves as giving their blood, sweat and tears and conceived of their lives as gifts of themselves. Goldie (*MOM554* 1920), for example, described 'Mrs Goldie [...] [as having] slaved in school and college and hospital – gladly giving her strength for these people who claim such a big place in her heart'.

Such accounts, at least as much as the great dramatic accounts of dangerous voyages and grievous losses, suggest the missionary life conceived as one of self-sacrifice.⁹ They suggest that missionaries' ideological individualism

⁹ It might be argued that it was children who were often sacrificed, given that they died or experienced hardships because of their parents' decisions to go to the field. Maurice Bloch (1992) ar-

depended on ideals of self-surrender in order to bring others into Christianity. True Christians accepted suffering, acknowledging the unrepayable debt established by the Crucifixion: just as Christ suffered and died for humanity, so missionaries must live in ‘a spirit of self-sacrifice and self-denying love’ (Brown 1908, 73, *passim*).

Indeed, self-sacrifice was taken to be a fundamental aspect of missionary work. In 1902, when Brown led the inaugural mission group to the Solomons, the *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review* (AMMR) reported that

a large number of people assembled [...] to say good-bye. [...] Those who were there saw ample evidence of the fact that the unity of faith and works may call for a great self-sacrifice. No one could witness the partings on the wharf without feeling certain that faith and love to God triumphed over the dearest ties. (AMMR 1902, 4)

Suffering was not to be sought. Brown (AMMR 1901), for example, stressed that missionaries were to care for themselves in order to best fulfil their task. But it would come. Going so far as to liken missionary effort to the Crucifixion, Goldie observed:

Twelve years in pioneer mission work has taught us that the road to victory is via Calvary. [...] There is no power that will influence heathen people but the power of love, and love means [missionary] sacrifice. The hands of Christ’s servant must bear the print of the nails. (Goldie 1914, 571)

This unusually explicit and dramatic metaphor is echoed in the numerous evocations and accounts of hardship and missionaries’ willing suffering. Even when authors do not explicitly claim self-sacrifice, their accounts repeatedly conjure that theme, ubiquitously evoking missionary life as an elevated example of Christian self-sacrifice.

gues that the thing or person sacrificed serves as proxy for the sacrificer, establishing an identity between the two. From this perspective, child deaths were the most exquisitely awful of proxies, the child as proxy for the parent (see also Bloch 1992, 26f.). But, so far as child deaths were understood in terms of adult suffering, self-sacrifice obviates this proxy: the sacrificer explicitly is the sacrifice. In the several pages (345-53) of Brown’s autobiography dedicated to his children’s deaths (and Lydia’s and other missionaries’ near deaths during his absence), the missionaries’ anguish bleeds off the page and his details are overwhelmingly devoted to the adults’ suffering as they battled their own illness, strove to save the children and dealt with their deaths. Similarly, Goldie’s brief letter postulates that his son may have died of appendicitis and manifestly conveys his grief, but says nothing of the suffering his child must have experienced. What is conveyed in both accounts is the *missionaries’* suffering – in losing their children they suffered, sacrificing themselves.

There is little doubt that accounts of suffering were intended to stimulate the home support and donations on which the missions depended (Thomas 1992; Samson 2013). They also contributed to the establishment and maintenance of the imagined emotional communities that linked Christians at home, missionaries abroad and convert populations (Haggis, Allen 2008). Scholars have also noted how Victorian and Edwardian women deployed the ideal of the self-sacrificing woman to justify their own missionary aspirations (e.g., Midgley 2006; Hill 2007).

But beyond such instrumentality, accounts of self-sacrifice convey something of the import that missionaries and their supporters ascribed to evangelization and of how Methodist missionaries imagined the moral person. For missionaries and others, being Christian entailed proffering oneself on behalf of others' salvation, the ultimate expression of Christian love. In 1899, Brown (*AMMR* 1901) led a voyage of interested Christians to Melanesia, hoping to stimulate support for the society's work, particularly for the envisaged Solomons mission. His account of the voyage, published in the *AMMR*, is immediately followed by an extract from the *Philadelphia Methodist*, characterising missionary work as the epitome of Christian being, grounded in transcendence of the self on behalf of others:

The missionary spirit is the truest sign of individual Christian and Church life. [...] [M]issionary enthusiasm [...] teaches sacrifice and service as its essential features, and reacts upon the soul with redoubled effect when keyed up to the highest pitch of sublime heroism in the battle for Christianity and humanity. (*AMMR* 1901, 7)

Sacrifice is an inherently social act, typically understood as governed by the logic of exchange and participation in relationships of reciprocity, a meaningful communication with noumenal beings like gods, spirits and ancestors publicly communicated in the material world (Hubert, Mauss 1964 [1898]; Mayblin 2014, 347). For Mauss, as part of ongoing exchanges between cosmic and earthly realms, it implies a gift 'made to men in the sight of the gods' (2002 [1925], 18, 20f.). As such, it is intentional, marked by future orientation, often understood as soliciting a desired outcome.

In Christian cosmology, though, sacrifice lies 'beyond the bounds of normal, reciprocal exchange' (Mayblin 2013, 345; Hubert, Mauss 1964 [1898], 100f.). For missionaries and their interlocutors, sacrificial instrumentality was ideally eliminated in favour of selfless concern for others. Good works should reflect their relationship to God rather than being means of acquiring grace, and they should be an aspect of Christian praxis, reflecting a constant awareness of Calvary as the gift of salvation. So far as self-sacrifice could be understood in terms of exchange or reciprocity, this was inevitably a case of permanent, irreversible debt: Christians forever indebted for the Crucifixion and their own offering of self at most

an obligatory, unworthy emulation, ‘destined, in some *a priori* sense, to be ontologically obsolete’ (Mayblin 2014, 352).¹⁰ Missionary sacrifice, then, was a reflection of Christ’s work of salvation by bringing heathens into communion, Goldie’s likening of his life to Calvary only a somewhat extreme expression of the understanding.

4 In/Dividual missionaries and Christian persons

Does Christianity’s fundamental premise, that each individual has a unique, immortal soul that transcends corporeal mortality, make it an individualising religion? Alternatively, does belief in the Crucifixion and the numerous New Testament accounts of compassionate outreach to others index a fundamentally relational mode of moral being? It is impossible to ignore the individualist aspects of many accounts of self-sacrifice. In conjuring the nails of the cross, Goldie certainly implied his own heroism. Brown (1908), more complexly, also constituted himself as hero and many other accounts are awkwardly placed between self-iteration and spiritual concern. But my concern is not whether individuals achieved the near-impossible task of putting aside their own spiritual and worldly concerns. Nor is my primary aim one of deconstructing discourses of self-sacrifice. Rather, I am interested in what such tropes say about models of Methodist personhood at that historical moment. In particular, how can these understandings be understood relative to questions about the relationship between dividualism, individualism and Christianity more widely?

In the abstract, idealisations of self-sacrifice suggest a moral model of relational personhood. Methodists could be fully, morally, human only in relationship with God and other Christians and by expressing themselves through good works. And salvation, understood as achieved through the self-gift of Calvary, was perceived as the ultimate relational act. But, as Mosko (2015, 376) notes, God’s gift was not, in fact, free. It morally obliged the reciprocity of ‘further

10 The value and status of sacrifice is very vexed in Christian theology. For many, Calvary marks the culmination and end of sacrificial religion. For others, self-sacrifice is oppressive – feminist theologians, for example, have criticised Christian associations of self-sacrifice and virtuous womanhood. For still others, the true Christian embraces the suffering on Calvary by humiliating their own flesh (by flagellation, fasting and other privation) or ‘offering up’ their suffering. In other contexts, Calvary serves as imperative to accept suffering on behalf of others. For still others, ‘a positive understanding of sacrifice’ – one shed of violence and conceived in terms of small recompense to God and eucharistic sharing – ‘remains intrinsic to Christian faith’ (Dunnill 2003, 93; Kirwan 2007).

gift offerings (e.g., with confession of sin, prayers, songs of praise, tithes, glorifications, good works)'.¹¹

Methodists expressed their obligation less economically, elaborating themes of love, joy, fellowship and salvation as a free gift, subject only to its acceptance. But this acceptance established a vertical relationship of submission: of self-will to God's will, of self-interest to the care of others, of self-sacrifice to the quest to extend Christendom. The vertical relationship with God must be expressed in the horizontal relationships of fraternity and sorority with other Christians. The solo Christian engrossed only in their relationship with God was incomplete because they had accepted His love for themselves alone. There is, then, a seemingly endless recursive movement between individual self and personal salvation experienced in one's own embodied soul and selfhood on the one hand, and, on the other, collective, emotional and spiritual openness, expansive sociality and self-surrender. Missionary self-sacrifice epitomised these vertical and horizontal, individual and relational themes, their suffering, offered upwards to God, simultaneously fostering horizontal earthly relationship.¹¹

Christianity has been profoundly linked to the global dissemination of models of the person as a bounded, unique individual (Keane 2007; Robbins 2015), although this is often unduly stressed over other forces (see also Lindstrom 2013, 247). But Methodist missionary personhood was marked by a sense of both a unique, indivisible, but porous, interiority – the Christian individual – and of a less bounded, properly self-giving and relational exteriority.

Even allowing for this doubled self-containment and openness, it would force the concept to interpret Methodist personhood in terms of the partibility and composite personhood of Strathern's 'dividual'. Still, missionary materials do highlight how, even in this profoundly ideologically individualist denomination at the height of its willingness to impose its own versions of civilisation

¹¹ For missionaries, there was a third aspect of Christian relationality. Mirroring the hierarchical relationship with God, their sacrifices placed them in vertical relationship with converts. Drawing converts into the wider Christian community through their self-sacrificing gifts of proselytisation, the missionary was constituted as gift to heathen humanity, as Christ had been gift to humanity. They seem to have comfortably accepted this hierarchy in colonial missions, although it undermined the ideal of co-equal Christian fellowship. The contradiction was resolved by rendering converts eternal children, not yet capable of religious adulthood (Thomas 1992). Their self-sacrifices constituted debts acquired by converts and implied clear expectations of reciprocity. In Goldie's accounts (e.g., 1914), for example, those who rejected conversion, decided to attend other missions – SDA, RC or Anglican – or sought to read their bibles for themselves are characterised as duplicitous, ungrateful, troublemakers or as embracing 'creed without conduct'.

and human development, these Methodist Christians enacted and experienced porous religiosity and relational imperatives.

Goldie went so far as to ascribe the rapid conversion of the Western Solomons to missionaries' suffering. Years after his son's death, he depicted pre-Christian society in terms of evil indigenous sacrifices, juxtaposing it to a Christian life wrought by missionary sacrifice:

Was it worth while [*sic*]? Could the reader [...] see the crowd of bright, intelligent boys and girls, clean, alert, bending over their work with happy eagerness [...] [and] the people [...] reverently and intelligently joining in the service of praise on the very spot where [...] men who had been on headhunting raids came to offer sacrifices and to take part in cannibal feasts, he would say, "Yes, it is worth while".
(Goldie 1922, 6)

Many other missionaries, perhaps less grandiloquently, made similar claims.

World religions gain traction in new locales by becoming substantively meaningful. This may result from their fundamental contrasts to cultural hegemonies, as when the individualist connotations of particular Christianity ideas challenge relational values (e.g., Robbins 2002). But in other contexts, synergies between indigenous and exogenous values may be decisive, as many Pacific theologians, stressing affinities between indigenous cultural values and Christianity, have observed (e.g., Boseto 1983; Namanu 1996; see also Forman 2005).

Despite their best efforts to do so, *AMMS* missionaries did not determine local expressions of Christianity (Dureau 2012). But the sense that individuals, as individuals, must simultaneously surrender their individual selves to collective being echoes many Melanesian understandings of the person as incomplete in and of themselves. Resolute harbingers of new forms of personhood, ideologically disposed to individualist models, missionaries nonetheless idealised the transcendence of individual being. Working in a region where the person was ideally dividual, their message, conveyed in industrial training, school and the ritual life they shared with converts, apparently resonated with indigenous personhood.

On Simbo, a century and more after Christianity arrived as an element in a coercive colonisation, relational personhood is celebrated as both indigenous and fundamentally Christian moral personhood (Dureau undated [b]). People stress moral personhoods contextually and largely understand persons as possessing individual souls, but fully developed only when able to transcend the unitary self. In contemplating death, most worried little about the fate of discrete souls (*cf.* Robbins 2002) and described the afterlife as the time when they will be reunited with dead kin.

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Jutta Vinzent

Challenging personhood: the subject and viewer of contemporary crucifixion iconography

1 Introduction

Vanessa Beecroft's *Black Christ* (2006) is a relatively large digital c-print (230 x 180 cm) of a black Sudanese teenage boy (Fig. 1, see appendix). At first sight, it represents exactly this: a black teenage boy. However, is this really the case? The title hints at the representation of something else and the body's pose confirms that this is not simply a photograph of a boy, but a representation of the crucified Christ. Such iconography brings into question two issues: first, as a photograph, it presents (rather than represents) corporeality of a boy who is not, as in painted or sculpted crucifixions scenes, an imagined figure and thus seemingly removed from the reality of a human being's fleshly body as a model for the representation of Jesus Christ. Second, the art work's title and the body's pose assume an art object that brings into consideration spiritual perception. In other words, one may ask: Is this photograph really an autonomous art work representing an individual person characterised by being male, black and adolescent or a personhood which is marked by plurality, representing something other than itself but, at the same time, presenting a black body? And is this other not existent in a relatedness essential to its understanding rather than being simply a replacement? Differently from painted crucifixions, does not the art form in which the work is executed make it more complex than perceiving the image just as the crucified Christ?

Despite many differences, performance art and photographs of the body have in common that they play with corporeality. As such, the art works are not only objects, but their corporeality (re-)presents and constructs personhood. Previous literature has argued that they do so regarding identity or self, assuming that what is represented is an autonomous individual (Biro 2007; Simpson 2004; Watt 2001). In light of recent discussions in anthropology, which have problematised the conception of the individual, this essay asks to which extent one can speak of the representation of personhood as individual or, as such conceptions in anthropology suggest, as *dividual*, whose characteristics remain pluralistic, conflicting, competing, antagonistic and intersecting, mostly because they foreground that a person is part of something else or consists of diverse parts

rather than being a unit of oneness, completeness and sameness which neglects partiality (Sökefeld 1999).

The urgency of this question is underpinned by literature which deals with modern and contemporary art, that knows of the term *dividual*. Differently from anthropology, however, this literature has not been applied to personhood, but objects. It was particularly Paul Klee (1922) and Gilles Deleuze (1986 and 1992) who developed a theory of the *dividual* in the light of painting and early cinema. Scholars, such as Joanna Latimer (2009), Glenn Peers (2012) and Michaela Ott (2015) have used the term *dividual* in view of Frida Kahlo's self-portraits, Byzantine art, and new technologies, respectively. Hereby *dividuality* is defined by fragmentation and fragility, unstableness and leakiness (Latimer 2009). Peers uses the term to describe 'quasi-objects' that are only superficially objects as opposed to 'discrete entities like individuals' (Peers 2012). Ott has based her book on Deleuze's concept of partiality. She interprets '*dividual*' as part-taking and cites particularly new technology as a reason for the end of the 'distinctiveness and authenticity of the art work' (Ott 2015, 62). Consequently, she then applies the term '*dividual*' to digital art works circulated over the Internet, such as Ursula Biemann's *Egyptian Chemistry* (2012), a multi-channel video installation, with which the artist attempts to penetrate real and virtual realities (Babias 2012). Some contemporary artists also call their work '*dividual*', including Victor Timofeev, who explores hybrid worlds (Hoare 2011).¹ Furthermore, an artist couple under the name *Dividual Notes*, collaborating on Facebook, produces and publishes digital photos from everyday life (*Dividual Notes* 2017). Here *dividual* (though not specifically defined) is understood as being produced by more than one artist and able to be shared with others who can contribute to the work via the Internet. These publications illustrate how widely the term can be used. A common denominator, however, is the foregrounding of partiality rather than wholeness in the sense described above.

The Christian iconography of the crucifixion has received a large number of publications; contemporary crucifixions scenes have usually only been considered regarding their sincerity, which has led to polemics often dismissing entire art works without allowing any second look. For James Elkins, contemporary Christian art is characterised by two types, existing simultaneously side by side, namely 'serious' religious art and that which he describes as 'sceptical, ambiguous, anti-religious, mystical, spiritual' (Elkins 2009; 2004; Elkins, Morgan

¹ The Latvian-born, Berlin-based artist Viktor Timofeev (*1984) grew up in New York, studying at Hunter College, New York from 2002 to 2008. In 2011, he titled one of his works (ink on paper) *192.128.13.15 [Residual Dividual]*, a work which exploits the basics of digital pictures. For his website, see <http://www.viktortimofeev.com>.

2008). These types also differ in their materiality (including original versus reproducible versus original). In response to Elkins, Aaron Rosen assumes one type of contemporary religious art, emphasising the works' complexity and providing deeper interpretations to some of the most contested ones (Rosen 2015, 18).²

The reason for this essay's focus on crucifixions in photography of the body and performance art is that their corporeality heightens in particular the issue of enacting personhood as dividual or individual. Such art works play not only with the doctrine of the crucified Jesus as part of a Trinity with the Father and the Spirit, but also with notions of art and spirituality in a sophisticated and complex manner. This is not to say that dividuality in art objects cannot become visible through other art works; however, I would argue that crucifixions in art forms which foreground corporeality provide a body of works which openly aim at something beyond being simply an individual art work, an image representing Christian iconography or an object revered – candidly manipulating the viewers' spirituality, religious beliefs and aesthetic expectations. The analysis of such works in the light of personhood will provide insights into conceptions of the dividual and individual. In the following, I will first outline anthropological understandings of the dividual, then apply such personhood to the represented in crucifixion art, before exploring the viewership constructed by such art works.

2 Anthropological understanding of personhood

Individuality has been defined as 'indivisible', and in terms of society, the smallest unit to which society can be reduced. It also has been described as fixed, autonomous and self-reflective. In recent years, scholars have increasingly questioned whether subjects are self-contained or rather can be broken down and thus deserve to be called dividual. In this light, dividuality has been described as permeable, relational and positional. They, therefore, usually do not speak of 'subjects' but 'personhood' or self (Smith 2012, 52). As the discussion about the individual and dividual has so far been dominated by anthropology, dividual personhood has often been associated with pre-modern, non-Western con-

² Rosen also suggests that the soaring number of such themes in art has to be seen in light of the increase of 'charismatic groups'. Rosen refers to scholars who even suggest that we may enter a period of 'desecularisation' (Rosen 2015, 18).

cepts (e.g. Strathern 1988; Fowler 2016; Smith 2012).³ Although there are several definitions of dividuality, the term is not a synonym for deindividuation, if the latter is understood as a defiance of individuality or mourning of the loss of the self-contained individual. Instead, dividuality would rather celebrate the partiality of the self, either as division of the self in a process of constant segmentation or as the abandoning of or detaching from a self-contained individuality.

Anthropological approaches, such as that of Marilyn Strathern, posit that the idea of the individual involves that any plurality is encompassed or eclipsed, so that the person is characterised as whole and holistic, self-reflective, ‘complete’ and autonomous (Strathern 1988, 13–5). Dividual personhood, instead, brings plurality to light by detachment of the self. Therefore, the dividual can be understood as divisible, permeable and mutable. This means really two different perspectives on personhood. For Strathern, this difference has an impact on power relations. While the first produces hierarchy, the second leads to egalitarianism. Strathern’s definitions are primarily concerned with the formation of social relations through cultural artefacts and rituals. However, as shown below, her ideas on personhood can also be applied to depicted personhood and to the viewership which the art works bring to the fore. Although the following is not about social systems at large or rituals in an anthropological sense, the art works under discussion represent, construct and form social relations and as such are acts that mark society. In a narrower sense, the kind of art form chosen for discussion involves particularly two subjects or personhoods, namely the represented crucified.

3 Dividual personhood in crucifixion

Images of crucifixions executed in such art forms arguably offer a number of possibilities in which dividuality can be discussed, of which two seem the most obvious, namely the meaning of dividuality for the Christian iconography of the crucifixion and for the corporeality of the person who represents the crucified.

³ As Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, Strathern had herself portrayed as two half-length figures, one reading and one gazing out of the portrait, seemingly illustrating her concept of dividual personhood (see Daphne Todd, *Portrait of Marilyn Strathern*, painting, Girton College, University of Cambridge, 2001). Feminist studies are interested in the dividual, because it can be argued that the individual is constituted as a discrete person, as ‘somebody’, whereas the dividual would be ‘anybody’ or even ‘nobody’.

In Christian belief, Jesus is the mediator between God and human beings. He is the Son, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit forms the Trinity: one God in three divine persons. How that relationship has been formed, whether hierarchically, relationally or correlationally, has been the topic of centuries-long discussions in Christian doctrine. In light of the understanding of dividual and individual as outlined above, one can assume a dividual God, divided into three. Jesus, however, can be described as an individual, historically real. However, the crucifixion scene pinpoints that the personhood of Jesus can also be seen as partly human (embodied in Jesus's suffering) *and* divine, because he is the son of God. Hence the iconography of the crucifixion itself is a topic that addresses dividual personhood.

Apart from the iconography, crucifixions executed in body and performance art play with personhood as dividual because of the art form. In photographs, such as Beecroft's *Black Christ*, and in performance art, it is a real person (either the artist or another person) who represents Jesus. Usually it is the artist himself. In performance art, the person representing Jesus is part of the art work but also a real person who continues to live on and has lived before this art work. The person presented in the art work can therefore be seen as becoming part of something else, namely the art work representing Jesus, but is also part of a lived reality. Such type of presentation (rather than representation) has been related to the dividual by Peers, though not for photography or performance art. According to him, Byzantine culture knew of what he terms 'quasi-objects', objects which did not 're-present' but were understood as 'presenting' reality. Peers calls this 'quasi-object' dividual (Peers 2012, 437).⁴ Such understanding is reminiscent of Hans Belting, who has been credited as the first art historian to provide insights into the role of Christian iconography being perceived as presentation rather than representation by medieval spectators (Belting 1994). However, he assumes that the image (regardless of the art form in which it is executed) presents subjects without acknowledging the partiality of the figure, who belongs to both the image as object and to the divine, if one were to follow Peers. In this way, one could differentiate in terminology two

⁴ Peers illustrates his argument by quoting from Michael Psellos, an eleventh-century Byzantine intellectual monk, who described a painting of a crucified Jesus not as a Platonic shadow, but as a medium through which the viewer can enter 'that other body and know with one's own body the painful sacrifice of Christ' in his writings. This process is 'contradictory, for the audience [...] is still embodied, and his viewers have their sense perceptions intact, but the eyes desire to see the crucified Christ to such a degree that each viewer would rather be nailed to the cross also' (Peers 2012, 438).

ways of describing not only the art work, namely as presence and likeness (the latter of which involves representation), but also the viewer as either dividual or individual.

Surely, imagining partiality might be more difficult for art forms which involve painted or sculpted figures than, as in our case, those which are based on corporeality of a real person who is both part of the art work and of a lived reality. Furthermore, surely, one can stress both the wholeness and the partiality, as also mentioned by Strathern and outlined above, particularly, as this discussion shows, when corporeality is involved. Individual or dividual is arguably a differentiation in perspective rather than in facts as such.

There are, however, art works which drift such perspectives further apart, because of the challenge of how far the artist goes in (re-)presenting the iconography of a dying Christ. This is illustrated by Sebastian Horsley's *Crucifixion* (2000), a performance which was undertaken by the artist in preparation for a series of paintings on the topic (Fig. 2, see appendix). Horsley, who travelled to the Philippines for his performance, was nailed to a cross and passed out (Bräunlein 2009). He only avoided serious injury because by-passers interrupted the performance (Kerr 2015; Horsley 2004; 2016). In this respect, it reminds of performance artists of the 1970s, such as Chris Burden – who performed *Trans-Fixed* at Speedway Avenue in Venice, California, on 23rd April 1974 – and Andrew Drummond, whose *Crucifixion Performance* took place at the CSA gallery in Christchurch, New Zealand from 1978. The artists in these works did not want to die as a self-sacrifice like Christ. They only accepted the suffering which made them part of something else to a certain degree, but they finally decided to remain alive. This decision marks the transition from a dividual experience (or an attempt to have such an experience) to becoming 'just' a human being, which foregrounds an individual personhood characterised by wholeness and reflection as described above. Schechner differentiates most usefully between a performance as theatre/entertainment or as efficacy/ritual (Schechner 1993, 621). While the former is characterised by individual creativity and an audience who watches, appreciates and critiques the performance, the latter refers to the performer being possessed or in trance, includes audience participation, and discourages criticism. Accordingly, ritual relates to a dividual personhood, while theatre to an individual. While Schechner's differentiation is most useful, offering a clear distinction between the two forms of performances, the examples of Horsley, Burden and Drummond illustrate the transition from one kind of performance to the other.

Differently from Horsley, Hermann Nitsch's series of *Crucifixion* performed together with the Orgies Mysteries Theatre, of which the first took place at the artist's estate in Prinzenndorf, Austria from 3 to 9 August 1998 (Jarosi 2013; Karrer

2015; Grant 2011; Jones 2011), seems rather theatre than ritual.⁵ Nitsch uses actors and his performances are highly staged, indeed theatrical: for example, a crucified and blindfolded man was held still under a bloody calf carcass, substituting the person, in a performance of the piece at the Fondazione Morra in Naples in 2002 (Fig. 3, see appendix). In other performances of his piece, Nitsch replaces the crucified body with animal bodies. Both kinds of performances, however, the ritual and the theatrical, demonstrate that the Christian iconography of the crucifixion is a particular challenge to the crucified's personhood as *dividual*. It brings matters to a head more than experiences of self-sacrifice as described by Dureau in this publication, or of being possessed, the topic of Malik's essay in this publication.

Body art executed in the medium of photography, such as Beecroft's *Black Christ* (Fig. 1), does not count as performance art in a narrow sense. Peggy Phelan would even deny any link to performance, as for her, only in the immediate present does performance exist (Phelan 1993, 146). In contrast to her, Jones argues that performance art does not only consist of the act as such, but is interrelated with its documentation (Jones 1988, 16). She goes so far as to say that without its documentation, there is no performance art as such (*ibid.*). If such a close relationship exists, one may conclude that Beecroft's c-print is the result of a performance. The boy must have been asked to pose, so that the artist could take photographs, of which this one has been selected. As arguably with all art using the body or body parts as media, though particularly in film and photography, the moment of performativity is still oscillating through the print.

4 Permeable viewership: reflection, transcendence and embodied affection

Beecroft's *Black Christ* does not only shape the personhood of the represented, but also that of the viewer (Fig. 1). However, what kind of personhood? Conventional literature on perception assumes the viewer as an individual, despite some of the publications acknowledging that the process of looking involves a detachment from the self. On the basis of these approaches, the following section asks whether and how the viewer's personhood can be seen as *dividual*, foregrounding its partiality. For this purpose, Deleuze's model of the *dividual*, which he applies to film stills, will be appropriated, because it offers a solution as to how the *dividual* as partial (namely the film still) is related to the whole (the film)

⁵ Nitsch had already acted out such performances as early as 1957.

(Deleuze 1986, 18). For Deleuze, it is not a question of perspective, but the individual is related to the whole in a process bound together by movement, as also described in more detail at the end of this essay. Therefore perception is assumed as consisting of moments (like film stills) distinguished from each other, while at the same time, these moments stand in a relationship to each other (through movement between them, forming a whole as perception). In the context of religious iconography, one can identify moments of reflection, transcendence and embodied affection, as the viewing experience arguably reacts to pictures' effects (Mitchell 1998; Bredekamp 2010). To underpin this argument, I will first focus on contemporary crucifixions which are seemingly unproblematic and then on those which have been discussed as controversial to the extent of having led to iconoclasm and socio-political upheavals.

Brian Catling's *Processional Cross* (2013), produced for St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London, consists of a simple cross (Fig. 4, see appendix). Two pieces of wood are tied together by a string, alluding to St. Martin who tore his cloak in two to give half to a beggar. The cross' rough pieces of wood, used as a reminder of Jesus' cross, are covered but still noticeable under the cast of a strong yet light-weight aluminium, gilded in white gold leaf. As such the cross is not only without a body, but also abstracted and enriched in a way which allows for a trace of emotional perception, as the viewer envisages Christ carrying and dying on the cross. For the artist, making the cross was 'overwhelming, both in the excitement of the concept and the enduring nature of its meaning [...]. Design is not enough, I need the struggle and tension that only ever comes through deep feeling, prolonged thought, and the work of the hands' (Catling 2017).

The artist believes he has created an object which is not only the product of reflection, but also of personal affects, namely touch and feeling. He emphasises these affects, because of the religious character of the art work. Although the object's singularity and exceptionality play an important role for the artist, for the name of the artist is still mentioned by the church, *Processional Cross* aspires to create a relationship between object and viewer by which the object, an abstracted cross without a body, becomes the mediator of a perception which aims at a spiritual experience. If one follows research which has aligned the spiritual with the aesthetic, one can also call it an aesthetic experience (Kuspit 2009; Koss 2006).⁶ In any case, it signals a relationship between the viewer and

⁶ Discussing the relationship between the aesthetic and spiritual experience, Kuspit draws on a number of critics (Clement Greenberg), artists (Piet Mondrian and Barnett Newman), philosophers and psychoanalysts (Jacques Derrida, Rudolf Otto and D. W. Winnicott, Erik Erikson, Erich Fromm and Silvano Arieti) (Kuspit 2009). See also Juliet Koss (2006), who describes *Einfühlung* as the 'reciprocal experience of exchange and transformation – a solitary, one-to-one experience

God (or the sublime), in which the object becomes only its mediator. In this religious (or aesthetic) experience, the viewer is not self-reflective. By referring to Kant, Deleuze describes the sublime in view of the individual and of God: The sublime

unleashes in our soul a *non-psychological life of the spirit*, which no longer belongs either to nature or to our organic individuality, which is the divine part in us, the spiritual relationship in which we are alone with God as light. Thus the soul seems to *rise up again* towards the light; but it has rather rejoined the luminous part of itself, which only had an ideal fall, and which fell upon the world, rather than being engulfed in it. The blazing has become the supernatural and supra-sensible. (Deleuze 1986, 59f.)

In other words, the viewer experiences personhood as detachment from the reflective self (Mosko 2010).⁷ As such the art work shapes the personhood of the viewer, torn between spiritual belief and reflecting upon the art work in a process of constant negotiation. Understanding viewership as such stresses the dividual, partial character of the viewer's personhood rather than the perception of a self-contained individual as presupposed by the long and substantial body of scholarship on perception theories (e.g. Mulvey 1975; Mitchell 1986; Kemp 1998).

In assuming viewership as dividual, one has to differentiate two different types of partiality in this process: firstly, the moments of reflecting versus believing, held together by movement of the mind; and secondly, the moment related to the religious/aesthetic experience which produces a movement between viewer and God (respectively the sublime), detached from a self-reflective, cognitively ordering mind: namely what Hartmut Rosa, who has recently published a book on resonance and sociology, has called the decoupling of emotion and resonance (Rosa 2016, 289). Although one may argue that any religious or aesthetic experience aims at such a decoupling of the self, I would argue that spiritual art makes these two types of perception more visible.

created, as it were, by both viewer and object, destabilizing the identity of the former while animating the latter. Physical, emotional, and psychological, the process of *Einfühlung* placed the spectator at the center of aesthetic discourse'. In the same article, Koss argues that this experience (*Einfühlung*) was always thought of as an individualistic experience and not as something that could be experienced as a group. She cites a work by the filmmaker Peter Kubelka from 1971 which was addressed at a spectatorship simultaneously individual and communal; communal, as the film was shown in a cinema to several people, and individual because the viewers could not see each other, but only the screen.

⁷ Mark Mosko describes this vertical experience as becoming part of Him and He becomes part of oneself (Mosko 2010). For him, this is a dividual relationship, whereas I would argue that it is not only a detachment from the reflective-self (and thus dividual), but also a belief in a unity with God.

Some contemporary art works with religious subjects play with the viewer's resonances. The viewer can reflect upon such images in the discourse of contemporary art, but because of the religious iconography, these images also play with the expectations of the believing viewer, arguably hindering a truly felt individual experience, as, for example, of those who undergo what Malik describes as being divinely embodied (rather than possessed) in his essay in this publication. Religion can arouse strong affects, even if (or perhaps because) contemporary art only fashions Christian iconography. Regarding representations of the crucifixion, Gilbert & George's mixed media print *Was Jesus Heterosexual?* (2005, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo) was described by a then British MP for the Conservatives as 'blasphemous in the extreme, as [they] will find out when finally they stand before the Son of God' (cited after Rosen 2015, 9). Andres Serrano's *Immersion. Piss Christ* (1987, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina), consisting of a photograph of a small crucifixion replica submerged in urine, has been the focus of verbal and physical attacks, suffering vandalism during an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne in 2011, which was discussed particularly in the tabloids (Anon. 2011). Many examples could be added that demonstrate that such art may only use Christian iconography to provoke, so that artists benefit financially and in reputation from their works being widely reviewed (Rosen 2015, 15). Such strong reactions result in many (mis)readings and (mis)uses of works with a religious theme through political and religious fanaticism. For example, while Serrano's *Immersion. Piss Christ* has offended Christian viewers, who felt that the image was blasphemous, Rosen argues that it can also be interpreted as a work that meditates on 'the torments and degradation of Christ' by using urine (Rosen 2015, 15). In similar lines, Wendy Beckett, the Catholic nun who became well known as an art critic, viewed the work as a statement on 'what we have done to Christ', that is, 'the way contemporary society has come to regard Christ and the values he represents' (Beckett 1998). Similarly, Damien Hirst's *God Alone Knows* (2007) can not only be defamed as contemptuous, but can also be seen as an installation that 'underscore(s) Jesus' humanity, emphasising the raw, bestial nature of his torments. Indeed, Hirst's crucified sheep carcass simply provides an unusually visceral embodiment of Christ's identity as the Lamb of God' (Rosen 2015, 49).

Differently from Rosen, who disregards the polemic of these images in order to understand them on a deeper level, Elkins views such images as in a category different from 'serious' Christian art, creating therefore two kinds of religious art objects which exist simultaneously, but with distinct differences in aims and strategies: namely polemic and 'serious' religious art. Following Elkins, one wonders how to account for historical and contextual factors. There have been several art works whose religious iconography has created dispute in the past

(and thus would belong to Elkins' 'other' History of Art), but which have now been firmly accepted as 'serious'. Furthermore, who says that reproductions of art works, a feature ascribed to polemic Christian art by Elkins, are not taken 'seriously'? What about those reproductions of works produced by famous artists such as Durer and hung in Christian households for the purpose of veneration? Is it not a question of the relationship between object and viewer rather than the object *per se* as to whether an art object is serious or polemic? I would therefore suggest a model that is based on mental spaces and gaps in the process of perception.

This model begins with the observation that religious works, because of their iconography, raise certain expectations by the viewer. Secondly, viewers recall mental images of religious iconographies from pictures seen before with which the viewers compare the image in front of them, both as images and conceptions.⁸ This produces a gap, which can be explained with the play between reference, deference and difference, a mechanism which Griselda Pollock has ascribed to the avant-garde (Pollock 1992, 14). Although in relation to a different subject, her concept explains well how the art works in question *refer* to Christian iconography, even sometimes to a specific image by a specific artist. Their rendering, however is *different*, but only by *deference* – a term which recalls Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* – sometimes also referred to as *espacement* or 'spacing', because the difference is between binary elements (Derrida 1963). And the larger this space, the difference, the gap between the image in front of the viewers and that of their mind is felt by the viewer, the deeper the aggravation. Such an explanation would not need an assumption of two different types of religious art. In addition, spacing as a form of distancing and approaching is a model whose ingredients remind us of the way in which the viewer's dividuality can be explained.

The use of the body, body parts and bodily fluids in art works seemingly enlarges this gap between images and therefore the aggression against works, particularly when exploited in works of Christian iconography. For example, Catling's *Processional Cross* discussed above does not use any body at all. Therefore, it does not produce such a gap. However, why? It can not only be explained by Christian doctrine which renders human identification with Jesus as God suspicious, but also with Julia Kristeva's notion of the 'abject,' which leads to the topic of embodied viewing.⁹

⁸ Arguably, this viewing process is general and thus also applicable to ideas about beauty and taste as well as religious works.

⁹ For embodied viewing, see also discussion of emotions and the relevance of suffering in Antje Linkenbach's essay in this publication.

Unlike many depictions of the crucified Christ, the body in Beecroft's *Black Christ* is strangely intact, almost aestheticised, emphasised through the cracked, marmorised and almost plane background (Fig. 1). There are no signs of pain and wounds, as one might expect from a crucifixion. The cross is even missing, so the viewer's concentration is solely on the body. This depiction prompts a voyeuristic view that searches the body for such signs, only finding the white loin cloth, which, typically of many crucifixions, is to hide the genitals. But instead of having a desexualising function, it awakens the body's eroticism (Steinberg 1996). This eroticism is underpinned by the young age of the boy, unusual in view of conventional representations of a much older Jesus on the cross. The viewers, becoming aware of their gazes, are shamefully reminded of their criticism of the artist, because the artist has lured the viewers into doing the same as what they accuse of the artist, namely treating a Sudanese boy as inferior and an object and voyeuristically abusing his teenage body, aggravated by being a white artist. As this is a representation of the crucifixion, Beecroft achieves, in her execution of the body as black, exactly the treatment of Jesus before and during his crucifixion: namely as being laughed at and despised, as described in the New Testament and in the interpretations in patristic readings. Differently from many crucifixion depictions reminding us of Jesus' suffering, Beecroft also achieves an effect whereby the viewer is not only an on-looker, but an accomplice of those who treated Jesus that way, perhaps not even realising and not repenting his/her own action.

Beecroft's *Black Christ* plays with the viewer who is used to identifying pain with the iconography of the crucifixion. Representations of the wounded and suffering Jesus, but also those by Serrano and Hirst, make use of what Julia Kristeva has called the 'abject' (Kristeva 1982; Fletcher, Benjamin 2012). Urine and flesh confront the viewer with a corporeal reality, which breaks down the distinction between the self and the other, as the viewer is drawn towards his/her own body, according to Julia Kristeva's theory. This is interesting in our context, because abjection describes a process by which the viewers are detached from their self-reflective selves.

While any art work using indexical signs can lead to abjection, contemporary art with religious themes arguably articulates the relationship of abjection loudly. Indeed, Beecroft exploits racial stereotypes for her purposes, which some consider problematic. The artist seemingly restores superiority of the white – for whom the black was object and possession in the colonial past – in contemporary art. The viewer is baffled because s/he assumes a different kind of treatment of such iconography, as described above. This is what the artists play with: they provoke, shock, because their imagery recalls a certain way of portraying Christian themes which are present *in absentia* (namely in the mind of the viewer who 'compares' them with what is in front of him/her). Serrano's *Immersion. Piss Christ*

encompasses this 'difference' not only by appealing to imagined pictures, but by using a photograph of a replica crucifixion which he then modifies with urine, a substance that many cultures identify with uncleanness, filth and assault. The religious iconography produces a gap between the image and the viewer's expectations, as explained above. The urine as fluid of the body, spilt over the represented Jesus, lets the viewer identify bodily with the image, experiencing the image as abject, because its corporeal reality (the urine in this case) breaks down the gap between the viewer's self and the presented image. The viewer feels with the body of the image and detaches from his/her own body.

Thus, religious iconography using corporeality produces two movements: the religious/aesthetic aspect distances the viewers from their self containment through aspiring to something higher, while the corporeality detaches the viewer from their self horizontally, breaking down the barrier between viewer and image. These movements are in constant negotiation.

Corporeality can mobilise senses other than the visual. Regarding representations of the crucifixion, smell is dominant in Cosimo Cavallaro's *Sweet Jesus* (2005, in possession of the artist), which is made of chocolate and thus following the iconography and medium used by artists such as George Heslop's *Jesus on the Cross* (2006) and Richard Manderson's *Trans-Substantiation 2* (1994). Differently from them, however, Cavallaro sexualises Jesus; his genitals are not hidden with a cloth as in Manderson's sculpture, or sculpted less pronouncedly as by Heslop. Even if one rejects these works as kitsch because of their material, one should, nevertheless, be reminded of the existing Christian iconography of the Sweet Jesus, which is based upon the Bible. Psalm 119, for example, reads: 'How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!'

Returning to the senses, sound is particularly exploited by video art, such as Mark Wallinger's *Via Dolorosa* (2002, Israel Museum, Jerusalem), which uses a part of Franco Zeffirelli's film *Jesus from Nazareth* from 1977. The scenes, which tell of the passion of Christ from Jesus' presentation in front of the people until his crucifixion, are blacked out by a rectangular pane. This hinders the view of the film, which is only visible beyond the rectangle's border, reducing the film to a small frame. In Mulvey's terms, the 'pleasure' which lies in looking is denied. Such refusal leads to 'a sense of separation and playing on their [the viewers'] voyeuristic phantasy' (Mulvey 1975). Despite her assuming an 'individual subject', she still speaks of a 'separation' that happens in the process of viewing. This separation, as I would argue, is the reason for understanding the viewer's personhood as *dividual* rather than individual, because the viewer's perception becomes part ('dividual') of something else, instead of being self-contained.

Of course, as images, moving and still, these art works are primarily directed at the visual; thus, the felt, smelt, tasted and heard experiences are always

multi-sensual, further detaching the viewer from his/her own body by feeling with the represented crucified Jesus.

Both types of affected moments, the religious and the sensual, can also involve 'real' corporeality: embodied viewing has in some cases led to the destruction of art work (as has been mentioned above) and the literal turning away or closing of one's eyes to distance oneself from the image in an attempt to protect the unity of the personhood. Furthermore, Christianity embraces a belief in incarnation, heavily discussed in theological doctrine as to how God can become a human being. Moreover, the Catholic Church has canonised stigmatists, including Francis of Assisi and Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, who have experienced sores in locations of Jesus Christ's wounds created by his crucifixion (Davidson, Fritz-Morkin 2009; Giovine 2009; Nickell 1993).¹⁰ Such stigmata have also played a role in contemporary performance art by artists such as Franko B and Bálint Szombathy (Richards 2008).

Crucifixions exploit both moments, the religious/spiritual as well as the abject. However, they seem to defer the viewer in different directions: while the former is a striving towards a vertical resonance, the latter is a yearning towards the self as body. Yearning and striving increase the space of deference. They also seemingly tear apart the viewer who attempts to negotiate cognitively bodily and spiritual experiences. Indeed, the viewer is denied a split of the self through religious/aesthetic moments and forced to a self-split because of the abjection. As the perception consists of two movements in different directions, images with religious iconography and corporeality produce a wider gap than those that are abstract, such as Catling's *Processional Cross*, a work in which corporeality is missing (Fig. 4). The wider gap, however, can lead to the viewer's frustration, which may result in some of the reactions to religious images as described above.

The issue here, however, is, that contemporary religious art plays on the notion of viewerhood as an indivisible individual. If Western personhood (and I would add, particularly that of the white heterosexual man) only sat in

10 See also Therese Neumann von Konnersreuth (1898–1962) who has been venerated for her stigmata and for whom the Catholic Church began the process of beatification in 2005.

For the meaning of partibility and permeability, see also Emma-Jayne Graham (2017), who explores their significance for body-part votives at Etrusco-Latial-Campanian sanctuaries in Late Iron Age central Italy. Her findings seemingly have parallels with the Catholic rituals mentioned above. Graham argues that the power of the divine beings to heal the living permeated the assembled body-part votives and the bodies of the living, while the practice of deposition shaped the divinities as 'multi-authored persons, composed of the bodies, prayers and offerings of human supplicants'.

relation to modern Western ontologies which have tended to privilege indivisible understandings of the world, as, for example, argued by Philippe Descola, religious art would not provoke anything spiritual or aesthetic, nor would body and performance art be abject (Descola 2013). Indeed, artists creating religious works can only play with different moments of perception, if one assumes any viewer's perception as consisting of dividual moments. If the white heterosexual viewer is understood as a person with a perception which only knows of self-reflective observation, religious art works would not have the power with which these are seemingly equipped in a Western world dominated by monotheistic religions. Particularly the experience of embodied viewing runs contrary to anthropologists' ideas of Western personhood – by which the individual presupposes a detachment from the body to see things 'objectively', enabling the subject to produce a clear and distinct view of what is – namely a 'complete' and autonomous individual (Latimer 2007, 53). It would be impossible for the viewer as individual to experience transcendence and abjection. Instead perception seems to be rather like what Strathern describes for the dividual personhood, namely as a self who is constructed as 'the plural and composite site of the relationships that produce' it (Strathern 1988, 13). In other words, anthropological scholarship may well assume a dominance of self as a self-reflective individual in the Western world, but the West also knows of moments in perception other than reflective, namely the spiritual, the sublime and the abject, as shown above. This would mean that crucifixions in particular and religious works in general presuppose and create a dividual viewerhood in the sense coined by anthropology. The outcries against and shock about contemporary religious art as described above, produce an understanding of viewership denying any pluralistic perception. Interpreted only bodily (by ignoring reflection and spirituality), such works foreground individual rather than dividual perception.

Because of using a body, the image is a literal sign, what Peirce would call indexical (as being the Sudanese boy), is iconic (the body of the Sudanese boy as image), and is a symbolic sign (as Jesus) all at the same time. Such representations have therefore particularly raised critics' eyebrows. Baert and Van Gelder begin their book on *Fluid Flesh* with the question as to whether and how are 'we able (and allowed) to think of the divine in a corporeal way? [...]. From the very center of the "body-religion-art" triangle, a force is pulsating between taboo and embrace' (Baert, Gelder 2009, vii). One could therefore conclude that Beecroft's *Black Christ* establishes a relationship to the viewer that is different from that of other representations of crucifixions. The art work seemingly defies any fixity and thus also questions in which way one can speak of dividual *or* individual personhood as mutually exclusive, which brings me to my last point.

5 Constituting personhood as an enacting dynamic process

As shown above, the *dividual* can be understood as permeable as well as divisible in view of crucifixions executed in photography and performance art in which corporeality is foregrounded. Art works as such create a viewer-personhood, which brings something else into question, namely the role of a dynamic process in defining personhood, which also helps overcome a problem created by anthropological conceptions of personhood that perpetuate dividing the world into the West and the rest. Although Strathern wants to avoid the mistake of Western views on feminism being simply extended to indigenous cultures such as the Milanese (Strathern 1988, 7), her perspective draws a black-and-white picture of the world with stark contrasts, introducing a neo-Primitivism in which Western societies are characterised by individuality and indigenous societies by *dividuality*. The latest scholarship in anthropology has asked whether the *dividual* and *individual* are not necessarily only opposites, but aspects which are both necessary for the forming of personhood. Chris Fowler, for example, does not dismiss the oppositional properties as such (indivisible and divisible, fixed and mutable, permeable and impermeable, individualist and collectivist, essential and contextual), but puts them in an ‘axis of relationality’ (Fowler 2016, 402).

Furthermore, Fowler advocates against merely stating ‘whether personhood is divisible or indivisible’, but to bring to the fore ‘the extent to which each can be identified, through what media, in what contexts and assemblages, and so on. Appreciating the ways that personhood is distributed in time and space with respect to bodies, objects and materials is the goal’ (ibid., 403). Although such an understanding allows for a precise differentiation of personhood beyond the usual patterns, it still assumes *individual* and *dividual* (as well as the other properties) as oppositional pairs, seemingly excluding that both can be considered as part of constituting personhood in a dynamic process.

As the investigation into the viewership of images of crucifixions shows, such a divide into *dividual* or *individual* is neither necessary nor actually factual. Although providing two different perspectives, personhood can also be understood as being characterised by both *dividual* and *individual* moments, if one takes on the contextual conception of *dividuality* by Klee, developed in the artist’s pedagogic notes taken while teaching at the Bauhaus from 1921 to 1931 (Klee 1922; Kudielka 2002). Referring to objects, the artist defines the *dividual* as the opposite of the *individual*, whereby the *individual* can also become a *dividual* and the *dividual* an *individual*, depending on the perspective. By referring to a fish, Klee

states that the fish is a dividual in light of an aquarium, the latter which would be the individual. He then provides a list of individuals and their depending dividu-als like a syntax series: ‘trunk – wood fibres, wrinkles in the bark; tree – leaves, branches, twigs; forest – tree; forest region – particular forest’ (Klee 1922, 266). These examples illustrate that Klee sees the in/dividual in a continuum, in which the definition of dividual and individual depends on the relation formed between them. Applying his ideas to personhood, dividual and individual moments both define personhood, depending on the relationship which these form. In the context of describing the relationship between art object and viewer, the viewer is an individual; but while experiencing the object, the viewer is dividual, becoming detached from the self and part of something else through spirituality, transcendence and affection.

Furthermore, taking on Deleuze’s conception of the dividual in cinematographic images, outlined in his book *Cinema I. The Movement-Image*, constituting personhood is a process rather than an ontological essence, as it only wins formation when being enacted (Deleuze 1986). For Deleuze, the duration of the film consists of parts, whereas images, when seen in duration, become a film. These images are themselves thought of as immobile, though there is movement between them. This movement makes the images into a film. Later in his book, Deleuze spells out that these parts, the cinematographic images, have ‘two facets, one of which is oriented towards sets and their parts, the other towards the whole and its changes; it is this that we must examine – the movement-image for itself, in all itself, in all its varieties and both its facets’ (ibid., 61). The latter image is connected via movement with other images to form a whole, an indivisible continuity, a duration consisting ‘in time’. In terms of viewer-personhood, I would suggest that personhood is both individual and dividual, mobile and immobile. In the present, in the now of the moment, personhood is dividual, while in view of its future (and past) in which moments are put together, personhood becomes a whole, an indivisible continuity, characterisations that can be applied to the individual, because this continuity is thought of as mobile, in flux, in a continuous process of becoming, never constituting essentiality. If this continuity is thought of as indivisible, one cannot conclude that the continuity consists of moments. As soon as one recognises such moments, one fixes them and thus changes fundamentally this continuity into something essentially different, namely into a dividual that is characterised by movement in space rather than in duration.

For performance art such a conception would mean that the still image of those works (as well as photographs of the body) documented as a film, would be dividual and, combined with other such ‘immobile’ stills by movement, form a ‘whole’ of the documented performance piece. According to Deleuze, however,

dividual is understood as stable and immobile in contrast to anthropological understandings that emphasise fluidity and mobility. The enactments of Horsley and Nitsch are dividual as they consist of stills which are part of the entire performance, while the entire performance as a whole constitutes personhood anew with each viewing.

For the personhood of viewers, such a conception would not only mean that perception can be considered as a set of moments, consisting of religious/aesthetic, embodied, as well as cognitive elements that dynamically form a whole, as described above, but also that the viewer's perception and relation to the world is constituted in this way.

Apart from the viewership and the medium, the dynamic process of dividualising and individualising can also be applied to the iconography of the crucifixion. To return to the image from the beginning, Beecroft's *Black Christ* enacts dividual personhood by being a Sudanese boy and, at the same time, the (re-)presentation of Jesus Christ in view of its Christian meaning (Fig. 1). The representation as the divine (as part of the Trinity) is underpinned by an aesthetically pleasing body that mystifies the depicted beyond the representation of a simple individual (Grant 2013). In other words, Beecroft's Sudanese boy is not only representing Jesus Christ, he is the Son of God and thus God itself through the process of crucifixion according to Christian belief. Criticism of the image and other representations of the body as God, which express outrage that a human body can personify Jesus Christ on the cross, prove that crucifixions go beyond a simple symbolic reception. Nowhere else comes this more to light than in performance art pieces of the crucifixion, where the symbolic character seemingly disappears behind the corporeal presence of the body-artist. Stripped of the iconography, however, the photograph becomes also just that of a teenage black boy who has lived his life before the image was taken, in other words, constituting an individual person in a historical setting.

Appendix

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1: Vanessa Beecroft, *Black Christ*, 2006, digital C-print, 76 × 59 cm © the artist.
<https://oneroom.eu/products/vanessa-beecroft-vbss-006-mp-2006>

Fig. 2: Sebastian Horsley, *Crucifixion*, 2000, still of a performance © the artist.
<https://www.dazeddigital.com/art-photography/article/39534/1/extreme-art-marina-abramovic-carolee-schneeman-jenny-saville-glen-luchford>

Fig. 3: Hermann Nitsch, *Crucifixion*, 2002, still of performance at the Fondazione Morra, Naples.
<https://kunststrikrieg.blogspot.com/2012/10/arnulf-rainer-hermann-nitsch-e.html>

Fig. 4: Brian Catling, *Processional Cross*, 2013, sculpture (aluminium gilded in white gold), St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London © the artist and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London.
http://www.modusoperandi-art.com/projects/st_martin_in_the_fields_the_processional_cross

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Christine Dureau, Esther Eidinow, Harry Maier, Aditya Malik,
Jutta Vinzent

Afterword: porosity, corporeality and the divine

Focusing on porosity, embodiment and the relationship to the divine highlights the wider pertinence of the concept of dividual personhood. The dividual has conventionally been opposed to the individual as an alternative conceptualisation of personhood (e.g. Marriott 1976; Strathern 1988) or thing (e.g. Klee 1922; Deleuze 1986). Although this is widely acknowledged as a heuristic, the literature repeatedly reifies it, treating different cultural regions and/or historical periods as essentially dividualist or individualist. However, religious experiences, ideals, performances and theologies highlight the significance of non-individualist orientations in diverse times and places, including those archetypally associated with the individual.

Our articles, stressing the links between human relationships to the divine and porous corporeal being, focus on cultural ideals of openness to human or non-human forces and substances and the interplay of dividual and individual being. In such contexts, the person is often conceived as characterised by bodily, including sensory and emotional, openness. This may connote volition, as when the young woman in *Aditya Malik's* account of possession opens herself to a goddess's visitation, or desire such as when the viewers of crucifixion performances, described in *Jutta Vinzent's* contribution, expose themselves to the art work, or embodied intersubjective porosity as described in *Harry Maier's* analysis of the communication between the apostle Paul and his associate via a slave. The question of the extent of volition is raised by the different accounts of possession that are found in ancient Greek sources, as *Esther Eidinow* shows. By contrast, we encounter also widespread belief in vulnerability to forces like the evil eye. Therefore active and passive openness may co-exist, as in *Christine Dureau's* account of Methodist missionaries' simultaneous solicitation of, and surrender to, the Holy Spirit. As these examples suggest, porosity can include intersubjective, divine, experiential, cultural, aesthetic and emotional dimensions. It can involve a host of intercommunicative, interpenetrating forces that result in the emergence and constitution of in/dividuals, as well as their unmaking and remaking.

These understandings challenge the typical markers of modernity as characterised by, even dependent upon, the pre-eminent ethical value of the bounded autonomous individual who, while enmeshed in social relationships, participates in them as a single unit. As these articles demonstrate, not only do we need to consider these dynamics in themselves, but also the ways in which they

have been presented and the power of their contextualisation. While Christianity has been widely associated with the emergence of this putatively modern person (e.g. Mauss 1985[1938]; Weber 2001[1930]; Dumont 1985), the three contributions on Christianity in this section, ranging from the religion's earliest days, through high imperialism to contemporary art works (Maier, Dureau, J Vinzent), suggest a historical trajectory of simultaneous in/dividuality. Eidinow's article raises the range of scholarly explanations, which, over time, have been put forward to explain the Pythia's experience of possession, and which can be seen to reflect contemporary concerns about women's social role. And, as Malik demonstrates, modern subjectivities can be profoundly resistant to colonialist and progressivist associations between being modern and being individual.

Indeed, the religious domain shows that surrendering self-containment – in possession, altered states of consciousness, responses to sacred imagery – is equally characteristic of the modern person. It is easy to relegate South Asian spirit possession to some kind of premodern remnant, for example, but it is crucial to recognise that such practices are prevalent in modern conditions and express contemporary forms of religion. Such practices are not different in kind to the effects on viewers aimed at by crucifixion performances or Methodist emotionality in an empire that proudly celebrated its modernity. Similarly, when we contemplate our futures, is our sense of the limits of our own agency and vulnerability to unseen forces and events so different from that felt by ancient Greek men and women? Acknowledging facets of personhood otherwise ignored or misrepresented in modernity's master narrative of the emergence of the sovereign subject as modern person, challenges not only the idea that moderns are definitively individuals but also presumptions that the modern West alone has claim to the idea of the individual: a dividual approach breaks this cultural script and unmasks its political and ideological power to privilege one cultural formulation over others.

Porosity suggests the possibility of constantly shifting modes of being, of openness to others, to the divine, to things. For example, Harry Maier's article deals with a New Testament text which understands porosity as a quality of relationships between God, humans, people and the natural world as well as material objects. Additionally, it conceives of correlative interpenetrating relationships entailed in various forms of institutionalised sociality such as between masters and slaves. Paul is simultaneously slave, father, son. The experience of oracular consultation, whether as prophet or consultant, similarly institutionalised porosity, demanding acceptance of the presence of supernatural forces within one's life. Greek literary descriptions of these events suggest that they, too, appreciated the resulting intersubjectivity, and the ambiguous status of personhood, moving between dividual and individual. A person who opens herself to becoming a

medium of a deity, as in Malik's article, may be simultaneously divine and human or move between the two states. Similarly, the artists who perform a Crucifixion do not merely represent the crucified Jesus as, for example, in paintings of the Crucifixion, but are the crucified one because they themselves embody it. But this also delimits their dividuality: ultimately, they either substitute their body with that of an animal or stop the performance in order not to die. In other words, the artist moves between dividual and individual personhood. Similarly, Methodist missionaries oscillated between individualist and dividualist modes, promoting individualism and welcoming emotional intersubjectivity and the Holy Spirit's bodily-spiritual penetration.

The performances and collective experiences outlined in these examples highlight the affective, transcendent sense of divinely-inspired openness of religious being. They suggest that porosity and corporeality are profoundly co-constituent, insofar as the body offers the 'route of entry' for outside influences. Here, we include emotions, bodies, roles, personae and responses to places or locales which render bodily being as intersubjective, inter-physical processes. These accounts aim not only to write about material being, but also to explore, in turn, how cultural scripts, patterns of memorialisation, narrativise the body. The embodied dividual can be refracted, given to possession, gifted, immersed in the collective, corporeally redefined, spread out, while remaining an individual under negotiation and construction.

The literature on the dividual stresses embodiment, but often in a paradoxically disembodied, immaterial, abstract manner. In Strathern's work, for example, the dividual is constituted out of the totality of relationships to others as expressed and conveyed through bodily fluids and food, itself a transformation of embodied work. Yet the sheer physicality of these exchanges is strangely missing from her account. By contrast, our contributions suggest something much more immediate. Maier's article looks at embodiment as a gift to others. Eidinow's contribution emphasises how the process of possession may also have been explicitly corporeal, involving changes in voice and bodily state, perhaps also accompanied by pain, with the possessed person thrown into an alternate state of embodied consciousness.

Emotional states often seem central to these dividual – divine relationships. Oracular consultations occur at moments of profound uncertainty, even crisis: they demonstrate clearly how individuals have the potential literally to become new in a reinvented universe. Methodist missionaries' accounts of suffering provoke emotional responses, creating an intersubjective oneness with readers who are swept along by an imaginative empathy in which the missionaries' experience becomes their own. Crucifixion performances depend on a similar sympathy, aiming at an emotional, bodily resonance in the viewer.

The emotional intensity described above can include surrendering the control that is ideally a constituent of the modern person, undermining the problematic binary chain of West – rest; individual – dividual (self-control – lack of self-control; rational – irrational). Notions of the divine since at least the Enlightenment have measured and normalised human divine relationships in terms of ontological otherness; noumenal beings are other than human, dwell in alternate realms, are beyond the natural and are subject to rational dismissal; humans are of the real world, the world of nature and the empirically verifiable. The concept of dividuality undermines this strong division, highlighting understandings of the divine as entangled with/in the human and the cultural, capable of penetrating, even making, individuals and selves.

Aesthetic forms offer powerful modes for achieving intersubjectivity. Viewing art aims at a fluid divide between the self and the art object; with religious art, the object has the potential for spiritual reconstitution. In ‘playing’ the divine or performing divine scripts (J. Vinzent, Malik), the self ‘becomes’ divine, embodying it for the moment of performance and enacted identity. Shared cultural narratives of possession or oracular consultation both expressed and shaped the experience of intersubjectivity.

For scholars like Strathern, the concept of the dividual challenges claims that particular forms of relationality necessarily express stratification; indeed, some forms of dividualism can be interpreted as egalitarian modes of personhood: the dividual implying that all of its constituent parts are of equal value. By contrast, the concept of the individual, as Jutta Vinzent puts it, favours inequality, because it involves eclipsing, suppressing or encompassing parts for a unity, therefore producing hierarchies. This is not to suggest a blunt binary: porous religious embodiment can be horizontally inclusive, directed towards sociality, or vertically hierarchical, as when it is oriented towards deities. Sometimes it is almost coercive. Paul rhetorically obliges his readers through his evocation of kin and emotive relationship; the goddess *possesses* her avatar.

Ritual and performance thus potentially dislocate and relocate the individual. The self who is not/divine is in/dividual even as the god is in/dividual by virtue of their simultaneous unique identity and unified relationships with other agents. Thus, Maier conceives of Paul as inhabiting a divine spirit, while the same spirit resides in others. Eidinow evokes the ritual of oracular consultation as an embodied process, marked by a series of ritualised actions, which begin with preparations for travel to a sanctuary. Jutta Vinzent considers contemporary Christian iconography whose objective is to establish a relationship between the viewer and the divine. In Dureau’s account, Methodist missionaries ideally approached the divine by accepting suffering in emulation of Calvary and emblematic of the need to transcend the self by gifting life experience in inadequate recompense for the gift of salvation.

Porosity, corporeality and relationships to the divine are thus intertwined. What does it mean to leave ‘myself’ behind and be open to other forces? Is porosity necessary to transcendence, which calls for the impossible to enter the realm of the possible? The sacred world is one of interpenetration, of openness, of the possibility of being within another. Historically, scholars have found this difficult to understand or accept with regard to the Pythia. Paul feels his heart and gives it to Onesimus who carries it within him. Such doubled being often entails empathic pain, as in the Methodist missionaries’ shared accounts of the sublime anguish of child loss. In performance art, the nature of this empathy is ambiguous. The pain of the crucified affects the viewer – *you feel what you see* – but can I, as artist or onlooker, embody Christ?

Gifts such as Paul’s leave deep traces, or perhaps wounds that paradoxically relieve profound pain, carving out meaning in a world occupied by imperfect bodies, slaves, masters, prisons, God. The emulation of a likeness again represents an opening, one that shares in a being or self which is, however, incessantly under construction. One *is* this and one *is* that. These are neither mere roles, nor acting nor mere representations, but the act of profoundly *being* something. The corporeality of the person is marked by emotion, fragility, and uncertainty, seeking solid ground within the disappearing horizon of time and existence. A pervasiveness of *being* permeates the body of God and the woman who is Devi, the goddess. A person surpasses herself or himself by being ‘possessed’, which itself is an act of surrender that involves fervently believing in the possibility of being open to the unknown. We know so few of the Pythiae by name.

Dividuality, in conclusion, points toward open-ended, processual realities that exceed single definitions, cultural performances or scripts. It points toward dynamic lived individuality under permanent construction and in perpetual flux. To argue that under such conditions there are no individuals but only roles and cultural scripts is not only to run roughshod over the immense diversity of human experiences, understandings and histories, but also to suppress aspects of the modern self, which is similarly in/dividual under its own particular cultural and social conditions.

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Religious Individualisation

Volume 2



Part 3: **Conventions and contentions**

Bernd-Christian Otto and Rahul Bjørn Parson

Introduction: conventions and contentions

The practice of studying only institutional documentation means that scholars miss all “lay” material, and helps explain why we still know so little about religious individualisation among non-institutionalised women and the common faithful. What is worse, it helps explain why we still fail to recognise the reciprocal influences of leading churchmen and spiritual women in developing lay devotion and lived spirituality in the later Middle Ages. It also helps us realise that searching for “institutionalisation” is only one aspect of our task, which has to be complemented by the search for “conventionalisation”, that is to say the study of constant, formalised, and recognised conventions and practices that regulate and stabilise individual initiatives in societal forms.¹

In her contribution to this publication, Anneke Mulder-Bakker points to a two-fold ambivalence often encountered by scholars working on religious individualisation. Particularly in premodern scenarios, we are used to a focus on elite literature and therefore tend to overlook the impact of ‘lay’ material on processes of religious individualisation. At the same time, Mulder-Bakker’s contribution shows that such ‘lay’ impulses rarely enter the history books: either because powerful elites or conventions prevent them from becoming institutionalised, i.e., from gathering stability over time by affecting larger groups of people; or, because they lose their individualising impetus over the course of their assimilation (and, eventually, expurgation) by established religious traditions or institutions.

How can processes of religious individualisation in all their multifacetedness gather stability over time and become relevant not just for a select few but for a significant number of people? Are there cultural strategies that help preserve those ideas, texts, practices, or sets of experiences for future generations that foster processes of religious individualisation, eventually eliciting the support, or even prompting the formation of, religious traditions or institutions proper? As indicated in the main introduction to this publication, these questions were among those focused upon during the second funding period of the research group ‘religious individualisation in historical perspective’, and they are also the main focus of this present part entitled ‘Conventions and Contentions’. We used the term ‘institutionalisation’ for the perspective outlined above, and thereby wanted to move away from the analytical focus on individual actors in favour of broader social dynamics that indicate processes of enhanced dissemination (e.g., through group formation), stabilisation (e.g., through ritualisation), standardisation (e.g.,

¹ Anneke Mulder-Bakker, ‘Lived Religion and Eucharistic Piety on the Meuse and the Rhine in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, Section 3.1 of this publication.

through the canonisation of texts), or even the establishment of ‘regimes’ of religious individualisation. To this end, we called for interpreting religious individualisation in context with, and in relation to, other religious strands as well as non-religious social spheres, including processes of, or eventual relapses into, de- or non-individualisation.

In hindsight, this appears to be quite an ambitious project and the final outcome presented in this part is more ambiguous than we had anticipated. This discrepancy may be due to three particular issues: (1) religious individualisation is itself a multifaceted phenomenon, or even refers to a range of different phenomena subsumed under the same umbrella (justifiably or not: see Otto 2017), so that one wonders to which of these various processes the term ‘institutionalisation’ might actually refer; (2) the composite ‘institutionalising religious individualisation’ was hence either too narrow, ambivalent, abstract, or complex to plausibly be localised in the data of most scholars who partook in our project; (3) the idea itself seems to entail some unresolved tensions, or ambivalences, that are difficult to conceptualise, let alone identify in historical scenarios. These ambivalences mostly pertain to the observation that, as soon as religious individualisation affects religious groups or prompts their formation, dynamics of normativisation or standardisation may undermine its initial impetus and instead lead to compulsory, normative or other forms of pseudo- or counter-individualistic group dynamics. Yet such relapses may not be inevitable and the task was, therefore, to find those subtle in-between-cases in which dynamics of religious individualisation had become relevant for larger groups (i.e., not only for some outstanding individuals) and gathered some stability over time while dynamics of homogenisation, dogmatisation, or the suppression of individual deviations had not (yet) led to backlashes into de- or non-individualisation.

Due to these conceptual difficulties and ambivalences, ‘institutionalisation’ did not make it into the title of this part of the publication, and the term also figures only occasionally in the contributions assembled here. Yet the idea that processes of religious individualisation can gather stability over time and inform religious groups or foster their foundation remains in the background, so that it is necessary to – briefly – explain what we had in mind by making use of the term ‘institutionalisation’. Obviously, our understanding differs from standard theories in economics, social sciences, or law, according to which different types of institutions are distinguished (formal and informal: North 1990) and institutions are demarcated from conventions and other social norms. If one differentiates formal and informal institutions, the former usually provide a set of (predetermined and textualised, e.g., legislative) rules that are enforced by a third party – usually the state –, thus shaping, stabilising, and governing human behaviour. In contrast,

informal institutions may relate to customary law, may not be textualised, and may only be enforced by social sanctions (e.g., through forms of ostracism or ‘othering’). Formal institutions very much represent collective rationality and are thus to be demarcated from informal institutions, which may only reflect the preconceptions and worldviews of particular (but eventually powerful) groups. Consider, for instance, the formal institution of marriage and – now in parts of the world – same-sex marriages, and on-going reservations and objections in the respective populations against the latter – which would then represent an informal institution. In contrast, certain types of fashion may be generally accepted and/or unquestioned and thus be considered neither formal nor informal institutions but, rather, mere conventions.

With this in mind, our idea of ‘institutionalising religious individualisation’ did not, of course, envisage the formation of fully-fledged ‘institutions’ of religious individualisation. These would be analogous to, say, law in modern nation states or, in the realm of religion, the foundation of a church – which today often functions both as an organisation as well as a formal institution that is granted certain rights by society at large. We wanted to analyse socio-historical processes and group dynamics that, on a somewhat smaller scale, trigger the enhancement of religious self-determination, the pluralisation of religious options, the facilitation of religious deviance, the development of elaborated notions of the self, or the realisation of intense ‘experiences deemed religious’ (Taves 2009) within religious groups or a larger number of religious actors over longer periods of time and in different historical scenarios. Quoting from our initial call for papers, we invited contributors to look at the following processes: ‘(i) the dissemination of certain patterns of self-practices (bodily, emotionally, spiritually); (ii) the ritualization of certain modes or patterns of communication of an individual actor or person with other persons or actors, including especially the not immediately plausible one(s); (iii) the emergence of spaces of choice or freedom (in various meanings of the term) of the individual vis-à-vis the wider group or category of reference; (iv) the creation of forms of sociality, community or collectivity that provide relatively unconstrained social (including religious) spaces for enabling the development of one’s personal options or paths’.

Over the course of preparing the contributions and editing this part of the publication, and due to the ambiguities in the notions of ‘institution’ and ‘institutionalisation’, we – that is, the contributors and editors –, felt the need for a change of vocabulary, from which the title ‘conventions and contentions’ emerged. What do we mean by this formulation? To begin with, institution/alisation, at least in its economic or legislative sense, necessitates the capacity to sanction deviant (religious) thought or behaviour, and thus seemed too broad. At the same time

it was also too specific to deal with a multitude of the more nuanced settings that we tend to find in historical cases. In fact, ‘conventions and contentions’ rather points to an on-going interplay between established dynamics of power, cultural norms of behaviour, patterns of belief and other societal structures at large – ‘conventions’ –, and the human tendency to question and deviate from such structures, independent of whether this is an un- or self-conscious act, whether it is performed individually or socially, or whether it involves secrecy or publicity. This is not to say that ‘conventions’ inevitably lead to deviations and, as it were, ‘contentions’, but we do assume that those historical scenarios that point to dynamics of an enhanced dissemination, stabilisation, or standardisation of religious individualisation are often influenced by the aforementioned interplay. The goal of this part of the publication was, therefore, to identify the dynamics of the stabilisation of religious individualisation from a ‘grass-roots’ perspective and with a particular focus on group formation in all its fragility, controversiality, and mutability.

With all this in mind, the rationale for the present part of the publication was to explore the dynamic interplay between ‘conventions and contentions’ and the impact of this interplay on the institutionalisation of religious individualisation. To that end, we assembled and compared case studies that cover different religious environments and historical scenarios, focusing on South Asia, the Mediterranean, and Europe from antiquity to the recent past. For analytical reasons, we decided to divide these case studies into two groups: the first group focuses on ‘practices’ and the second on ‘texts and narratives’. While the contributions to the first section thus ponder the impact of practices – ritual is foremost but contributors also consider economic or bureaucratic practices – on processes of religious individualisation and their eventual institutionalisation, the second section focuses on the impact of texts, narratives, and the relevance of the author and readership to such processes.

In both sections, our case studies reveal that detecting and analysing forms of institutionalisation of religious individualisation is a complicated task. The case studies in section one indicate that practices, foremost ritual practices, have a two-fold, or ambivalent, quality when it comes to religious individualisation: they may enhance individual agency, provide new options of behaviour, facilitate critical or deviant thought, or yield extraordinary experiences. However, they may also take on a shared, stereotypical, or even normative character, thus making it hard to consistently confirm a causal relationship between ritualisation and religious individualisation. Section two shows that the written word lends itself more readily to conventionalisation, and possibly, institutionalisation. Literary and religious texts have often set in motion particular discourses that empower and promote religious individualisation, particularly with regard to ideas of

personhood and individuality. It is, however, the ‘modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation’ (Foucault 1977, 137) that provide insights into the cultures and social relations that embolden paths of religious individualisation. In other words, it is the production and modification of the ‘author function’ that indicates the emergence of institutions, these in turn valorise the exemplary ‘individual/author’. The figures discussed in the ‘texts and narratives’ section are the ‘founders of discursivity’, the prime movers of particular currents of thought, although subsequent texts and writers gave retroactive force to these founders, since these latter contributors were the critical perpetrators of the discourse in which they took part.

Let us briefly summarise the contributions to both sections. Section one, on ‘practices’, traces the institutionalisation of religious individualisation with a focus on practices, particularly ritual practices (Patera, Ramelli, Mulder-Bakker), but also economic (Hermann-Pillath) and legislative (Nijhawan) practices. *Ioanna Pateria*, in a paper entitled ‘Individuals in the Eleusinian Mysteries: Choices and actions’ ponders the ‘individualistic’ elements in this ancient Greek ritual, an endeavour which turns out to be difficult, due to the public and normative nature and context of the ritual. In a similar vein, *Ilaria Ramelli*, in her article ‘Institutionalisation of Religious Individualisation: Asceticism in Antiquity and Late Antiquity and the Rejection of Slavery and Social Injustice’, describes patterns of religious individualisation in ancient monasticism and the surrounding debates on slavery. She, too, arrives at an ambivalent result, as dynamics of de-traditionalisation, an enhanced focus on individual salvation, or preliminary ideas of human rights and ‘dignity’, are accompanied by various de- or counter-individualising dynamics, such as binding monastic rules, ritual standardisation, or the recurrent desire for tradition(alisation) in ancient ascetic milieus. *Anneke Mulder-Bakker*, in her piece ‘Lived Religion and Eucharistic Piety at the Meuse and the Rhine in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries’, outlines processes of religious individualisation in some exemplary lay religious women in late medieval Europe. As these women failed in prompting greater dynamics of religious individualisation, but nonetheless became exemplary figures in later hagiographies, Mulder-Bakker speaks of ‘conventionalisation’ (understood as the formation of ‘stable, formalised and recognised conventions and practices, which regulate and stabilise individual initiatives in societal forms’) rather than ‘institutionalisation’.

Carsten Herrmann-Pillath’s chapter ‘Religious Individualisation in China: A Two-Modal Approach’ outlines a fully-fledged economic theory of religious individualisation based on the religious market model (RMM). Choosing modern China as his example, Hermann-Pillath distinguishes two basic modes of economic exchange – market exchange and gift exchange – and explains

the institutionalisation of religious individualisation as well as backlashes into de- or non-individualisation as a dynamic interplay between these two exchange modes. *Michael Nijhawan*, in his paper ‘Migrant Precarity and religious individualisation’, shifts our attention to legal – or bureaucratic – practices, namely those geared towards controlling the residence, activities, and eventual deportation of Sikhs seeking asylum in post-1984 Germany. He shows how Kafkaesque bureaucratic necessities and procedures – such as the asylee’s frequent dependence on court orders, work permits, or monthly visa-renewals – lead to a variety of changes in their religious practices and self-perceptions that correlate to processes of religious individualisation. These include certain forms of de-traditionalisation, creative re-interpretations of Sikh terminologies, or enhanced reflections on their religious self or self-hood. Finally, *Bernd-Christian Otto*’s piece ‘The Illuminates of Thanateros and the Institutionalisation of Religious Individualisation’ analyses the schism of a contemporary grouping of ‘learned magic’ (or ‘magick’, as it is called in modern practitioner literature). According to Otto, this schism illustrates the tension between a strikingly individualist, anti-hierarchical, anti-dogmatic agenda on the one hand and competing (group) dynamics of dogmatisation, authoritarianism, secrecy, and power abuse on the other, thus, again, pointing to basic ambivalences in the idea of institutionalising religious individualisation.

Section two analyses the institutionalisation of religious individualisation with a specific focus on ‘texts and narratives’. The section is organised around the nexus of authorship, texts, audience, and the locations of individualisation and institutionalisation. *Ian Henderson*’s reading of Chapter 7 of Paul’s Letter to the Romans, “...quod nolo, illud facio” (Romans 7:20): Institutionalising the unstable self’, reveals how Romans 7 has provoked particularly individualising reading traditions and reflections on the ‘I’ and the complexity of the Self. This text inspired and intensified conflicting discourses about personhood and individuality between Torah and Gospel. Paul conjured up the confusing ‘I’ of Romans 7 to haunt and destabilise the subsequent institutionalisation of Christianity. The many Pauls of this text ask the audience to question the nature and stability of the identity, self, and the ‘I’ in the text. *Anne Feldhaus*’ piece, ‘Individualisation, Deindividualisation, and Institutionalisation among the Early Mahānubhāvs’, discusses the Old Marathi literature of the 13th-century Mahānubhāvs as both a classic example of individualisation and its mitigation – revealing the tensions and contradictions in the processes of religious individualisations that emerge from textual sources. Her chapter examines the characterisation of two of the divine incarnations, Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāūl, in their Mahānubhāv hagiographies, and the account of the early years the disciples spent without the benefit of the incarnations’ presence, therefore attempting to maintain the divine

presence in narrative form (14th–15th centuries). In her contribution, ‘Religious Individualisation and Collective Bhakti: Sarala Dasa and Bhima Bhoi’, *Ishita Banerjee-Dube*, also dealing with an early Indian text, examines the *Mahabharata* in Odia ascribed to Sarala Dasa, the *adi kavi*, the originary (but not necessarily the first) poet of vernacular Odia. She discusses Bhima Bhoi’s compositions and those attributed to him in order to trace the constitution and mobility of texts and author(s) in the very process of their actualisation in interpretive reading. Banerjee-Dube illustrates the force the audience and readership have on the text and, indeed, the ability to produce the figure of the author according to the needs of the recipients of texts. Moving to North India, *Rahul Bjorn Parson’s* chapter, ‘Individualisation and Democratisation of Knowledge in Banārasidās’ *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*’, engages with the 17th-century Jain poet Banārasidās in order to trace how the poet mobilises and transforms older Jain philosophical concepts of non-absolutism and may-be-ness for a new historical moment, one in which a growing interest in personhood and Self starts to inform a particular species of religious individualisation. Banārasidās gives force to an idea of the Self in neutrality, resisting partiality, influence and dogmatism, in order to *experience (anubhav)* the true Self. Additionally, since the subsequent poets conform to the conventions of the genre of *Adhyātmik* (spiritual) poetry popularised by Banārasidās, this study also serves as an example of how pathways of individualisation oscillate between innovation and conventionalisation.

In his contribution, ‘Subjects of Conversion in Colonial Central India’, *Saurabh Dube* explores the interplay of conversion, translation, and the life-stories of central Indian converts to Christianity in 19th and 20th-century India. Focusing on autobiographies and biographies of converts in the Chhattisgarh region of central India, Dube shows how the sources reveal an ambivalence towards and resistance against patriarchal power, the search for a local meaning and vocation, as well as a drive to vernacularise and localise Christian revelation, namely, to personalise and individualise the Word in the Indian context. *Max Deeg’s* chapter, entitled ‘Many Biographies – Multiple Individualities: The Identities of the Chinese Buddhist Monk Xuanzang’, discusses the East Asian Yogācāra master *par exemplum* and Chinese monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (600/602–664), in order to explore the ways in which individualisation has manifested in several historical narratives about one specific individual. Xuanzang’s biographies have been received, projected, and recreated repeatedly, from the time of the monk up to present-day film adaptations. Xuanzang’s different biographies reflect a rare historical process during which many identities are constructed and multiple individualities are implied. Finally, in ‘Jewish emancipation, religious individualisation, and metropolitan integration: A case study on Moses Mendelssohn and Moritz Lazarus’, *Sabine Sander* closes this section of the publication with a discussion

of the path taken ‘out of the Ghetto’ by European Jews between 1750 and 1850. She examines the parallel biographies as well as the religious and linguistic writings of two German-Jewish scholars, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903). Sander shows how the writings of Mendelssohn and Lazarus, as well as their life stories, both initiated and institutionalised processes of individualisation, as well as the subsequent expression of these developments within the Jewish religion. Religious individualisation, particularly as manifested in texts, offered emancipation and self-development for European Jews, while at the same time informing European urban demographics and metropolitan growth.

The two sections of this publication, ‘Practices’ and ‘Texts and Narratives’, thus form a productive alliance. The ‘practices’ section reminds us of the blurred relationship between textual ideas, topoi and tropes, and the reality of praxis. It fleshes out the ineffability and some of the ambiguities inherent in processes of religious individualisation but it also points to certain requirements of institutionalisation processes: without ritualisation, group formation, or the establishment of textual traditions, religious individualisation may remain nothing but a niche phenomenon. The ‘texts and narratives’ section reveals some of the limitations of language, at the point of the ineffable, as well as the (in)stability of the concept of the author. Here, unsurprisingly, the examples frequently deal with irony, *akrasia*, paradox, and contradiction. We see how texts are instructive in fathoming the limits of language, particularly with regard to the ineffability of the Self and the individual, especially when attempting to express this in a shared, universal code such as language. Against this backdrop, practices and rituals give us a glimpse of what may manifest in performance, action, resistance, or praxis, rather than mere words. The ambiguous results of the ‘practices’ section offer a sobering rejoinder to the ‘texts and narratives’ section, which trades in the more idealised realm of promise and possibility.

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Section 3.1: **Practices**

Carsten Herrmann-Pillath

Religious individualisation in China: a two-modal approach

1 Introduction: individualisation, in society and in religion

In current sociological and anthropological studies of China, the issue of individualisation is prominent (Hansen, Svarverud 2011). On the one hand, this is a most general concept referring to ideas about modernisation as a project that enhances the rights of the individual and centres on individual aspirations for fulfilling one's goals and values in life. On the other hand, the notion relates to the more specific ideas of Ulrich Beck (2014, 91ff.) about 'reflexive modernisation' which highlights the autonomy and responsibility of the individual regarding the construction of her or his identity as a person (such as even individualising the choice of gender). The difference between the two approaches lies in the respective role of reflexivity. Applied to China, this boils down to distinguishing between two kinds of individualisation. For example, the upsurge of consumerism and self-centred moral attitudes as well as the growth of private entrepreneurship may be regarded as individualisation in the former sense. However, this process of individualisation is triggered by many policies actively promoted by the government, so that it may be conceived as a passive process of adaptation, lacking the criterion of reflexivity. An influential contributor to the debate, Yan Yunxiang (2010), therefore argues that individualisation in China is different from the Western form of individualisation and can be characterised as 'state-led individualisation' or 'authoritarian individualisation'.¹

¹ I cannot go into the details of the discussion, which is more complex, as Beck, for example, distinguishes between 'individualism' and 'individualisation'. However, I think my description catches the gist of the argument. Important empirical studies on 'authoritarian individualisation' have been presented for the educational sector in China, where persons are educated to become 'individuals', see, e.g., Hansen 2013.

Note: Thanks to Bernd-Christian Otto, Martin Fuchs and Philip Clart for extensive comments on an earlier version of this paper. Further, I learned a lot from presenting my ideas at the meetings of the *Kollegforscherguppe*.

From the angle of this section in our publication on religious individualisation, Yan's argument refers to a peculiar pattern of institutionalisation of individualisation, though evidently in a paradoxical way, as far as established Western notions of that process are concerned: Western observers would mostly tend to see individualisation as a process of establishing autonomy vis à vis authorities external to the individual. Therefore, I want to tackle the issue of individualisation in a different way. Evidently, both conceptions of individualisation in China take for granted that some form of 'collectivist' culture is the starting point from which individualisation proceeds. Indeed, characterising traditional Chinese culture and society as collectivist and group-oriented is a staple across the social sciences, psychology, management sciences, and economics.² I wish to question this assumption and present the hypothesis that China traditionally manifested culturally embedded forms of individualism, which are reflected in certain religious practices. By implication, current tracks of individualisation would not be interpreted as being connected to earlier forms of collectivism, but may stand in line with traditional forms of individualism.³ In previous work (Herrmann-Pillath 2016a), I relied on the conceptual and empirical work of one of China's foremost 20th century anthropologists and sociologists, Fei Xiaotong, in debunking claims about the 'collectivism' of Chinese culture, by combining it with recent research in psychology, sociology and cognitive sciences about the values and behavioural stances of the Chinese. In this argument, I already point towards Chinese religion as a potential area to further substantiate this claim.

In the current paper, I will present my case for individualism, 'Chinese style', by connecting the sociological debate to the discourse that is going on in religious studies about religious individualisation (Fuchs 2015), and which lies at the centre of this multi-volume collection of papers on the topic. In this discourse, the conventional idea about individualisation follows the established narrative about Western modernisation: For example, the secular trends following the Reformation, as one revolutionary step in individualisation, manifest phenomena such as increasing protection of religious freedoms of the individual and growing self-determination of religious choices, with a focus on individual religious needs and preferences and inner beliefs and spirituality. However, this master narrative is increasingly questioned, both regarding the historical record and in

² To mention just one example, extremely influential in economics and management sciences, in the Hofstede approach China appears as diametrically opposed to Western countries in the 'collectivism vs. individualism' dimension, representing a strong case of collectivism (Hofstede et al. 2010).

³ Mirroring this reasoning, one can also argue that individualisation in China today does not exist in tension with the persistence of group-oriented behaviour, especially in traditional forms, see Barbalet 2016.

cross-cultural comparisons. As for the historical record, the historical ubiquity of deviant forms of religiosity, large local variations in religious expressivity and practice, or the strength of mysticism in Europe may indicate that the notion of individualisation hinges on an uncritical acceptance of hegemonic religious beliefs and organisations as a measure of evaluating these phenomena as marginal. Cross-cultural comparison, in turn, reveals the cultural embeddedness of the analytical notion of individualisation; therefore, we might be blinded to alternative cultural forms of individuality, or even might not be able to appreciate cultural forms that dissolve the analytical dualism between individual and group (such as covered by notions of ‘dividuality’, Mosko 2010).

I think it is worthwhile to build on this discourse in religious studies and raise the question of religious individualisation in China.⁴ This question has its own interest, but will also contribute to the wider debate over individualisation in Chinese studies more generally. I will argue that the Chinese religious domain manifests many forms of individualism, thus supporting the case for individualisation in Chinese society in the context of both tradition and modernity. In doing this, I introduce a specific analytical framework that is motivated by a recent discussion in Chinese religious studies about the relevance of the ‘religious market model’ (henceforth, RMM).⁵ In this discussion, David Palmer (2011) criticises applications of the RMM in pointing out that many forms of religious activity in China do not follow the logic of market exchange, but of gift exchange, thus primarily serving as expressions of identities and community. We can refer this to the debate about religious individualisation in general, where we also observe the implicit distinction between individualism in terms of choices and individualism in terms of expressivity. This dualism has been seminally elaborated by Charles Taylor (1989) as an important feature of the European process of individualisation. I suggest that we can therefore think about individualisation in terms of two modes, where market exchange relates with (rational) choice, and gift exchange with expressivity. I submit the claim that an adequate picture of individualisation needs to take both modes into consideration, and analyse their

4 My project is related to Szonyi’s (2009) discussion of secularization in comparative terms. Indeed, individualisation is often seen as concomitant to secularization, partly because secularization reduces the grip of religion on society. Interestingly, Szonyi uses the religious market model, which I introduce below, also as an analytical device to analyse secularization in Imperial China, which is methodologically akin to my approach.

5 The RMM was seminally introduced by Iannacone (1991), building on early ideas of Adam Smith. The subsequent literature is aptly reviewed by Höhener and Schaltegger (2012). The journal *Religion* published a special issue on religious markets in the Chinese context in its issue 41(4) in 2011. One of the most influential authors in this area, Rodney Stark, has also co-authored a study on Taiwan, see Lu et al. 2008.

systematic interaction. In other words, I think that individualisation is always and everywhere a bimodal phenomenon. This implies that it is dynamic, and that there are recurrent oscillations between the poles which may explain much historical and cross-cultural diversity.

In this context, the RMM has never been considered as a point of reference in the specialised literature about religious individualisation, to the best of my knowledge. I suggest that it can help as an analytical lens to identify specific forms of individualisation that occur during processes of the economisation of society (Çalışkan, Callon 2009; 2010). After all, this is certainly part and parcel of the grand narrative about Western individualisation, and an important aspect in discussing individualisation in China today. Authoritarian individualisation easily can be interpreted as a form of ‘neoliberal governmentality’, where the market appears as a form of social power, thus actually even reducing the scope for both individual choice and expressivity (Sigley 2006). Yet, the RMM states precisely the opposite in arguing that religious markets enable individual choice, and therefore create a competitive dynamic of providers of religious services fulfilling autonomous individual needs.

Therefore, I think that we can use the RMM as an analytical metaphor in reflecting on the nature and scope of individualisation, without claiming that it also covers the phenomenology of religion in a specific case. In discovering the limits of its applicability, we can also identify the points of transition to the mode of expressivity, following the lines of Palmer’s reasoning. Yet, at these points of transition, we could indeed realise even the phenomenological value of the RMM in noticing the emic references to market exchange in religious life, often triggering critical reflection and moves towards the expressive mode.

Another advantage of the RMM is that it implicitly combines the perspectives of institutionalisation and individualisation in its analysis of practices. On the phenomenological level, the empirical vindication of the RMM would rest upon the identification of certain practices, such as competitive behaviour among alternative suppliers of religious services. However, ‘markets’, even if conceived as a mere metaphor, would include both complex forms of institutionalisation (such as religious rights) and individual behavioural stances (such as entrepreneurial drive). Accordingly, I think that the RMM is particularly powerful in approaching the relationship between institutionalisation and individualisation in the domain of practices.

In the following, I begin with a brief exposition of the RMM. In section 3, I introduce the second mode of expressivity and gift exchange. Section 4 puts the two modes together in a dynamic model of individualisation. Section 5 applies the model to China. Section 6 concludes with an outlook on the implications for the general issue of individualisation in Chinese society.

2 Basics of the religious market model (RMM)

I treat the RMM as a methodological litmus test to explore some deeper aspects of religious individualisation, without claiming that it is sufficient to explain observed phenomena. The RMM is a useful metaphor and heuristic device that highlights certain aspects of individualisation which relate to the economic dimensions of religion, in two senses:

- First, religious activities and religious organisations require economic resources and economic management, which implies that economic motives and concerns always intermingle with religious ones, creating specific motivational and behavioural patterns.
- Second, religious activity is integrated into the larger evolving structures of society, with special relevance of processes of economisation and marketisation, which embed and even drive the individualisation of social agency, resulting in specific forms of economic agency that interact with agency in other domains, as stipulated in the first point. These processes mainly work via certain patterns of institutionalising markets and their embedding social contexts.

The RMM as an empirical hypothesis posits that economic agency is also underlying religious agency, in terms of the rational choice model. I do not make this assumption. The concept of economisation implies that rational choice cannot identify a universal form of agency, but is always contextualised in specific social and cultural forms, partly enshrined in institutions. Economisation means that rational agency is established in social practices, norms, and ideational schemes that themselves evolve, interacting with other forms of agency. It is a process in which the boundaries between ‘the economic’ and other social domains are continuously negotiated, reproduced and changed.

Originally, the RMM was developed to explain an apparent paradox in the theory of modernisation, as applied to the United States, specifically. This is that secularization and modernisation have not resulted in a decline of religion in terms of religious practices, as indicated by the fact that the United States, although being the most advanced economy in the world, still manifests strong religious activities, such that, for example, in the World Values Survey, the US continues to display ‘traditional’ values, though also scoring high in so-called ‘self-expression values’.⁶ The RMM explanation builds on economic theory, espe-

⁶ See <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp> (last access March 3, 2018). The WVS is designed as a two-dimensional measure of societal modernization, with one dimension defined

cially rational choice and market theory, in order to solve this apparent paradox. It starts out from recognising a revealed preference for religious services that cater to certain religious needs which are taken as a given, as usual in economics. Based on this, the RMM applies a market model of supply and demand, in which religious organisations are treated as firms. The organisations pursue certain goals, which are not necessarily profit-making, but, for example, pursue expansion of the number of followers ('market share'). The most important analytical ingredient is competition. Competition enforces certain strategies on religious organisations that are responsive to the demand of believers, but also aim at influencing market structure, such as creating monopolies, in the same fashion as business firms design strong brands to which customers are loyal.

The RMM suggests that institutional secularization, together with the legal guarantees of religious freedom, creates the conditions for an emerging religious market.⁷ In a real-world religious market, it is precisely that freedom of expression and organisational autonomy that leads to the expansion of religion, mediated via enhanced competition, relative to societies where religion remains partly tied to the state. Further, the RMM can even explain certain specific aspects of religion, such as the emergence of especially strict forms of sectarianism in an otherwise secular society, as the outcome of market dynamics and organisational strategies. Clearly, this specific notion of institutionalisation amounts to the standard narrative of growing civic freedoms and individual autonomy in Western modernity.

My interest in the RMM results from the observation that it has been applied with some success in the United States, but seems less appropriate for other cases.⁸ Therefore, I consider the possibility that it is performative.⁹ In a narrow sense, performativity of the RMM would mean that applying the RMM itself would

by the two poles of 'traditional' vs. 'secular-rational' values, and the second by the two poles of 'survival' vs. 'self-expression' values. Over the past twenty years, the US has slowly moved from a comparatively strong position in the traditional values to rational-secular values, yet remains far below Protestant European countries, but, interestingly, also the 'Confucian' countries, including China. The comparative literature on the RMM has not resulted in conclusive empirical evidence even on the secularization thesis, as summarized by Höhener and Schaltegger (2012).

⁷ This corresponds to Beck's (2014) general argument on individualisation as 'institutionalized individualism'.

⁸ For an explicit critique of applications to China based on institutional differences, especially the role of the state as a quasi-religious entity, see Liang 2014.

⁹ In economics, the notion of performativity has been gaining ground, see Boldyrev, Svetlova (2016). The narrow meaning of the term refers to the phenomenon that economic theories do not only describe economic facts, but create them, in the same way as performative utterances in speech act theory. I follow the broader meaning represented by Callon (2007) who does not

contribute to the emergence of the phenomena that it describes. This is evidently not the case, given the limited reach of the RMM in religious practice (such as, possibly, in guiding management decisions by leaders of religious communities in business-like mega-churches). But in a broader sense, both the RMM and its referents would be conceived as being embedded in certain forms of a market-based society, or, capitalism. Then I would surmise that these forms of life and corresponding forms of thinking give rise both to the specific forms of religiosity and to the RMM as a way of scientifically understanding it. In other words, religion in the US and the RMM would be conjugated cultural forms embedded into a shared larger cultural framework that reflects secular processes of economisation and marketisation which are specific to the US context. This implies that standard forms of applying the RMM are themselves relative to certain cultural frames, and hence cannot be taken as universal patterns of explaining religious phenomena.

However, I think that the RMM as such points towards an important issue in the theory of religious individualisation. This is the interaction between certain forms of individual behaviour and the institutional environment. Taking the market as a theoretical reference implies certain conditions of application that are themselves indicators of individualisation. Most importantly, these are specific individual rights, such as the right of religious self-determination, the right of free expression, or the right of establishing religious organisations. So, the analytical notion of ‘market’ is highly loaded with assumptions that describe the institutional emergence of individualisation in modern societies. This is recognised by the RMM because it takes secularization for granted, which poses the challenge that RMM intends to meet. One could argue that all these institutional conditions of application are included in the notion of secularization, thus partly resolving the alleged puzzle *ab ovo*. Then, from the perspective of performativity, we could say that the applicability of the RMM is a sort of litmus test for indicating the existence of its conditions of application.¹⁰

Regarding our topic of individualisation, we notice that the RMM implies a specific type of individualisation, which is inherent to the general model of a market. This model can be described in terms of concepts such as utilitarian

limit this function to scientific economic theories, but includes all kinds of ideas and concepts relating to the economy.

10 However, one additional condition is to take religious needs for granted. That would mean that secularization as such would not essentially impact the religious needs. This is a view specific to economics, which refrains from explaining preferences at all, starting out from subjectivism as a premise. The strength of religion in the US would be simply seen as manifesting the underlying preferences. Thus, the theory argues that market dynamism reinforces the expression of these needs.

rationality, autonomy, or analytical separability between individual and society. This form of individualisation has been repeatedly highlighted by many sociologists and philosophers, such as Norbert Elias (1969, xlvi ff.), who coined the term ‘homo clausus’ in his theory of Western civilisation, or Charles Taylor (1989, 195ff., 305ff.), who distinguishes between two different strands of individualism in European history: the rationalist, which corresponds to the RMM model, and the expressivist. This dualism inspires our next section.

3 Expressivism and gift exchange

David Palmer (2011) has thoroughly criticised the application of the RMM to China. Palmer points to different institutional and normative forms of ‘religious economy’ and opposes market exchange with gift exchange, following classical anthropological theories of gift exchange as stated by Mauss. The central idea is that a gift is not a commodity, because it creates and maintains a social relationship. Whereas in market exchange, payment concludes the social interaction between seller and buyer, exchange of gifts never concludes the social relationship, because the action is perceived as being part and parcel of an ongoing reciprocal exchange. Religious gift exchange is a variant of reciprocal gift exchange because it involves a third party, the transcendental entities. This means that, for example, a giver may not expect reciprocity from the human receiver of the gift, but from the transcendental domain. However, sacrifice may also be interpreted along the lines of dualistic gift exchange, thus establishing a relationship between the Gods and the human giver of the sacrifice. Palmer argues that gift exchange plays an important role also in Chinese religious activities, and can be clearly demarcated from market exchange in empirical terms (for a similar view, see Liang 2014). That means that in the Chinese religious economy the two modes coexist: For example, there are temples that are indeed involved in economic competition over attracting pilgrims and believers, according to the standards of efficacy (*ling* 靈) in meeting the needs of the visitors, but there are also the communal temples of the villages, which define the relationship between believer and temple in terms of social ascription to the village community as a ritual collective.

I argue that Palmer’s critique comes very close to Hénaff’s (2002) discussion of the relationship between market exchange and gift exchange, but there is an important clarification to be made. Hénaff criticises the inclusion of gift exchange in the broader notion of economy (which is often done in anthropology), because this opens the door for economic analyses of gift exchange that conflate both

modes of relationship. Instead, Hénaff emphatically argues that gift exchange is radically different from market exchange in serving the goal of expressing identities in social relationships, in the sense of both individual and shared identities. This radical difference implies that the two modes cannot co-exist in one single pattern of social interaction, because market exchange necessarily undermines the expressive functions of the gift. This is most evident if we consider the role of money in mediating social relationships. Since money is the primordial medium of market exchange, the use of money in reciprocal relations of gift exchanges can undermine their very role in creating and maintaining the underlying shared identities. This is important in the context of this paper, because the relationship between markets and other social domains is strongly influenced by the respective roles of money, with money assuming transformative forces.¹¹

Further, I refer Hénaff's reasoning to Taylor's distinction between two forms of individualisation in European cultural history, the rationalist and the expressivist.¹² If we deal with a particular phenomenon of social relationship, this can be framed in either of the two modes. Here, the methodological dimension comes into play, also in the sense of involving performative phenomena. The two frames are simultaneously phenomenological and analytical. In the analytical sense, we refer to two fundamentally different frames of thinking in intellectual history. The rationalist view is ideal-typically represented in economic theory, which, in a broader sense, also encompasses all approaches that rely on analytical figures such as the social contract. This is exactly the frame that also underlies the RMM, and hence also stipulates a specific form of individualisation, namely the instrumental and rationalist one, in which individuals pursue their goals rationally, and create social institutions based on instrumental rationality, both via exchange and agreement. The expressivist analytical stance is represented by social theories and philosophies that reject the frame of instrumental rationality and instead focus on the role of individual identity and creativity. In this view, individualisation means that the scope and range of individual expressions of

¹¹ This opens perspectives on Simmel's (1907) philosophy of money, which is significant in the current context because Simmel approaches money as a major medium of individualisation, and would imply that a market logic expands across all social domains. However, as Zelizer (1997) has shown in her classical study of money in social relationships, the uses of money are classified differently in social practice, especially distinguishing between money used in market exchange and in gift exchange. I have analysed the performative functions of money extensively in Herrmann-Pillath (2016b).

¹² Taylor (1989, 195ff., 305ff.). More specifically, the rationalist tradition is defined in terms of 'atomism' and 'instrumentalism'. Expressivism is also a constant, but was strongly emerging as a counter-current against rationalism, such as in German romanticism; it relates with Republican values in political philosophy, as opposed to rationalist social contract theory.

identity is enhanced, and necessarily requires the cooperative creation of shared identities based on emotional and symbolic formations.

These two frames also have a phenomenological status. This implies that there is a tension between the analytical and the phenomenological uses, because the two analytical frames are mutually exclusive, but in terms of the phenomenological interpretation they can co-exist, albeit in tension. This is the idea that I wish to explore further in the next section. I argue that the notion of individualisation is two-modal, and that the two modes are manifest in different combinations and dynamics across diverse cultural settings, and across different historical periods. One essential aspect is the relationship between individualisation and economisation: Economisation is deeply shaped by historically specific trajectories of institutional changes, driving the emergence of specific forms of economic agency that interplay with changing forms of religious agency. It is the struggle between those different forms of agency that determines the trajectory that individualisation takes. Therefore, we could argue that institutionalisation of individualisation leaves a space open for multiple trajectories of individualisation in either of the two modes, such that there is no unequivocal relationship between institutionalisation and individualisation, as is often uncritically assumed when reflecting upon the Western experience.

4 The two-modal approach to religious individualisation

The two-modal approach to individualisation suggests that, even when referring to the European origin of the distinction, individualisation in the West must be conceived as a multi-faceted phenomenon, manifesting tensions and contradictions. We can use the two modes as an analytical device by which we can identify certain conditions and manifestations of individualisation, while at the same time avoiding claims that one analytical mode is sufficient for explaining observed phenomena, or that entire social and cultural systems are shaped by one form of individualisation. This is because in the phenomenological interpretation, we always need to realise that the two modes co-exist in a dialectical tension. My claim is that in different cultural settings we will find different societal, normative and institutional arrangements that reflect temporary solutions to this dialectical tension, and that one important aspect of individualisation is the individual creativity in discovering these solutions and successfully engaging collectives of actors in adopting these solutions.

Summarising the discussion in sections 2 and 3, we can arrange the issues in the following way.

	Market exchange	Gift exchange
Rationalism/instrumentalism	Compatibility	Tension
Expressivism	Tension	Compatibility

Analytically and phenomenologically, rationalism is compatible with market exchange, and expressivism with gift exchange. This also implies a performative relationship: Adopting a rationalist stance is a necessary condition of maintaining market exchange, and vice versa, and gift exchange relies on expressive stances, and vice versa. Analytically it is possible to interpret gift exchange in terms of rationalism, yet phenomenologically the corresponding stances exist in tension, as demonstrated by Hénaff. In other words, instrumentalist gift exchange is counter-performative, at least in the longer run.¹³ This is what directly applies to the RMM, as has been shown by Palmer for the case of China: If participant actors start to perceive the religious domain as a ‘market’, this triggers a backlash and move towards the gift exchange mode. Yet, this does not mean that the entire social domain of religion does not manifest institutional, normative, and behavioural patterns that can be analysed by the RMM. In a nutshell, applying the RMM analytically means to consider the process of economisation, and this helps to understand general processes of individualisation, and of religious individualisation, specifically.

In some more detail, the notion of individualisation can be related to the market exchange model in an abstract way: Individualisation mode 1 relates with the market exchange mode of relationships. In analytical terms, this mode allows for identifying certain conditions of individualisation, such as certain formal or informal rights of pursuing individual goals. Then, the RMM is a proper analytical tool for understanding religious individualisation, as it allows for recognising behaviours and social practices that relate to established and recognised forms of pursuing individual religious needs, and understanding the corresponding role of instrumental functions in establishing larger organisational phenomena of religion, undergirded by certain institutional arrangements. As an abstract analytical model, the RMM is culturally neutral, but helps in identifying functional equivalences across different cultural contexts, thus also in identifying culturally specific forms of individualisation in the market exchange mode (such as relating the interpretation of evangelical churches in the US as ‘firms’ to the performance of Daoist temples in Hong Kong).

¹³ On the notion of counter-performativity, see McKenzie (2007).

However, in the market exchange mode fundamental issues arise regarding the question how to establish, maintain, and express the identity of the individual as a person who is in continuous social interaction with others. Hence, in the market exchange mode a crisis of identity and authenticity looms. So, individualisation mode 2 emphasises the stability, the commitment and the authenticity of behaviour in expressing and manifesting individual identity as a person; the mode of expression is gift exchange. This unfolds in the fundamental tension between being an individual person and being in need of realising this personhood in a web of social relations. The tension can only be resolved when these relationships are themselves rooted in authenticity and commitment.

Now, I claim that the dialectical relationship between the two modes explains specific patterns of religious individualisation: I do this, first by adopting the different analytical perspectives of the two modes, and second, by understanding the inherent tensions in terms of the phenomenology of religious practices. In other words, in terms of empirically identifiable phenomenon, we observe 'individualisation' as a mix of the two modes, and only analysis can reveal their specific expressions. Religious individualisation is driven by and enabled by the expansion of the religious market, in conjunction with the diffusion of markets in society, or, more generally, processes of economisation. This process builds on the growth of a religious infrastructure, which is itself increasingly diverse and competitive, and goes along with the standardisation of religious practices by different suppliers, such as the formalisation of beliefs and rites of specific communities, which enables expansion of services. The concomitant enhancement of individual freedom of choice enables religious entrepreneurship and creativity.

These developments correspond to the institutionalisation of individualisation and imply the growth of the religious market also in institutional terms, that is, in certain formal or informal rights of religious expression, the diversity of organisational forms offering religious services, and specific ways of regulating the religious market. However, they also create the conditions for a backlash, which I approach as the second mode of individualisation. The second mode emphasizes individuality in terms of personal experience, uniqueness, and authenticity of the religious experience, thus explicitly working against the forces of standardisation, but also against all other forms of external enforcement of religious beliefs and rituals that constrain the religious market. The more the religious market moves to 'commoditisation', the stronger will the incentives become that trigger the transition to individualisation mode 2. This is because, as Hénaff shows in much detail, the economisation of the religious domain raises principled doubts and questions about the very authenticity of the motivations and experiences of religious actors. This tension is literally embodied in the universal conflicts over the role of money in religious activities and organisation.

The gift exchange mode is more complex. This is because there are two aspects here, related to the fact that social relations and religious relations are superimposed. On the one hand, religious interactions with the transcendental can be approached as a gift exchange relationship by which the believer relates personally with the object of her belief. At the same time, however, this personal relationship is mostly embedded in communities of believers who share this personal experience in creating shared identities, which is also expressed in gift exchange. This makes individualisation 2 complex because personal individualisation can be in tension with the embeddedness in a community, which imposes constraints on individual freedom, understood in terms of individualisation 1.

Thus, we see how the two modes contain the seeds for change, and stay in continuous interaction with each other, as represented in Fig. 1. Individualisation mode 1 often triggers the emergence of alternative religious movements that claim authenticity of the religious experience, thus moving to mode 2: That is, the role of the ‘religious entrepreneur’ bridges the two modes, triggering such modal transitions.¹⁴ There are various more detailed scenarios, in par-

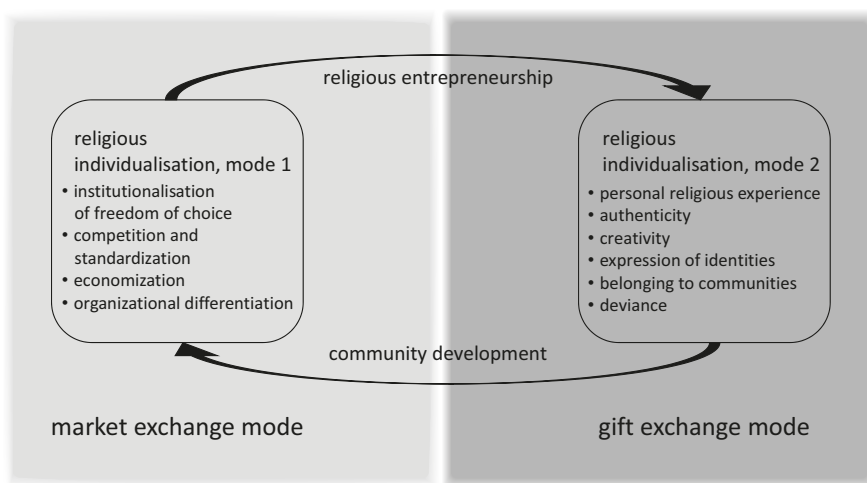


Fig. 1: The two-modal view on religious individualisation.

¹⁴ The figure of the religious entrepreneur is ambivalent here, but can be related to a similar duality in Schumpeter’s views on market dynamics. There is also the type of entrepreneur (the *Wirt*) who concentrates on enhancing the efficiency of the organization and expanding its resource base: This type remains within the scope of individualisation 1. But the type of entrepreneur who drives ‘creative destruction’ is not motivated by economic concerns in the first place: This matches with my notion of religious entrepreneur, and operates in the expressive mode.

ticular referring to religious markets which are deeply embedded in social and political power structures, thus actually constraining individual freedom of choice via limiting the supply side. In these cases, broader societal developments of marketisation and commoditisation can also drive deviant religious movements, that are originally cast in terms of individualisation 2, but which eventually also foster individualisation 1, such as in claiming also rights of religious freedom.

On the other hand, individualisation 2 can foster the expansion of religious communities in the larger context of marketisation. In this case, communities need to build an organizational infrastructure, which requires the mobilisation of economic resources, but also triggers processes of standardisation. So, this mode also harbours forces that go along with individualisation 1, depending on the broader framework of existing institutional constraints and endogenous forces limiting freedom of choice. This is especially true if communities aim at expansion, which requires raising resources and creates the need for standardising religious practices in the transition to more formal organisation.

In the end, we can envisage cycles of individualisation, for example, with individualisation 1 fostering the emergence of institutionalised freedom of choice, but also engendering switches to mode 2, with religious entrepreneurship operating as a lever connecting the two. Individualisation 2 also goes along with mode shifts to individualisation 1 because of standardisation and economisation in the context of community formation. I posit that these dialectical movements can only be properly understood if we contextualise them in the larger patterns of economisation that take place in different societies. So, the model is both universal and particular: It is analytically universal, but can only be empirically grounded if, phenomenologically, cultural and socio-political embeddedness is explicitly considered.

If I call these movements ‘dialectical’, this even applies on a deeper level. So far, I have approached the phenomena in the dimension of individualisation, without considering the two poles of this trajectory together. However, one could also argue, for example, that individual dissatisfaction with standardised forms of religious practices in mode 1 in fact responds to their increasing power of de-individualisation, as conceived in mode 2. This applies vice versa: submission to community ways of life may be felt as encroaching on individual liberties, so being another kind of de-individualisation, but as perceived in mode 1. Hence, we could argue that the movement between the two modes is driven by their inherent de-individualising forces, as measured in the opposite mode. For reasons of space, I do not pursue this further theoretical development here.

5 Religious individualisation, ‘Chinese style’

Applying the model of individualisation to the case of China means that we interpret the empirical evidence about Chinese religious phenomena in the light of the four elements of the model, that is the two poles of market exchange and gift exchange, and the mechanisms that drive the dynamics between the modes. By means of this interpretation, I assess the status, the pattern, and degree of religious individualisation in China.

In doing this, as a starting point it is important to briefly consider the role of the state, because the state is the most important medium by which certain forms of institutionalisation of individualisation emerge and are being reproduced, which are both constraints and enablers of certain practices of individualisation. The modern Communist state continues, but also considerably strengthened the control of religion that was characteristic also for Late Imperial China (Palmer 2010). This observation plays a central role in one of the most prominent applications of the RMM to China, Yang Fenggang’s (2006) distinction between the ‘red’, the ‘gray’, and the ‘black’ market of religion. If we look at this phenomenon in the light of the individualisation perspective, however, we can interpret the regulatory role of the state in various ways. The peculiar relationship between state and religion was established in Imperial times to contain religion as a potential source of autonomous power *vis à vis* the state, often manifested in the role of religion in large-scale uprisings. This motivation clearly is also prevalent today, such as in the case of the suppression of Falungong (法輪功), which did not directly challenge state authority, but revealed organisational capacities that posed a potential threat.

However, this containment of religion has another side of the coin, namely implicitly safeguarding individual freedom of choice in religion, both by limiting the emergence of religious monopolies and by refraining from establishing and enforcing a state religion: This is manifest in the secular growth and richness of the central phenomenon of Chinese religiosity, i.e., popular religion (Clart 2012). The latter assessment might be questioned, however, as the Confucian state cult certainly had a religious dimension (sometimes called a ‘civic theology’); beyond that, the Confucian enforcement of certain kinship norms and rituals may also be interpreted as imposing state-backed religious beliefs, as ancestor worship is one of the constitutive elements in popular religion (Ebrey 1985; Faure 2007). Similarly, some observers would argue that Maoism was a substitute state religion, and even contemporary modernist ideologies might have an almost religious status (Goossaert, Palmer 2011, Chap. 7; Liang 2014). Yet, I think that even if we accept the thesis of religious aspects of the Chinese state, this does not imply that a state religion is imposed on society, in the sense of

a fully-fledged institutionalisation of religious practices. One important limit to this is the rationalism and secularism that shaped both Confucian and contemporary modernisers' thinking about religion, and is visible in the long historical tradition of approaching popular religion as mere 'superstition' (Lagerwey 2010, 2ff.). Battling against superstition in the 20th century, of course, also implies that certain individual rights of religious choice are infringed, but as we know, both Imperial and Communist governments also accommodated popular religion. In the past, this happened via the recognition of spontaneously emerging beliefs in the official pantheon (Watson 2004); in the present, this works via the symbiosis between tourism and ideas about national heritage and popular religion (Clart 2012). This ambivalent attitude of the state has been theoretically and positively described as 'orthopraxy' versus Western 'orthodoxy', meaning that state-led institutionalisation only covered certain sensitive forms of social practice, but firstly, refraining from imposing also certain standardised interpretations of these practices, and secondly, leaving all other practices effectively to the choice of individuals and communities.¹⁵

Therefore, I conclude that we can diagnose a de facto, though constrained recognition of the freedom of individual choice of religion.¹⁶ For Yang's RMM model, we can conclude that the very applicability of the market paradigm implies that the entire domain of religion in China manifests properties of a religious market, though under government regulation. By implication, we observe a high degree of individualisation on both the supply and demand side, in terms of the market exchange mode.

This comes to the fore in an approach to Chinese religion that has been developed recently by Adam Chau (2006; 2011). Chau looks at the demand side in more detail, but without referring to the complete RMM. Yet, his point is pertinent. He argues that Chinese religion is 'polytropic', which means that the entire religious domain is shaped by the expressions of different 'modalities of doing religion', such as scriptural, caring for life concerns, or ritualistic. Modalities correspond to different needs that individuals have. Individuals turn to different suppliers in the various modalities, according to need and perceived efficacy. So, polytropy means that the religious domain is not shaped by a hegemonic belief system, but is open, variable, and dynamic. Most importantly,

¹⁵ The term 'orthopraxy' was seminally suggested by Watson (1985/2004), Watson and Ebrey (1988) and Schmidt-Glintzer (1983). There is still a lively debate about its merits, see Sutton (2007) and the contributions to this special issue of 'Modern China'.

¹⁶ Regarding individual rights in general, Bünger (1983) seminally argued that Western-type notions of rights might not have emerged in China because the state was not as intrusive as in Europe, especially in England after the Norman invasion (on this, see also Foucault 1997).

it centres on the individual, or, in the Chinese cultural context, the household (which points to the variant of ‘family individualism’ as highlighted in Chinese studies).

This interpretation is especially relevant when considering the organised religions. Clearly, Buddhism and Daoism easily match with the analytical standards of the RMM because they compete in delivering services to individuals, which also implies a cash nexus. Since the collapse of the Imperial order, these religious groups started to import organisational models of Christianity to strengthen their positions in the Chinese religious domain, introducing hierarchical structures, standardisation, and so forth. At the same time, there is the distinction between lay people and religious experts, with the latter adopting exclusive ties to the respective confessions. However, there is no strict imposition of exclusivity on the laypeople. By contrast, Christianity and Islam always caused tensions in the Chinese religious domain because of their claims to exclusivity. Yet, we can still think of Christianity as competing with other forms of religion in the Chinese religious domain, while even adopting certain assumptions of the RMM in arguing that it is this competition that creates tendencies towards exclusiveness. I shall come back to this important point later, because it refers to the transition to the second mode of individualisation.

I think we even need to diagnose an extremely rich and diverse form of religious individualisation in China, both in the rural and the urban settings. For example, as has been shown by Fisher (2012) for the case study of a large urban Buddhist temple, on the one hand there are the religious experts in Buddhism, and on the other hand, in the foreyard of the temple that is his field site, there is a crowd of individual lay preachers who offer an astonishing diversity of interpretations and opinions related to Buddhism. This is a veritable market microcosm where the different suppliers of religion compete. Remarkably, we do not only observe individualisation on the demand side, but also on the supply side. Further, we also recognise a strong cash nexus, especially relating to the formal organisation, with donations serving as vehicles of obtaining relief of religious needs, without establishing any kind of closer ties of believers to the organisation, which even remains somewhat aloof from the average believer with less financial means.

Fisher’s (2008) work also shows how economic dynamics even drive individualisation within the organisation. Quite frequently individual monks aspire to set up their own temples in some other place in China, where they would assume the role of abbot, and thereby also generate income, safeguarding their livelihood now and in old age. This activity clearly is akin to investment, and in fact sometimes does not rely only on donations, but also on investments that require the generation of returns, produced by future donations to the monastery and

temple. In other words, these activities are almost exemplary instances of religious entrepreneurship in the market exchange mode.¹⁷

Often, these activities aim at the urbanising rural areas, where religious needs may be strong, and sufficient prosperity is achieved. However, this effort meets with the endogenous dynamics of popular religion in the rural areas. Here, we observe a similar richness and continuity of forms of individualisation. One important difference between the urban and the rural areas certainly is that in the rural areas, the family and, more precisely, the household plays a central role in forms of individualisation. In that context, Adam Chau (2014) noticed another important difference between Western and Chinese forms of religion: In Christianity, the community is the basic unit of religious practice, highlighted in central rites such as communion, whereas in China the household is the central unit. Specifically, in the idea of communion God hosts the believers, whereas in China the household hosts the gods.¹⁸ This reversal of roles also applies for many Chinese temples if they are built autonomously by local communities: Apart from established religious entities, a temple would additionally host various gods who often represent local histories of religious tradition.

This is not the place to go into details that are well known. What is most important is the fact that therefore in Chinese tradition, often still alive in the rural areas, religion permeates social life, beginning with the fact that the household is at the same time a site of religious activities, beyond the religious role of the family in ancestor worship.¹⁹ This relates with gender differences, with women playing an essential role in individualising religious activities related to the household, including external activities such as visiting temples (apart from ancestral halls). There is a vast continuum of activities in the field between the

17 In my own fieldwork conducted together with Feng Xingyuan, we met a related example in Ninghai, Zhejiang province, which is a failed investment. A monk arrived there, equipped with funds that were investments, and asked the villagers for complementary donations. The core building of the temple was constructed, with a plaque identifying all donors of the village, but eventually funds were insufficient, and the monk left.

18 Foucault (2004, 177ff., 187) highlights the subordination of the individual to the community in the Christian image of the 'shepherd'. In this sense, formal Christian religion in medieval times was clearly de-individualising. This confirms Bünger's previously mentioned point in the sense that individualisation in the West can be interpreted as a countermovement which was simply not necessary in China, given the high degree of individualisation already present.

19 For a rich elaboration on this, see Yue (2014). This fact had led C. K. Yang (1961) to describe Chinese religion as 'diffuse'. However, this has a somewhat pejorative ring, matching with the modernist Chinese stance since the 1920s to regard only organized religions as 'religion'. In our context, the religious meaning of ordinary life is a major aspect of individualisation. On this peculiar symbiosis of life and religion, see also Gui (2013; 2014).

household and public forms of religion: For example, religious feasts might be organised on the household level, and sometimes, depending on the charisma of the protagonists, might tie up with larger public activities of temple festivals (Yue 2014).

My point here is that we meet a wide and rich variety of religious entrepreneurship in the rural areas of China, past and present. Again, this is true for both the demand and the supply side: across the fluid boundary of the household and the public domains, these two sides merge, as the household first has a religious need, and then might turn into a supplier fulfilling similar needs of others. Beyond that, the widespread existence of shamans, spirit mediums, or idiosyncratic forms of collective religious activities rooted in local histories, is clear evidence of the individualisation of the supply side of religion (Dean 2003; DuBois 2005). Here, the central notion of ‘efficacy’ (*ling*) also points towards to a common yardstick of competitive performance, often extending the impact of suppliers far beyond their local roots, such as local temples attracting visitors from other places.

In this context, we should include the role of local government in both constraining, but also supporting this local religious market today. This is a peculiar aspect of the Chinese governance of religion that needs systematic recognition and seems so far neglected in Chinese religious studies, which mainly focus on the regulatory role of the central government. Especially with regard to analysing the economy, the fundamental dualism between central and local state has paradigmatic analytical status (Pieke 2004; Heberer, Schubert 2008). One intriguing observation about religion in modern China, noticed by many researchers, is the active role of local governments in the ‘marketisation’ of religion, mostly under the umbrella of tourism (e.g. Oakes 1999; Bruckermann 2016). Although this might sometimes even provide legitimacy for individual religious practices on the part of officials, what counts most in the current discussion is that the appropriation of religion for purposes of tourism strengthens the market exchange mode also in the religious domain proper. This is typically manifest in competing claims on religious sites, beginning with competition over interpretive hegemony, to actual conflict about managerial control (for a case study, see Kang 2009). So, authentic believers might struggle with local government representatives about certain features of the site, or businessmen might try to push original religious activists out of the management committee of a temple site. However, there is also a long tradition in Chinese popular religion where religion stays in a symbiotic relationship with markets, such as in the institution of the temple fair (*miaohui* 廟會). Today, founding a temple even for economic motives may not simply be a touristic investment, but also, in a deeper sense, an attempt at creating collective social capital and reputation for a community; or even with a genuine religious

motivation as the first driver, ultimately one may also have the economic prosperity of the community in mind (for a case study, see Chau 2006).

This observation points to the ambivalent role of religious entrepreneurship in China. This is an even more complex and rich field, beyond the forms that we mentioned so far, and relates with what Yang calls the ‘gray’ market. To a certain extent, this gray market also existed in Imperial China, because it is mainly defined in distinction to the black market. The latter was certainly covered by the notion of ‘heretical teachings’ (*xiejiao* 邪教) in Imperial China, which reveals many family resemblances with prohibited religious activity today. In comparison, the ‘gray’ market covers a broad range of autonomous religious activities which also may not fit into the established forms of tradition. As such, it is also a distinct form of religious modernity in China, including such things as redemptive societies, healing sects, and so forth. Evidently, these need to be counted as manifestations of religious individualisation. Yet, what is most important here is the tension between the two modes that accompanies many religious activities in the gray market. That means, most importantly, that the switch to the gift exchange mode would undermine the logic of market exchange underlying the RMM.

I think this is a crucial step in the analysis: We approached the domain of Chinese religion in terms of the RMM, discovered many forms of individualisation, but now realise that individualisation also means that this religious market generates forces that undermine the very logic of market exchange. We can even say that it is the market itself that creates these countervailing forces, as is even stated by Yang himself (2011): The expansion of the market society, the perceived erosion of morals, and the growing feeling of alienation create the need for religion beyond the use of a service that would just mirror this marketisation process.

This corresponds to Palmer’s (2011) argument against the RMM. In a narrower sense, this means that religion would directly oppose the cash nexus, even if monetary flows are involved. This happens, for example, when religious communities are established in the shape of charities, and strictly follow the principle that donations are channelled to the needy, and that this fulfils the religious needs of the lay members of the charity (for a case study, McCarthy 2013). In a broader sense, the tension between market exchange and gift exchange has always been present in the Chinese religious domain. Palmer rightly points out that there were always two types of temples, with one type directly manifesting community identities, and therefore explicitly excluding competition with other providers of religious services. This constellation is one driving force of temple construction in China today, also including ancestor worship where the community is directly defined in ascriptive terms of kinship. There is much religious entrepreneurship involved, but this is only indirectly related with the market exchange logic, mainly

via the creation of social capital for the entrepreneur. First, religious entrepreneurs contribute to the strengthening of communities via the construction and organisation of religious activities, and only as a derivative effect this also results in social capital and reputation, which might support also their business activities. This argument even applies on the community level: For example, Christian businessmen as members of Christian communities might achieve the reputation of being trustworthy. Yet, it needs emphasis that we are here facing the creative tension between the two modes: This effect can only work if it does not rely on the market exchange logic.²⁰

Community formation is the shared feature across an extremely wide range of religious activities in China today, reaching from traditional lineages to villages, over Buddhist lay organisations and Christian house churches, to ‘new age’ forms of religion, ‘Chinese style’. It may be granted that this is also reflected in the RMM, as competition is conceived as strengthening strong ties between believers and religious organisations. Yet, this argument hides the forces that factually create these ties, which cannot themselves follow the market exchange logic. So, I argue that the gift exchange mode is omnipresent in China, and again driven by forces of individualisation. Probably the most impressive recent example of this transition was the rise of Falungong out of what initially appeared to be an entrepreneurial project in the context of Qigong (氣功) movements present in many forms. The rapid transformation into a powerful religious movement was emerging from its increasing role in defining individual identities and their expression in close-knit communities. The spread of Christianity via Protestant ‘House churches’ also fits into this pattern of expressivist community formation.

The latter proposition follows from the observation that there is no external force that imposes certain ascriptive ties on individuals, apart from kinship. Even regarding the latter, we could again argue that the suppression of traditional kinship by the modern state implicitly implies the protection of individuals against such impositions. Yet, we observe a strong revival of ancestral rites in many places of China, and most interestingly, this is often tied to the local economic strength of kinship groups. This is especially visible in South-East China, where kinship groups (lineages) often could maintain control over land rights, which have become extremely valuable during the recent urbanisation process.

²⁰ A fascinating case study is Cao’s (2008; 2009) research on Christian entrepreneurs in Wenzhou, which shows in detail the delicate balance between business leadership and religious leadership, also cast in modernist terms, such as the ‘quality’ *suzhi* 素質 of leaders. Chau’s (2006) much cited study of a Black Dragon Temple in Shaanxi highlights the role of a businessman who even retreated from business to become a temple manager, without necessarily internalizing the religious beliefs.

Based on their economic power, and perceiving the need to counterbalance municipal authorities potentially encroaching their rights, there is a resurgence of kinship-related rituals that express and cement the solidarity of the lineage (Trémon 2015; Herrmann-Pillath, Guo 2017). In this case, we observe the confluence of the two modes in maintaining what is probably a precarious balance, given the forces of social change that eventually will erode the ground on which extended kinship is built in China (such as demographic change).

To round up this section, if we look at the rich and expanding landscape of religious practices in China today, we can employ the two-modal framework as an analytical lens to identify underlying forces of individualisation. There is much scope for religious entrepreneurship, and the reach and scope of religious communities is growing. This can be related to a vibrant religious market that grows out of a distinct pattern of an aggressively secular communist state which gradually retreated from suppressing religion to toleration, thus creating the space for limited religious freedom by default. However, as I will discuss in the conclusion, this observation is different from the thesis of ‘authoritarian individualisation’, since the revival of religion in China is not driven by the state.

6 Conclusion

We can resolve the conflicting perspectives on the RMM and gift exchange in Chinese religion through arguing that both analytical perspectives grasp the two modes of what I conceive as an integral process of individualisation. The dynamics of this process are driven by the dialectics of these two modes, contextualised in the specific societal, political, and cultural setting. Based on this, I claim that the Chinese religious domain manifests many and strong phenomena of religious individualisation. I also think that we can extend this diagnosis into Imperial times, which, however, would be the topic of another study.²¹

This result is of high significance for the general debate about individualisation in China. Yan Yunxiang believes that this differs from the Western pattern because it is driven by the state. The case of religious individualisation does not confirm this claim. Here, the state contains the religious creativity of people, across all social domains, from rural to urban, so that we cannot say that the state

²¹ As stated in the beginning, this matches with Szonyi’s (2008) analysis of secularization, which covers different historical periods. The paradigmatic debates in historical religious studies on China, such as the issue of ‘orthopraxy’, can be easily tied up with individualisation in historical times.

pushes people into individualisation, but to the contrary, tries to keep it within boundaries defined by the state. On the other hand, we also cannot say that the state fosters individualisation beyond religion just because the government suppresses religion and, hence, allegedly ‘collectivist’ forms of social organisation in China. This follows from our re-evaluation of Chinese religious practices in the light of the two-modal framework of religious individualisation. In Chinese popular religion, the household and the individual play a central role in shaping religious activity. There is a rich dynamic of creating all forms of modern religiosity, unless contained by the state. Paradoxically, the other side of containment by the state is that there are large spaces of freedom, which are filled by individual religious initiative. I have argued that this can be partly covered by the RMM, which we can therefore use as an analytical litmus tests for identifying religious individualisation in China. Hence, we diagnose a distinct pattern of institutionalisation, individualisation and practices that is far more complex than the thesis of ‘authoritarian individualisation’ suggests.

Therefore, in the religious domain we can find support for autonomous forms of individualisation in China: In other words, religious individualisation is an important aspect of the individualisation of Chinese society in general. That may come as a surprise to many Western observers who, following the Western narrative of modernisation, would tend to see religion as a social force that works against individualisation. Yet, we can argue, as has been done for the case of Taiwan (Weller 2004), that in the specific political and economic context of China, religion becomes an important foundation for individualisation and hence a defining feature of modernity.

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Ioanna Patera

Individuals in the Eleusinian Mysteries: choices and actions

The Eleusinian Mysteries have gripped the imaginations of both ancient candidates for initiation and generations of modern scholars. They are among the most intriguing of ancient cults, as their study raises a variety of questions regarding Athenian politics, religion, philosophy, and soteriology, as well as issues surrounding the continuity of the cult from the Bronze age, through the classical period, and on into the Christian era. The Mysteries attracted individuals who participated as a matter of personal choice, offering an eschatological perspective at a time when the fashion for ‘mystery’ and ‘oriental’ cults had not yet reached the height of its popularity. Initiation by choice means that participation in this public cult, which is administered by the Athenian state, is not purely a matter of tradition, as was the case for other cults attended by citizens or demesmen. At the same time, the Eleusinian Mysteries were open to all those who wished to be initiated and they attracted a large and varied audience. The decision to participate led the initiand to take a series of preparative ritual actions and then on to the various stages of the initiation itself: the preliminary initiation, the *muêsis*, and, ultimately, the *epopteia* where the initiand becomes one who has seen.¹

How should we understand the combination of the individual aspect with the collective in this cult? While the unique individual is prominent in the Mysteries, they are still, obviously, strongly characterised by socially and politically predetermined expectations. The collective aspect, on the other hand, applies here to various groupings. In what follows, we shall examine the ways in which individual and collective combine. This approach will cast light on the extent to which individuals act and the extent to which they are acted upon, the roles they are expected to play, and the space left for individual initiative. Within the framework of polis- or public cults, the Eleusinian Mysteries are indeed an exception. Not only is participation based on personal choice – itself an oddity, since attendance is still regulated by tradition –, but individual initiation promises to change one’s fate in the afterlife. This focus on the individual has been seen

1 For the various stages of initiation, see Clinton 2003, 51, considering the preliminary initiation, the *mustai* as first-time participants, and the *epoptai*, the viewers, one year later. See also, with slight differences, Richardson 1974, 20; Dowden 1980; Simms 1990, 190, rejecting preliminary initiation and identifying the *muêsis* with the Mysteries.

as challenging the theoretical model of polis religion, which would not address the individual as the Mysteries do, by offering an emotionally and intellectually satisfying perspective. In this respect, the relation of the Eleusinian Mysteries to other mystery cults is multi-faceted and inspiring. However, treating ‘mystery cults’ as a single category is liable to restrict our attempts to focus on the particular religious and social contexts which significantly differentiate cults across time and place. For instance, the categorical approach requires focusing on the notions of individual salvation and belief rather than on ritual. Both elements, moreover, are emphasised in Christianity, marking a definite break with ancient religions.² For this reason, I will concentrate on the Eleusinian Mysteries and will limit my enquiry primarily to the context of classical Athens and will draw only secondarily on later sources. I will attempt to evaluate the space available for individual initiative, interaction with other individuals, and the integration of individuals into a new group which conveys a new religious identity that is both personal and collective.

To what extent is it possible to consider the individual in this particular cultic context? In the course of the festival, collective acts and acts involving the individual closely follow each other, as a brief summary of the calendar shows. To start with, the setting links Eleusis to the city of Athens both geographically and ritually. On 14 Boedromion, the ephebes take the *hiera*, the sacred things, from Eleusis and escort them to the Athenian Eleusinion. On 15 Boedromion, the sacred herald announces the festival during the *prorrhêsis* (proclamation). The initiates then respond to a call of the *archon basileus*, the highest magistrate responsible for religious affairs, and proceed to the *agurmos* (gathering) at the Stoa Poikile. At some point, the formula *hiereia deuro* (here, the animals) calls for a sacrifice. On the next day, the initiates respond to the formula *halade mustai* (initiates, to the sea); they march with piglets to Phaleron and bathe in the sea. 17 Boedromion is reserved for latecomers and Asclepios, honoured by a major sacrifice and a *pannuchis* (all-night celebration). During this time, the rest of the candidates interrupt their collective activities and rest at home. On 19 Boedromion the procession forms and leads the ephebes, priests and officials escorting the *hiera* (sacred things) to Eleusis. On the 20th of the month, the crowd of initiates follows Iacchus to Eleusis, likely joined at some point by the ephebes (Graf 1996, 61–4). The initiation takes place the day after, when all participants have

² Rüpke 2011, 192; Rüpke 2013, 5. Bremmer 2014, 142–54, for previous discussions on the presumed – and denied – influence of mystery cults on Christianity regarding terminology, ritual practice, and doctrine. See Pakkanen 1996, 109–21 and 130, for the definition of individualism in Hellenistic Athens in terms of possibility of choice, of personal faith entailing a submissive attitude towards deity and of individual remaining in society.

arrived at Eleusis. Scholars have long speculated about what was done and said during the initiation ritual. It seems certain that what took place involved single individuals in ways that I lay out below and thus indicates a focus on the individual already in the sixth century. Various aspects of this coming together in the community of initiates point to an early focus on the individual, his disposition and his fate.

1 Personal choice and personal fate

In contrast to most other cults, the Eleusinian Mysteries were open to various categories of people, including men and women of all ages, foreigners and slaves. According to Herodotus (8.65.4), ‘whoever of the Athenians and the other Greeks wishes is initiated’. Restriction applied only to those who did not speak Greek, those who had blood on their hands, and after the Persian wars, the Persians (Isocrates, *Orationes* 4.157). Despite this apparent inclusivity, time and cost certainly prevented many from becoming members of this, after all, selective group.

Does free choice point here to a case of ‘initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred?’ (Burkert 1987, 11). Most scholars have considered choice to be characteristic of the Mysteries and an important factor in shaping a personal relation with the goddesses (Burkert 1985, 285; Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 26). We know with certainty that the experience of the rituals was perceived as changing one’s fate in the afterlife. The whole setting of the festival aimed at bringing the participant to a state of receptivity to this change through alternations of dark and light, sorrow and joy. Awe that turns into joy, as Burkert acknowledges, is not about rescue or salvation but ‘blessedness’ and, more properly, material happiness.³ The personal character of the experience was, as we shall see later, less firmly grounded and secrecy was a concern to all initiates, as well as to the Athenian state.

³ Burkert 1987, 21. *Olbos* in the Homeric poems is given by the gods: de Heer 1969, 12–3; Lévêque 1982, 123. It consists in the possession of a house, wealth, family, and power. Foley 1994, 63, emphasises material happiness or success, as well as a different relation to the afterlife. We can follow Richardson 1974, 310–1 and 314, in considering it most probable that the *olbios* is prosperous both in his present life and after death. It is only later that the initiates appear to be living on the Islands of the Blessed or with the gods; see Graf 1974, 80–1. *Olbios* means more properly happy while ‘blessed’ has clear Christian connotations. Similarly, de Heer 1969, 4, points to the ‘emotive Christian overtones’ of the term ‘blessed’. I therefore keep the sense of happiness in the quoted texts about the *olbos* of the initiates.

To start with the *Homeric hymn to Demeter*, the poem describes the fate of individuals in the afterlife. While there is no reason to admit any precise correspondences between the myth reported in the *Hymn* and the cult practiced at Eleusis, the *Hymn* suggests some general ideas about the cult of the goddess that were certainly shared by at least some of the candidates. Happiness in the afterlife appears as the aim of the initiation: ‘happy (*olbios*) is the mortal on earth who has seen these rites, but the uninitiated who has no share in them never has the same lot once dead in the dreary darkness’ (480–3, transl. Foley).⁴ Soon after, the *Hymn* makes clear how this state of happiness begins in actual life: ‘highly happy (*meg’ olbios*) is the mortal on earth whom they [the goddesses] graciously favour with love. For soon they will send to the hearth of his great house Ploutos, the god giving abundance to mortals’ (486–9, transl. Foley). The initiand is not only looking for an answer to the question of the afterlife, he is also looking for *olbos*, the wealth combined with fertility that is taken to be one of the early aims of the Mysteries.⁵ Demeter herself expresses the miseries and the inevitable fate of mortals when Metaneira interrupts the goddess burying the son of the queen in the fire to make him immortal. She reproaches mortals for being ‘ignorant and foolish, unable to foresee destiny, the good and the bad coming on them’; they ‘cannot escape death and the death spirits (*ouk esth’ hōs ken thanaton kai kêras aluxai*)’ (256–7 and 262, transl. Foley). In the *Hymn*, death is the prime concern of those who see the rites. Sophocles (F 837 Radt; 753 Nauck) alludes to their being awarded life after death: ‘thrice happy (*trisolbioi*) are those among mortals who have seen these rites before going to Hades; for they alone have life there (*toisde gar monois ekei zên esti*), while others have all kind of misery’. In a similar formula in Pindar (F 137 Snell), seeing the rites bestows a special kind of knowledge: ‘happy (*olbios*) is he who having seen these things has gone under the earth; he knows the end of life and the Zeus-given beginning (*oide men biou teleutan, oiden de diosdoton archan*)’.⁶ All kinds of sources allude to this privileged relation between death and initiation. Aristophanes (*Peace* 375) shows Trygaeus borrowing money because he needs to be initiated before he dies while Isocrates (*Or.* 4.28) asserts that initiation (*teletê*) gives more agreeable hopes about the end of life and all time (*peri te tês tou*

⁴ For Dickie 2004, 589, this is what the hierophant said to those who had just been initiated. For the viewing of the Mysteries, see Petridou 2013.

⁵ Bremmer 2014, 18–9, points to the fertility aspect of the Mysteries with the return of Persephone, the showing of an ear of wheat (Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 5.8.39) and agricultural wealth, the prominence of Ploutos and Pluto.

⁶ Richardson 1974, 313, suggests that the language of Pind. F 137 and Soph. F 837 is so close to that of the *Hymn* that imitation is likely.

biou teleutês kai tou sumpantos aiônos). Heracles articulates these hopes as he presents to Dionysus the initiates in the underworld, wandering and dancing, jesting and joking in flowery meadows (Aristoph. *Ran.* 324–36, 342–52, 372–6, 447–59).⁷ They form happy choirs of men and women together clapping their hands, enjoying their existence in a breath of pipes, shining light, and myrtle groves (154–7).

All these passages show happiness and a better fate in the afterlife to be the aim of initiation. From the *Hymn* to Aristophanes, all sources share a common view of the afterlife the initiates will enjoy as distinguishing them from the uninitiated. This eschatological aspect of the Mysteries seems to have appealed to candidates who came to Eleusis to gain some kind of knowledge and to ensure a better fate after death.

2 Individual initiation

What happened during the initiation ritual remains cloaked in a shroud of secrecy. We can, however, glean some information on practical matters from inscriptions and from the blend of allusions to myth and ritual in literary and poetic works.

Starting with logistics, an inscription regulating Eleusinian matters, dated to 470–460 and found in the City Eleusinion, relates the fees necessary for initiation. Each initiate is to give an obol to an official, probably the *dadouchos* (torch-bearer), half an obol to each of the hierophantides who had the duty to reveal the *hiera* along with the hierophant, and an obol at the Lesser Mysteries as well as another at the Greater Mysteries to the priestess of Demeter (*IEleusis* 19 C 5–14 [Clinton 2005]).⁸ The Eumolpidai and the Kerykes together receive money from each initiate, five obols from men and three from women (20–3). No candidate is exempted from the fees, with the exception of the child from the hearth (24–6).⁹ Information follows on the way to properly conduct the ritual. The Kerykes as well as the Eumolpidai are to initiate each *mustês* individually (*Kerukas de muen dichia tos mustas hekaston*); if they initiate several at once (*ean de kata pleios*),

⁷ For the relation of the *Frogs* to the Mysteries, see Bowie 1993, 228–38, arguing for a chorus constituted by Eleusinian initiates, *olbioi* continuing their cult in Hades. For the meadow as a standard piece of the Eleusinian underworld, see Graf 1974, 41–2.

⁸ According to *Inscriptiones Graecae* I³ 6.6–9, the half obol is given to the *hieropoios*, while according to Cataldi 1981, 79, it is given to the sacred herald.

⁹ *IEleusis* 19 C 24–6. For Cataldi 1981, 79 the stress is on the age of the candidates.

they are fined a thousand drachmas.¹⁰ The inscription then returns to financial matters.

This *muêsis* is the first instance within the ritual process in which initiates are individually treated. After making a free choice and participating in the public part, each of them receives the attention of an initiating official. This one-to-one ritual may have been about something the official did, said and/or showed. From what we know, some acts and formulas may have been restricted on an individual basis. At the same time, other acts addressed the whole group. For instance, the drama of the story of the goddesses, if any, was likely shown to the group as a whole, as was the marvellous vision in brilliant light.¹¹ At some point, the initiate utters or hears other types of formulas, presumably reporting his own actions, such as the giving of the obscure password (*sunthêma*) reported by Clement of Alexandria: ‘I fasted, I drank the potion (*kukeôn*), I took from the box (*kistê*), after working I placed back in the basket (*kalathos*) and from the basket in the box’.¹² We do not have the slightest idea how these actions were carried out, nor at what moment in time, nor whether they formed a single sequence or extended over several days of the festival. Nor do we know if they were collective or individual actions.¹³ Their meaning is elusive beyond the sense they give us of participation in a common ritual that led to the happy state of the initiate.

10 *IEleusis* 19 C 26–30. *IG* I³ 6 omits *dicha*. According to Clinton 2008, 42, *pleios* in 29 suggests an opposite condition should be restored in line 26, for which *dicha* is appropriate, stressing the individual character of the initiation; see also Sokolowski 1959, 4. Simms 1990, 187, considers the possibility that lines 26–30 refer to the costs of initiation and not to the number of *mustai*. Consequently, *pleios* in 29 would refer to *obelos* instead of *mustas*, and *hekaston* in 27 to the fees rather than to individual initiation. Another possibility discussed is the restoration *Kerukas de muen kath'ena* and so on, where *hekaston* has Kerykas as subject, contradicting the prohibition of group *muêsis*. Clinton 2008, 42, sees *hekaston* modifying Kerykas as rather forced, since this would imply that each member of the Kerykes and Eumolpidai performed *muêsis*. ‘Each’, after Clinton, most naturally pertains to the *mustai*, each of whom takes part in ritual. Clinton remarks that the ritual had certainly been conducted for groups for convenience, hence the penalty.

11 *IEleusis* 637 (215 CE); Plutarch, *Mor.* 81e; Plut. F 178. This leads Parker 2015, 72, to consider the collective character of initiation as increasing the intensity of the experience. For the relation between the representation of death and ritual, see Graf 1974, 126–38. The question has fascinated philosophers and later authors who have related a drama of Demeter’s sufferings to the representation of the initiates in the afterlife.

12 Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.21.2. See also the tokens (*sumbola*) reported in 2.15.3: ‘I ate from a drum (*tumpanon*), I drank from a cymbal, I carried the *kernos*, I went into the chamber’.

13 According to Bremmer 2014, 3, these acts would not have been part of the Mysteries because there would not have been enough time for some thousands of initiates to perform them. He thus relegates them to the Lesser Mysteries or to another time.

3 Initiates as a group

If the previous acts refer to the initiate primarily as an individual, how do the initiates participating in the ritual as a group relate to each other? The ritual identity of the initiate connects citizens, non-citizens, foreigners, young and old, men and women. The bonds forged between them are situational, regardless of civic identity or territorial claims. Nor do they connect the whole polis population. They are a collective for and during the festival. The question is then what happens after the festival. Is there any indication of Eleusinian initiates forming a group or a community?

The initiates act as a group during the public parts of the festival, and certainly in the more obscure parts of the festival that took place within the sanctuary as well. When we refer to a group we essentially talk about a large crowd, as the Persians' reaction indicates. Watching the procession from afar just before the battle of Salamis in 480, they heard the song of Iacchus and saw dust coming from Eleusis as if there were thirty thousand people.¹⁴

The procession formed an impressive spectacle. The initiates wore festive clothes, were crowned with myrtle, and held a branch called *bacchos*. The splendour of the procession was important enough to make Alcibiades a favourite among the Athenians because he had it restored during the Peloponnesian war. He conducted the priests, the *mustai* and the *mustagôgoi* in order (*en kosmôî*) and silence (*meta siôpês*), an awesome (*semnon*) spectacle for his fellow citizens who witnessed his valour and hailed him as hierophant and mystagogue.¹⁵

According to the Athenians, this cult promises that 'the greatest good among men is acquaintance with one another and trustworthiness' (*IG II² 1134.20–1, 117/6*, transl. Clinton 1999, 98). There is evidence that those undergoing initiation together become brothers (*adelphoi*).¹⁶ We may understand this relationship from co-initiation by Dion's misfortune. This disciple of Plato was initiated and hence was attached to two brothers from Athens, Callipus and Philostratus. Their friendship came from companionship and sharing in religion, initiation and *epopteia*.

¹⁴ Hdt. 8.65.1; Plut. *Themistocles* 15. Could it be the multitude (*plêthos*) of the 'law concerning the Mysteries' *IEleusis* 138 Bf 6 (367/6–348/7)? For Clinton 1980, 273, and Clinton 2008, 117, the increased popularity of the Mysteries motivated this 'new code', the 'most extensive set of regulations we possess from antiquity concerning this cult'. The document's value as a code is refuted by Scafuro 2010, 39.

¹⁵ Plut. *Alcibiades* 34.3–5. Simms 1990, 193, considers this appearance of the mystagogue as an anachronism projected back to the fifth century.

¹⁶ Sopatros 8.123.26–8: *an daidouchian theasômai kai schêma ti peri tou adelphou gignomenon*. See Burkert 1987, 45 and n. 77. According to Parker 2005, 361, n. 152, Sopatros' reading is probably wrong.

Arriving in Sicily, they found out that Dion was charged with plotting a tyranny and killed him. This shameful (*aischron*) and disrespectful (*anosion*) act from brother to brother brought shame on the whole city. According to Plutarch, the outrage of the goddess was as great as if her *mustês* were slain by his mystagogue, implying that Callipus had initiated Dion (Plato, *Letters* 7.333d-334b; Plut. *Dion* 56.4. Bremmer 2014, 3).

This episode illustrates an ideal relationship that is disrespected. We may doubt, however, that there existed a larger brotherhood comprising all initiates from different social classes and milieus. It is similarly doubtful that the Mysteries ritually reinforced group solidarity beyond the context of the ritual (Sourvinou-Inwood 1990, 305). The group of the initiates has indeed been thought to form a community, based on their collective religious identity and experience.¹⁷ However, the status of initiate does not entail an exclusive individual awareness of belonging nor self-description as a member when the ritual is over.¹⁸

After the Mysteries are over, there is no more unified group.¹⁹ The initiates' return to their usual mundane environment somehow dissolves the ties that bound them together during the festival. They are not required to return to Eleusis unless they seek to achieve a higher degree of initiation. From their departure from Eleusis onwards, except for the initiates in court who isolate themselves from the uninitiated in order to avoid revealing the secrets of the ceremony if the case regards the Mysteries,²⁰ we know of no other collective activities. Initiates occasionally come together, as in the case of the mimicking of the Mysteries by Alcibiades and his friends, but we never hear of a formal association of initiates.

17 Burkert 1998, 377, considers a new community. If community there is, it is clearly not one formed around one religion or a civic status (see Graf 2003, 9) and it would also count among its members mythical initiates, such as Dionysus *Mustês* (Pausanias 8.54.5) and Heracles (Diodorus of Sicily 4.14.3; Plut. *Theseus* 30.5).

18 Rüpke 2016, 4, defines a group as sharing concepts and a collective religious identity, considering in all cases these identities to be differentiated and dynamic.

19 As Burkert 1987, 43, remarks, there is no credo after this experience, nor is the group united by faith. See Bremmer 2014, 138, on the lack of special groups of Eleusinian initiates in Attica.

20 Andocides, *On the Mysteries* (I) 12.28–9 and 31. See Sourvinou-Inwood 1997, 145. According to Pollux 8.124 and 141, the jurors are chosen in this case from the *epoptai* and the court is cordoned off by a rope. As to the jurors, they are elected by lot from among those over thirty and not in debt to the treasury: Aristot. *Ath. Pol.* 63.1 and 3.

4 From personal choice to religious individualisation

Personal choice seems to be part of the individualisation process. We need to keep in mind, however, that the individual is entangled with the collective. While personal and free choice is a requisite for initiation, future initiands are drawn in some way to the Mysteries by acquaintances who are already initiated.²¹ *Muêsis* requires a mystagogue, a guide, time devoted to preparatory learning and *paradosis*, transmission of knowledge.²² The mystagogue leads the participant to the completion and success of his initiation (Hesychius, *s.v. mustagôgos*), as the hierophant does later in the process. They both have, at some point, a one-to-one relationship with each initiate in order, presumably, to tell or show him what is coming.

Regarding the significance of knowledge in the initiation process, Aristotle (F 15 Ross; Synesius, *Dion* 8.48.42–4) states that the initiates should not learn anything but, rather, experience or suffer in order to be put in a certain disposition (*ou mathein ti dein alla pathein kai diatethênai*) and to become suitable in ways that are not to be articulated (*kai hê epitêdeiotês de alogos*).²³ Even though Aristotle has been largely followed to the letter and learning considered as opposed

21 Bremmer 2014, 3, n. 3, for the sources. And. *Myst.* (1) 132, alludes to his having initiated a Delphian and another friends of his from outside Attica, and the orator Lysias had promised to initiate his mistress Metaneira (Demosthenes, *Against Neaira* [59] 21). For Simms 1990, 191, this would mean merely taking care of the expenses.

22 The mystagogue's role clearly relates to teaching: Posidonius F 368 (*didaskalou kai mustagôgou*); Plut. *Mor.* 795e (*didaskôn kai mustagôgôn*); or simple assistance: Plut. *Mor.* 765a; Sopatros 8.123.22–3; Menander F 714 (Sandbach; Plut. *De tranquillitate animi* 474 B 6): *mustagôgos tou biou agathos*. Instruction relates, for many later authors, especially to the Lesser Mysteries. For Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.11.71, the Lesser Mysteries are about teaching and preparation for what is coming (*didaskalias tina hupothessin echonta kai proparaskeuês tôn mellontôn*), and the Great Mysteries are about everything, where one does not learn (*ou manthanein*) but sees and ponders nature and things (*epopteuein de kai perinoein tèn te phusin kai ta pragmata*); see Riedweg 1987, 5–14. For Simms 1990, 191–5, the mystagogues conducted the indoctrination of *mustai* early in the Mysteries and he links them with the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes, recalling *IEleusis* 138 A 27 (*infra* note 35), separating the *muêsis* and the leading of the *mustês* to an Eumolpid or a Keryx, and equating *muêsis* and *mustagôgia*, also noting the relatively late appearance of the term, especially after 100 CE.

23 Or as Bernabé 2016, 34, translates: ‘those who become initiated should not learn anything, but rather experiment and change their mentalities, this is, achieve due preparation’. He translates *pathein* as ‘to experience’, ‘to receive an external stimulus without implying any activity from the subject’. For Albinus 2000, 156, n. 6, Aristotle's statement could have been polemic.

to experiencing, *pathein* is closely related to learning through experience.²⁴ If we accept that knowledge was somehow related to *muêsis*, it may have been transmitted in advance. The experience of the Mysteries is guided and somehow instructed by the various officials. Before the *muêsis*, some kind of interpretation (*exêgêsis*) is provided to the *mustai* (*IEleusis* 250.27, second-first century), possibly by the mystagogues.²⁵ An individual pre-initiation was apparently administered at some point by a member of the Eumolpidae or the Kerykes. This seems to have been a preparation through information provided by a mystagogue or the officials. This is clear in the story of two uninitiated Acarnanian youths who entered the sanctuary unwittingly and were given away by questions revealing their ignorance of Eleusinian matters.²⁶ Part of the preparation may have been hearing the *logos* narrating Demeter's kindness towards the Athenians, which was only allowed to be heard by initiates (Isoc. *Or.* 4.28). In addition to certain types of knowledge gained before the initiation, a different kind of knowledge is thought of as resulting from the initiation itself. Pindar (F 137) for instance claims that the initiated gained insight (*oiden*) into the end of life and the Zeus-given beginning.

Given the centrality of gaining some kind of knowledge or insight through the process, the question is how this knowledge affects individuals. Pre-initiation knowledge may indeed prepare the candidates but, at the same time, it marks them out from the uninitiated.²⁷ Marking out is not yet individualising. At the other end of the process, the final experience is individual, as is the mysteric

24 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 177, reports the very wish of Zeus that 'wisdom comes from suffering': *ton pathei mathos*. Talking about mysteries in general, Plut. F 178, states that knowledge comes to the soul at the moment of death, when it undergoes an experience similar to that of the participants in the great initiations (*tote de paschei pathos oion oi teletais megalais katorgiazomenoi*). As Bernabé 2016, 37, remarks, this knowledge comes from experience and not from being told.

25 According to Clinton 2008b, 33, this is a period set aside for the *muêsis*, a few weeks before the Greater and Lesser Mysteries. The quoted passage follows that concerned with what happens to the mystagogues if they do not march with the *mustai* in the procession (l. 26) and could be related. *IEleusis* 138 A 38–40, also mentions the *exêgêtai* that start their work on the Athenians and on foreigners on Metageitnion 1, well before the *muêsis*. Larson 2016, 273–6, assumes transmission of knowledge about eschatological promises, the basics of Eleusinian theology, cult terminology, *hieroi logoi* tied to the landscape of the sanctuary, the significance of a password and rules of secrecy, assuming that there was a large amount to be learned by each *mustês*.

26 Livy 31.14.7–8. The youths were eventually put to death. See Parker 2005, 346; Larson 2016, 274.

27 Parker 2005, 345. Bernabé 2016, 37, points to the use of *oiden*, the perfect form of the verb 'to see' expressing the present result of a past action: whoever has seen the mysteries now retains these visions. Petridou 2015, 254–6, stresses the relationship between the vision of the rites and knowledge.

sacrifice of piglets offered on behalf of each initiate, contrary to collective rituals where the animal was brought on behalf of all (Schol. Aristoph. *Ach.* 747). Even so, the initiate does not achieve anything on his own, guided as he is by acquaintances, a mystagogue, and then by the hierophant. He achieves his initiation only through mediators and through the ritual itself. One might then argue that while it involves marking out the participant, the experience is not necessarily one of strict individualisation. The effect of the initiation, moreover, is the same for all candidates.

In the frame of this barely sketched individualisation we can include a personal moral disposition which appears to be necessary. Aristophanes (*Ran.* 455–9) counts among the happy ones who ‘enjoy the sun and the light’ those who have been initiated and who behaved properly (*hosoi memuêmeth’ eusebê te diêgomen tropon*) to foreigners and ordinary people. In the same play (*Ran.* 354–7) he uses a formula resembling the *prorrhêsis* stating that one cannot join the choirs of the initiates who ‘is not pure in thought (*hostis... gnômên mê kathareuei*), has neither known nor danced in the rites of the noble Muses and has not been initiated into the Bacchic rites of the tongue of Cratinus the bull-eater’.²⁸ Purity will be more significant in later periods and in other religious contexts, more particularly orphism, yet the moral distinction drawn between the happy ones, on the one hand, and the uninitiated and those who have transgressed rules, on the other, is already present in the classical period (Petrovic, Petrovic 2016, 263). The dominant opinion is that the just and pious are rewarded (Rudhardt 1992, 119). Transgression and non-initiation are put on the same level and entail punishment, inflicted on the uninitiated dead through encounters with monsters and laying in mud.²⁹ This relates the after-life to moral values and the distinction certainly reflects some of the shared understandings of the time.³⁰ Morality and purity ascertained by initiation

28 As Bowie 1993, 239, and Petrovic and Petrovic 2016, 243–4, remark, this echoes the Eleusinian *prorrhêsis*. See also Burkert 1985, 289; Dickie 2004, 588 and Schol. Aristoph. *Ran.* 369.

29 Soph. F 837 Radt (753 Nauck). Aristoph. *Ran.* 144–51, describes ten thousand snakes and terrible wild beasts, dung where whoever wronged his guest, or screwed a boy and took back a pay, or thrashed his mother, or smacked his father’s jaw, or swore a perjured oath lie. Paus. 10.31.9, describes the *leschê* of Polygnotus at Delphi and the fate of two uninitiated women, carrying water in broken jugs. In Pl. *Grg.* 493b, they carry water into a leaky jar with a sieve. For the punishment of the uninitiated, see Fabiano 2010.

30 See Graf 1974, 86, on the moral aspect of this assertion, combined with Pl. *Phd.* 69c, contrasting the uninitiated (*amuêtos kai atelestos*) lying in the mire with the purified and initiated (*kekatharmenos te kai tetelesmenos*) living among the gods; Plut. F 178, presents the initiates along with the pious and the pure (*sunestin hosiois kai katharais andrasi*). See also Dickie 2004, 585–6; Parker 2005, 361.

could be used for further purposes. For instance, Demetrius hastily undergoes all stages of initiation at once for his own political purposes. This is his way of displaying a superior morality in contrast to his political opponents and of claiming purity from blood after the murders in the dynasty of Alexander.³¹ Philosophers, on the other hand, often use the Mysteries to confirm their theoretical positions or to add a religious dimension to their exercises (Burkert 1987, 85; Waldner 2013). Finally, administrators of the Eleusinian Mysteries focus on the aspect of ritual that suffices for the initiation (Larson 2016, 270). The moral focus thus shifts or is nearly absent, depending on the perspective and the purpose of the sources.

The varying natures and contexts of our sources have sometimes been neglected and this has led to the creation of a stereotype of spirituality that tends to be contrasted with the usual ritual display of the polis that would prevail over belief (Petrovic, Petrovic 2016, 2). Burkert points out some of the problems of spirituality and sees the ancient mysteries as a personal but not necessarily a spiritual form of religion (Burkert 1987, 87). But even the personal aspect of such a form can be questioned, since the personal needs of the candidate for initiation are hardly distinguished from the shared religious concerns which render them almost communal and even political (Kindt 2015, 39).

We may also wonder what is meant by spiritual.³² If it is a concern for the fate of the *psuchê*, we only have indirect evidence that the Eleusinian Mysteries were 'spiritual'.³³ Yet the picture of the initiates in the underworld described in the *makarismos* of the *Homeric hymn* is closer to the ideal existence of the orphic utopia, as Bernabé puts it. It stands in contrast to the depiction of the feeble ghosts in the *Od.* 10.560, when Circe gives Ulysses directions to the house of Hades where the dead, the *psuchai*, end up. There, Ulysses is to invoke the dead and to sacrifice to the fleeting heads. These are a famous race, the shadows of the dead.³⁴ Their gloomy description in the epic not only contrasts with the happy fate of the *olbioi* in the *Homeric hymn* but also brings out the coexistence of these two contrasting understandings of the afterlife, despite the generally admitted change in attitude towards the afterlife in the archaic period (Sourvinou-Inwood 1997, 139–40).

31 Plut. *Demetrius* 26.2. Kuhn 2006, 269, also stresses the demonstration of Demetrius' complete integration into Greek culture.

32 Regarding Burkert's assertion, see Albinus 2000, 198.

33 Orphism by contrast was spiritual in stating the immortality of the soul; see Bernabé 2012, 13–4.

34 *Od.* 10.521, 536; 527; 530, with their repetition in *Od.* 11.29–65. For the *psuchê* in Homer, see Bremmer 1983, 15–7; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 56–8.

One last aspect of the Mysteries that connects the individual and the collective is secrecy. Secrecy is implied in the sources from the *Homeric hymn* (478–9, transl. Foley) onwards: the rites are ‘not to be transgressed, nor pried into, nor divulged’ (*ta t’ou pôs esti pareximen oute puthesthai, out’ acheein*). The *Hymn* (479) stresses the reason for the secrecy, that ‘great reverence of the gods restrains utterance’ (*mega gar ti theôn sebas ischanei audên*). For Strabo (10.3.9) things are slightly different: ‘the secrecy with which the sacred rites are concealed induces reverence for the divine (*semnopoiei to theion*), since it imitates the nature of the divine, which is to avoid being perceived by our human senses’. A growing stress on the secrecy of the cult appears in our sources from the Imperial period, with Pausanias refraining from describing the Athenian Eleusinion and the sanctuary of Eleusis (Paus. 1.14.3 and 1.38.7), and the name of the hierophant being included amongst the secret matters (Clinton 1974, 9).

The initiate is to keep the secret of the Mysteries but this is, at the same time, a secret of the whole society (Bremmer 1995, 70; Burkert 1998, 378). When the collective secret was at times divulged, trials took place and the issue was handled by the Athenian state. When accused, Aeschylus seemed unaware of what he had divulged and claimed to be uninitiated (Aristot. *Eth. Nic.* 1111a; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.14.60; *TGrF* 3, T 93 Radt). He was eventually acquitted. Diagoras of Melos was accused of mimicking the Mysteries (Lysias, *Against Andocides* 17; Melanthios, *FGrHist* 326 F 4; Aristoph. *Av.* 1073–4), as was Alcibiades at the time of the Sicilian expedition. Both were condemned. In all cases of impiety for divulging the cult secrets, the city made the final decision on the offence and punished the offenders, cultivating reverence for the two goddesses and their Mysteries (Gagné 2009, 220–2).

There emerges a quite intricate picture of the initiation process. Aspects that stand out are the acquisition of different types of knowledge, elements of moral disposition, and secrecy. In our sources, however, we find that the different aspects are variously highlighted. And as a result, individual and group, personal choice and collective or civic affairs, merge in a range of ways. The complexity of the evidence and how the individual and group merge is also brought out by the initiatives of officials.

5 Eleusinian officials and the Athenian city

The place left for the initiatives of Eleusinian officials is suggestive of the significance of the cult in the Athenian city. The main officials originated from two Eleusinian families, the Eumolpidai and the Kerykes, which were associated with

performing initiations.³⁵ The Eumolpidai provided the hierophant, the official who showed the sacred things during the culminating point of the ceremony. The dadouchos and the sacred herald were provided by the Kerykes. In both cases, their authority came partly from the knowledge that was passed down through the families for generations.³⁶ However, the supervision of the festival was the task of the annually elected Athenian *basileus*, along with the *epimelêtai* or curators elected by the People, two from the Athenians, one from the Eumolpidai and another one from the Kerykes, as stated in a ‘law concerning the Mysteries’ (*IEleusis* 138 A 30–1, 367/6–348/7; Aristot. *Ath. Pol.* 57.1).

Most officials of the Mysteries acted as a group and appear to have had little eminence as individuals. A few exceptional cases involve the attitude and actions of officials towards questions of impiety, mostly taken for political reasons. The hierophant Eurymedon, for instance, is known for bringing Aristotle to trial, accusing him of impiety for having composed a hymn in honour of Hermias.³⁷ This prosecution, however, had nothing to do with Eurymedon’s position at Eleusis; he merely acted as a citizen (Gagné 2009, 222). There are also instances in which officials ordered to act as a group denied the authority of the request. Thus, in 415, the priestess Theano refused to curse Alcibiades despite a decree stating that ‘all priests and priestesses’ were to curse him. The reason she gave was that she was a praying and not a cursing priestess (Plut. *Alcibiades* 22.5). When the People eventually decreed the return of Alcibiades in 407, the hierophant Theodoros refused to revoke his curse. He claimed he had invoked no evil upon one who did no wrong to the city, so that his curse was void.³⁸ In so saying, Theodoros subtly acknowledged the authority of the city while at the same time defying it. He tried, and succeeded, to differentiate his own actions from those of the priestly board. Later, the dadouchos Pythodoros refused to initiate Demetrius Poliorcetes when he asked that the calendar be modified in order to allow him to undergo all the stages of initiation at once. Pythodoros’ refusal had no effect,

35 It is illegal indeed, according to *IEleusis* 138 A 27–9, for one knowing that he is not a member of the Eumolpidai or the Kerykes to perform the *muêsis*. It is also illegal to introduce a candidate to initiation to someone who is not a member of these families.

36 This factor is clearly at play for the dadouchos Themistocles in *IEleusis* 300.63–5.

37 Diogenes Laertius, *Aristotle* (5) 5. Before that, Diogenes Laertius reports another story in which Aristotle fell in love with a concubine of Hermias and sacrificed to her as the Athenians did to Demeter (3–4), but this is not included in his charges. Similarly, the hierophant Eurycleides accused the philosopher Theodorus of joking about the Mysteries. He was eventually saved by Demetrius of Phaleron or condemned to drink hemlock: Diog. Laert. *Aristippus* (2) 8.101; Athenaeus 15.696a.

38 Plut. *Alcibiades* 33.3. As Burkert 1995, 205, remarks, this is logic encroaching on ritual.

even though he had authority over the ritual.³⁹ Other officials at times opposed Eleusinian authority in order to defend their own rights and were successful. An anonymous priestess in the fourth century opposed the hierophant Archias over her rights and he was convicted of impiety by the Athenian court for having performed a sacrifice contrary to the ancestral tradition (*Dem. Or.* 59.116–7).

Many *dadouchoi* were also distinguished and politically active individuals. Kallias the second was part of the embassy that negotiated the truce with Artaxerxes in 449/8 and he also negotiated the truce with Sparta in 446/5.⁴⁰ Kallias the third was general in 391/90 during the Corinthian war. Acting as envoy to Sparta, he gave a famous speech reporting the civilising mission of Triptolemos among the Peloponnesians and the tradition that he revealed the Mysteries first to Heracles and the Dioscuroi, the founder and the citizens of the Spartans (Xenophon, *Hell.* 6.3.2–6). He was also involved in dubious affairs, such as the accusation of Cephisius against Andocides in 400 for placing a suppliant's bough on the altar of the Eleusinion during the Mysteries.⁴¹

The honours accorded to Eleusinian officials attest to the prestige of their families and their involvement in the political life of the Athenians. The focus on their public life contrasts with the anonymous crowds of the initiates, until the Roman period when most prominent politicians would travel to Eleusis to undergo initiation.⁴² Cult officials acted, then, as eminent citizens and therefore as individuals in a way that is entirely different to that of the initiates. They were entitled to oppose each other and, at times, even the decisions of Athenian politicians. Praised for their dedication to the cult, they were, at the same time, carefully pursuing their own agendas.

6 The initiates

From our evidence, it is very hard to identify who participated in the Mysteries. The question shifts to whether participants act and appear as individuals or as a

³⁹ Plut. *Demetrius* 26.1. Kuhn 2006, 267, illustrates by this case the complexity of the issue of ritual authority and of the meaning and power of ritual knowledge in practice.

⁴⁰ Schol. Aristoph. *Nub.* 64. On the legendary wealth of Kallias, see Plut. *Aristides* 5 and 25. For the personage and his family, which dominated this office during this period, see Clinton 1974, 47–8.

⁴¹ *And. Myst.* 112–7. Politically active officials are far more common during the Roman period. See Clinton 1974, 68, for *dadouchoi* holding distinguished offices.

⁴² Clinton 1989b, 1500, dates the interest of Romans in the Mysteries to Cicero's time; see Clinton 1997, 163, on the steady stream of them travelling to Eleusis. For the prosperity of the sanctuary between the Hadrianic and Severan periods, see Lippolis 2013.

group. A special official seen as representing the Athenians is also worth considering in this context.

Regarding the social context of participation in the Mysteries, the regulation from 470–460 addressing all those who wished to use the sanctuary set a truce for the protection of the visitors travelling to Eleusis (*IEleusis* 19 B and later *IEleusis* 138 B 14–7. See Clinton 1994, 162–3). All were welcome although not all came. The picture of the chanting crowds heading to Eleusis points to mass initiation and, as a norm, Athenians who could afford it would be initiated (Parker 2005, 343; Bremmer 2014, 4). Much later, at least, being initiated was an assurance of a degree of popularity, as is shown by Lucian's (*Demonax* 11) account of the unpopular character of the Cynic Demonax: alone of all he refused to be initiated. This means that most people wished at least to go to Eleusis. Notwithstanding the cost of the Mysteries, the social pressure to take part alongside everyone else must have been strong. Other groups of initiates are identified as the ephebes lifting the oxen for the sacrifice and the slaves who worked in the sanctuary (*IG II²* 1028.10–1 [100/99]; *IEleusis* 159.24).

When we turn to politicians, it appears that involvement in the Mysteries increases their popularity and at the same time increases the magnificence of the festival for all to see. This is exactly what Alcibiades did by restoring the procession during the Peloponnesian war. The magnificence contributed in turn to the attraction of more initiates and of more prestigious participants. This dynamic renders the personal choice of those undergoing the ritual for political reasons a tricky notion. Such a choice is socially prescribed by the identity a powerful individual adopts, constructed from several civic as well as religious titles.⁴³ For some, participation in the Mysteries was part of their public image. For others, the choice was made for what we understand as an individualistic goal regarding *olbos* and the afterlife. Their personal development is suggested by the chanted fate that awaits them in the underworld.

Among the initiates, we have some evidence – albeit very difficult to interpret – for the so-called child initiated from the hearth. Through this special initiate, a rather sophisticated way of reconciling the character of the Mysteries as a central polis cult with their limited accessibility through individual initiation

⁴³ This is particularly clear in the case of the Roman emperors, for whom the festival becomes a must at a time when Eleusis became a centre for imperial cult; see Clinton 1989b, 1503–9; Clinton 1997, 163–73. For Hadrian, see Clinton 1989, 56–7, and Clinton 1989b, 1516–9. Also, Clinton 1999, 94–7, on the evidence for Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius or Nero. In this context, the formalities of the initiation through the Lesser Mysteries in Anthesterion, the Great Mysteries in Boedromion and *epopteia* a year later may have been simplified for Roman initiates as they had occasionally been for a few politicians wishing to undergo all stages at once.

has been suggested. The *pais aph'hestias muêtheis*, selected by lot among the Athenians, is often seen as symbolically representing the whole Athenian polis (Harpocr. s.v. ... *ho aph'hestias muoumenos Athênaios ên pantôs*).⁴⁴ If this interpretation is valid, the representative character of this participant may minimise the significance of individual choice. Porphyry (*Abst.* 4.5) compares those who sacrifice to the gods on behalf of the polis with the child from the hearth who implores the gods in the place of all the initiates (*anti pantôn tôn muoumenôn*). The child therefore had the role of offering prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the initiates and, possibly, on behalf of the city as well, according to Kevin Clinton.⁴⁵ The child was, then, certainly important to the city that paid for his/her initiation fees.⁴⁶ The title has been variously understood as pointing to the city, as symbolised by the public hearth, or to the first and primordial initiate (Clinton 1974, 99). Besides Porphyry, however, there is no clear evidence on this initiate's being in any way representative of the city. The evidence shows these *paides* to be members of well-to-do families and wealth appears to have been a criterion for a candidate for the position, as much as tradition or family choice. It becomes apparent then that choice can hardly be thought of as individual in this case. Just like other officials, the child bestowed fame as much as he received it from his family.⁴⁷ Notwithstanding this realistic description of the perfect candidate, we hardly have any evidence on the actual function of the child. Whether the city was indeed represented is hard to assess. Porphyry's comparison indicates that the child represented all the initiates rather than the city. In all cases, the interpretation of representativeness does not imply 'that all members of ancient societies were in principle equally religious' (Rüpke 2011, 192; 2013, 3), as the polis religion theoretical model suggests. Individual choice draws a line between the initiates and the rest of the citizens and there does not seem to be a way to integrate into the first category other than through the ritual of initiation.

⁴⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood 1997, 151. Albinus 2000, 183–4, n. 44, points to a possible symbolic connection between this initiation 'from the hearth' and Demeter's nursing of Demophon 'in' the hearth. The child appears thus to be a representative of the people, as was Demophon in the myth. For Bremmer 1994, 85, the presence of the child fits with the origins of the cult in the archaic puberty rites of a *genos*.

⁴⁵ Clinton 1974, 99, points to the high respect accorded to them, attested by a great number of honorific dedications of the Hellenistic and Roman periods issued by the Areopagus, the Council and the People.

⁴⁶ *IEleusis* 19 C 24–6, is of highly uncertain meaning, as is *IEleusis* 138 Bd 5; *Anecd. Bekk.* 204.

⁴⁷ Clinton 1974, 100–1 and 108–13, lists between the last quarter of the second century BCE and the middle of the third century CE future epebes, sons and grandsons of priests and daughters and granddaughters of priestesses, *kanêphoroi* and *arrêphoroi*, *exêgêtai* of the Eumolpidae and members of the Kerykes, archons, and other members of distinguished Athenian families.

Political and social considerations with regard to initiation do not alter the aim of the ritual and the *olbos* gained through it that is praised in the *Homeric hymn*. Eschatological concerns are already visible in the *Hymn*. Even so, scholars have only admitted eschatology as part of the Mysteries in later periods. According to this approach, the Mysteries originated as a civic cult without eschatological concerns.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding the original nature of the cult, which is beyond our understanding, it was certainly a civic cult since it was administered by the Athenians. At the same time, the promise of a happy afterlife in the cult of Demeter appears as early as the *Hymn*. This evidence indicates that the premises of a civic cult and eschatological concerns could certainly be combined. Moreover, eschatological concerns appear to have been significant in a cult that was largely controlled by the Athenian city well before the classical period. Different theoretical models, however, raise questions about a potential contradiction, as I discuss below.

7 Theoretical models for the Mysteries

The Mysteries have been seen as ‘a remarkable anomaly in the panorama of civic religious practice of archaic Greece’, because they were state-sponsored, on the one hand, but ‘secret’ and oriented toward winning a better fate for individual initiates, on the other hand (Stehle 2007, 165). Various things the initiates did during the festival, such as wandering, searching, mourning, or joking, imitated the actions of the goddess, bringing the participants into a relationship of intimacy with Demeter.⁴⁹ On this view, the experience of the Mysteries was one that the ‘standard sacrificial ritual’ did not provide.

Despite the difficulties involved in defining what ‘standard sacrificial ritual’ might be, the Eleusinian Mysteries are part of what Sourvinou-Inwood has called the Athenian polis religion, which takes the individual as its basic cultic unit

⁴⁸ Bremmer 1995, 72; Parker 2005, 343. Bremmer 2014, 18, claims that the emic explanations of the reverence for the divine forbidding the Mysteries to be performed outside their proper ritual context contained no esoteric wisdom. Sourvinou-Inwood 1997, 152, argues for a shift from a polis cult of agricultural nature to an initiatory soteriological cult. This shift has also been claimed by comparative anthropologists. See Richardson 1974, 12–8, for former theories about the origins, the development and the significance of the Mysteries, namely the Corn-mother and the Maiden, and the shift from the agricultural paradigm to the personal, or eschatological, development towards a happy existence after death.

⁴⁹ Stehle 2007, 176–7. It is, however, going too far considering identification with or presence of the goddess in that, eventually, the participants become Demeter in wandering and then are with Demeter in the Telesterion, as the author claims.

(Sourvinou-Inwood 1988, 264). Sourvinou-Inwood claims that individual rituals were not abnormal nor different from group rituals and there was, thus, no rupture between the usual polis cults and those involving individual initiation or choice (Sourvinou-Inwood 1988, 266). Individual initiation was, however, certainly unique and did not function in the same way as did the collective rituals we know of. Significantly, the Mysteries do not appear as an alternative to mainstream practices but merely as an additional option (Waldner 2013, 218). Yet the model of polis religion has much to offer for those seeking to understand the Mysteries.⁵⁰ Taking some of these nuances into account and combining them with aspects of the individualisation concept (Otto 2017), we can see that the Mysteries stood at the intersection of both models.⁵¹ As Walter Burkert stressed some years ago, even though the mysteries – without considering those of Eleusis in particular – were characterised by secrecy and individual implication, they were not private and nor were they in opposition to the polis.

It is significant that the polis itself seems to have encompassed and legitimated all the religious activities of its members, including activities related to eschatological concerns (Sourvinou-Inwood 1988, 264–6; 1990, 297–300; 1997, 151). Not only were the Mysteries controlled by the polis but they also contributed, just as did other civic cults, to the defining of the polis' religious identity, with the Eleusinian sanctuary serving as a symbol of civic identity and unity (de Polignac 2009, 430). The Athenians used Eleusis to reinforce their international prestige and influence in the Greek world, as well as to provide a source of income.⁵² The contribution of the Mysteries to the religious identity of the city is not restricted, however, to the region of Athens or even to its sphere of political influence. The kind of religious identity that it created encompassed initiates who came from all over the Greek world and beyond. Such a collective identity incorporates individual choice in various ways. Initiation can, therefore, be seen as a process

50 Kindt 2009, 15, considers the relation between polis and religion to be far more complex than this model allows. Eidinow 2011, 11, based on more or less the same critique, solves the issue of 'loose ends' left by this model as marginal by invoking the social networks, or sets of nodes representing individuals or groups linked by ties representing relationships, not all of which occur in polis-centred ritual activity.

51 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 38, already believed that the Mysteries and other movements can only be thought of as marginal if one ignores the intimate intertwining of the Eleusinian Mysteries with Athenian polis religion.

52 Isoc. *Or.* 4.28. Clinton 1994, 161. For the rhetorical manipulation and political exploitation of Demeter's *xenismos* in Athens, see Petridou 2015, 305–9. The income is secured by the practice of the *aparchai* known by the decree IG I³ 78a 4–8, 24–6 (*IEleusis* 28, 440–35), urging during the Mysteries that all cities should offer *aparchai* 'according to the ancestral custom and the oracle of Delphi'.

involving the socialisation of the individual in an intimate and closed community that is distinct from the polis (Burkert 1998, 375), even if it is a situational and a temporary community. At the same time, the festival is clearly Athenian in character.

What makes the Mysteries unique in this context is the individual choice involved (Sourvinou-Inwood 1997, 152). A significant aspect of the relation between individual and collective religious identity is what has been described as a shift in attitudes towards death that took place in the sixth century. According to this interpretation, there was a movement from the acceptance of the notion that death was hateful but not frightening toward a greater concern for the survival of one's memory, which led to a more individualised perception of one's own death. This shift is related to the eschatological promise of a happy afterlife, which has been claimed to be integrated into the religion of the polis (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 298–300; 1997, 153–4). This integration, however, is not necessarily thought of as unproblematic by scholars, especially given the various influences on the Mysteries. Orphic influences on the Mysteries can be detected from the end of the fifth century on.⁵³ Further on, the Hellenistic era is largely considered to be a period in which the aims of cult and individual religiosity became increasingly soteriological, since it was now easier to choose which cults one wished to follow (Pakkanen 1996, 109–21). It should, however, be pointed out that the eschatological aspect of the Mysteries is much earlier; there is no real contradiction in accepting both an eschatological belief and a promotion of the Mysteries by Athens at the same time, that is at the beginning of the sixth century (Clinton 1994). Eleusinian eschatology has also generated a soteriological discourse in modern times but this is a mere anachronism (Sfameni Gasparro 2013, 148–9). The general trends mentioned do not prove a parallel, soteriological development of the Mysteries.⁵⁴

53 The Mysteries and orphism were still treated as somehow related to one another as late as Paus. 1.37.4, who avoids giving the reason for prohibiting beans in the Mysteries but states that it is well known from the *Orphica*. For Orpheus as founder of the Eleusinian Mysteries, see Graf 1974, 26–34 and Bremmer 2010, 27–9; for Demeter and the Eleusinian eschatology in the orphic epic, Richardson 1974, 77–86; Graf 1974, 139–50; Bremmer 2002, 23, for their common picture of the afterlife, and Graf 2011, 61, for details in Plato's eschatology referring either to Eleusis or to Bacchic mysteries. Albinus 2000, 162–4, points to the differences between the Eleusinian and orphic genealogies of those playing a part in Demeter's story. He compares the fate of the *olbioi* in the underworld to the orphic immortality of the soul, drawing the line between orphism and the Mysteries. See also Graf 1974, 81–2.

54 As Larson 2016, 252, points out regarding eschatology, even though we can detect a 'moralisation' during the Classical period, it is best to avoid notions of chronological development from one prevailing form of belief to the next.

Individualisation through the Mysteries implies obtaining knowledge of a commonly shared secret, the keeping of which was everyone's personal duty. This sharing would create coherence among the initiates even though they never formed any kind of unified religious association, even in times when such associations flourished. While there is no single community of Eleusinian initiates, there would have been several groups spread across the Greek speaking world. There would have been as many distinct groups as there were places of origin for the participants and each group would be as large as the number of *mustai* coming from that particular single place, presumably travelling together from their homes to Athens during the truce. These groups formed a network around initiation and the goddesses' favours. *Mustai* did not, however, share a life-style comparable to that of the orphics (Pakkanen 1996, 72). Other than the status of initiate, we have no evidence as to how or whether the participants internalised the whole experience.⁵⁵ The poets and philosophers of the ancient world allude to certain moral values of the initiates while rewards and punishments are a recurrent topic of Eleusinian eschatology. The purity required by the *prorrhêsis*, as formulated by the chorus of Aristophanes (*Ran.* 354–7), also shows concern for the soul. This is one further exception to the trend of the increasing internalisation of purity as occurring only in later antiquity.⁵⁶ Speculation on ethics or pragmatic matters regarding the happy afterlife of the initiates is entirely depending on the sources.⁵⁷ While personal ethics are important – even though not consistently, the collective dimension of the festival is still prominent.

Regarding the theoretical frame of individualisation, self-consciousness of the divine favour and the knowledge conveyed by the Mysteries is the basis for the self-categorisation as *mustai*. This is a valued status that necessitated an emotional involvement and a sense of interdependence between the initiates, at least during the festival.⁵⁸ Indeed, if not for poetic allusions to the flowery underworld and civic occasions such as trials during which only initiates might gather to hear cases related to Eleusinian matters, the social ramifications of the initiate's

55 Vernant 1989, 220, considers the initiate as gaining an internal modification through his familiarity with the two goddesses, even though this entails no socially visible change.

56 See Bremmer 2014, 4. As Petrovic and Petrovic 2016, 11, notice, purity includes a moral dimension.

57 Graf 1974, 140, for the speculative dimension in the orphic epic and in connection with the Eleusinian Mysteries.

58 Rüpke 2015, 10; Rüpke 2016, 5, lists evaluation of membership by individuals, the importance ascribed to this particular membership, the emotional involvement, and the sense of interdependence as aspects defining a group self-categorisation.

status are entirely obscure. What remains are the narratives about the values, characteristics and history of the group (Rüpke 2016, 5) but these are known for the *mustai* in only a fragmentary and frustrating way. There is, on the one hand, a ‘common knowledge’ about what the Mysteries can do for the initiate. On the other hand, there is the specialised knowledge acquired by the initiates during the ritual, through direct transmission and via the preparation that took place over the length of the festival. The broad body of initiates – including politicians and eminent citizens to ordinary individuals, foreigners, slaves, and cult and civic officials – displays a significant diversity regarding their social and certainly religious identity. They cannot be considered as a whole wherein the identity shaped by the quality of *mustês* is always predominant or, indeed, even religiously motivated in all cases. Individual and/or collective identity is in each case foregrounded depending on the participant’s social background and the occasion that motivates his/her participation in the ritual. Both as individuals and as a group, initiates follow a tradition which is thought of as long established by the goddess and guarded by her officials. The initiation process is entirely thoroughly regulated and determined by traditional norms, even though single individuals, for the most part officials, may have, at times, influenced or changed them (Patera 2011). The discourse concerning the Mysteries that was shaped by both Eleusinian officials and the Athenian city implies an ideology of the *olbioi*, putting the initiates and their fate at the centre.

These multiple parameters limit individual initiative within the regulated ritual frame of the Mysteries. Its norms and practices are meticulously codified by institutional bodies, along with the officials chosen from the two official families discussed above. As a whole, the city has religious authority over the matters concerning the Mysteries. Even in this highly institutionalised frame, the focus on the individual experience of the initiates and the eschatological promises do not lose their gravity. While the Mysteries address the individual, differing in this approach from the polis religion model, there is little beyond personal choice that points to religious individualisation. Initiands tend, rather, to follow an individuation process, defined as a ‘gradual full integration into society and the development of self-reflection and of a notion of individual identity’ (Rüpke 2013, 7). The more prominent initiates mostly seek a type of distinctiveness, which is to say a form of competitive individuality. Some among them are honoured for their exemplary lives, as was Themistocles of Hagnous in 20/19 (*IEleusis* 300.31–63; *Plut. Mor.* 843c), but none is clearly representative of a model to follow. There remains the fact that the rituals focus on the participants who seek *olbos* and a happy fate, rather than on the gods, as is the case with other civic rituals (Bernabé 2016, 28). Seeing the Mysteries gives the individual a new status within the large and somewhat loose community of initiates. This status might prove at times significant in

civic life. Beyond specific social occasions, however, the identity of the initiates rather fades throughout their lifetime into other social groupings to which each initiate belongs. At the same time, sweet hopes might accompany them until such a time as they meet their fate in the underworld. Separating the dead initiates from the shadows in Hades in the epics, this individual fate resumes their shared experience as initiates on earth, only this time they are clearly distinct from all the uninitiated.

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Ilaria L. E. Ramelli

Institutionalisation of religious individualisation: asceticism in antiquity and late antiquity and the rejection of slavery and social injustice

1 Methodological Introduction: Religious individualisation, asceticism, and justice in imperial and late antiquity

Phenomena related to religious individualisation existed, and were important, already in classical antiquity and late antiquity.¹ A major issue that is closely related to religious individualisation in historical perspective² is the practice of personal piety, and specifically of asceticism, in antiquity and late antiquity – with a focus on one’s own body, soul, passions, and intellect/nous, with a view to a ‘unified nous’ (Evagrius). My focus in this paper will be on imperial and late antiquity, the long period over which Jörg Rüpke has identified a change in practices and assumptions, which he calls ‘individualisation’.³

The definition of asceticism is complex. What emerges from an accurate analysis is that ancient and late antique philosophical asceticism involved not only dietary and sexual restrictions, and not simply a mortification of the body, as a kind of new martyrdom or even new sacrifice (on whose varieties in Roman times see Schultz 2016), but also voluntary poverty, voluntary service to others, refraining from oppressing other people, and the like, all as part and parcel of piety towards the divine. This emphasis on poverty, voluntary service to others, refraining from oppression, and the like is not common to all strands of asceticism (neither in antiquity, nor today: see Logan 2017), but is stressed both in

1 See Fuchs, Mulsow, Rüpke 2016, 5. This is an etic category; I refer to its discussion as a semantic matrix in Otto 2017. See also Rüpke 2013, which analyses both the individual and its socialisation – its integration into ever larger social contexts – in ancient Mediterranean religions from Hellenism to late antiquity, including Seneca’s philosophical reflections (Aldo Setaioli, ‘Cicero and Seneca on the Fate of the Soul: Private Feelings and Philosophical Doctrines’, Chap. 17). Concrete examples of individualisation in Roman religion are in Rüpke 2016. On religious individuality in gnosticism see Marksches 2014.

2 See Fuchs, Rüpke 2015; Fuchs 2015; Rüpke 2015.

3 Rüpke 2011/2017; 2014. See also Rüpke 2013a; Spickermann, Rüpke 2012.

the Pythagorean tradition that was Christianised through the *Sentences of Sextus* and in patristic philosophy, especially the ‘Origenian’ line, which represents the quintessential philosophical asceticism of the ancient Christian tradition.⁴ As Anna Williams (2007, 7) has remarked, ascetic texts ‘do not display their authors’ interest in ascesis because ascesis is a worthy or superior substitute for intellectual activity, but because the latter is infeasible without control of the emotions and bodily desires’. The concern for justice is paramount both in the harmony of the single person’s faculties, including the control of passions (i.e. negative emotions) and desires that are so central in, for instance, Evagrius, and in the harmony within humanity as a whole, with an equal distribution of goods and without the oppression of some by others.

Elements of ascetic practice which were present all together or selectively in given groups of ascetics, included sleep and food deprivation, chastity, poverty, renunciation of honours and of any form of violence and oppression of other people, along with much else. In the various forms that ancient asceticism assumed, some aspects were more emphasised than others. Some, for instance, placed greater stress on sexual and nutritional control and less on poverty and the renunciation of oppression; others, on the contrary, attached more importance to the latter than to the former aspects. The ascetics who made the most of the renunciation of oppression and injustice were also more likely to renounce both slave ownership and wealth, which was perceived as the cause of the poverty of other people and, thereby, of social injustice.⁵

Peter Brown’s highly influential analysis (1988/2008) concentrates on only one facet of asceticism, sexual restraint in the first five centuries of Christianity, but there were many other kinds of self-control. Even virginity itself was conceived of very broadly by ascetics such as Origen, Methodius, and Gregory Nyssen, to the point of embracing the whole of the self-discipline that aimed at *apatheia*, the eradication of passions from one’s soul with a view to purification, as the first stage in the ascent to contemplation. In late-antique Christianity, monasticism, both anchoritic and cenobitic, was the privileged environment for the application of asceticism. William Harmless (2009) rightly insists not only on the renunciation of marriage, family, and any sexual activity as marks of asceticism, but also on the renunciation of wealth, property, and career, the taking up of manual labour, and the deprivation of food and sleep. Cenobitic asceticism was already practiced by Essenes and Therapeutae in the Jewish world, and it is precisely such ascetic circles, both Jewish and Christian, that provide the most

⁴ See Ramelli 2016. On theological perspectives on slavery see also Priesching, Grieser 2016.

⁵ On the notion of social justice see Ramelli 2016, introduction and conclusion, and Feldman 2016.

remarkable instances of the rejection of slavery as an institution, as well as a broader rejection of both social injustice and oppression.

As recent scholarship has emphasised (Griffin-Ramelli 2019), asceticism – ‘pagan’ philosophical, Jewish, and Christian – in antiquity and late antiquity is not hatred of the body, not even in the Platonic tradition. Asceticism was not simply about the refinement of the body: in both ‘pagan’ and Christian Platonism, the ascent through the hierarchy of bodies reflects a purification and progress of the soul. Origen spelt out this soul-body correlation in the best way: each soul must be in a corporeal state that is appropriate to its rank or order, by which he means its level of moral development (Ramelli 2018). For several ascetics, in particular the philosophical ascetics of Hellenistic Judaism and especially late antique Christianity, the progress of the soul involved justice, solidarity with other people, and renouncing the oppression of fellow humans that came through the ownership of slaves and the impoverishment of others that was a result of possessing excessive wealth.

2 Asceticism and the rejection of oppression: human dignity and Gregory of Nyssa’s arguments against slavery and socio-economic injustice

I shall outline the main strands of the research I have conducted into the role of philosophical asceticism as a personal and group religious practice (2016) and its echoes in the opposition to social injustice and slavery found across religious traditions (‘pagan’, Hellenistic Jewish, and Christian) throughout the Mediterranean world in imperial and late antiquity. My study points out how private and group ascetic practice played a substantial role in the rejection of slavery, oppression, and social injustice in this period and seeks to connect asceticism, the rejection of the institution of slavery, and the embrace of social justice as they are found in ancient philosophy, Jewish Hellenism, and especially Christian antiquity and late antiquity. When Christian ascetics chose poverty and low status in service to Christ, were they simply withdrawing from social duties, or were they also concerned for those who were socially enslaved or dispossessed? Since at least some Christian (and Jewish, and ‘pagan’, as we shall see) philosophical ascetics spoke explicitly of justice in this connection, we can surmise that at least some of them embraced asceticism also for the sake of justice.

In voluntary poverty and the giving up of slavery, a deeper level of asceticism was often at work: the principle of renouncing the oppression of fellow humans

and thereby the commission of injustice against them, either by claiming to own other people or by accumulating wealth, which latter automatically meant, in the judgement of these ascetics, stealing the necessary from the poor. This is the patristic tenet that wealth is tantamount to theft (Ramelli 2016, Chap. 6). Renunciation of oppression and injustice was, at least in the case of the best ascetics, the common root of both the rejection of slavery and the rejection of social injustice through the embrace of voluntary poverty. The necessary and deep interrelation between the two thus turns out to derive from a common origin rather than being a mere juxtaposition. Other options were also available for the second point, social injustice, such as – instead of voluntary poverty – almsgiving in a variety of degrees. This represented a milder form of the reduction of social injustice and oppression.

In some cases, we can even see the development of a notion of ‘human dignity’ and, as we would call them, individual human rights. This is especially clear in Gregory of Nyssa’s strong theological arguments for the rejection of slavery and social injustice on the grounds that they lead to the dire poverty of some people, especially his ‘theology of the image’, which bestows a unique dignity on every human being qua image of God. Gregory rejected the legitimacy of the institution of slavery and his theological arguments against this institution parallel his theological arguments against the social injustice which resulted in great poverty for many.

Gregory’s main argument against slavery is found in a Homily for the Holy Easter (*In S. Pascha*, 379) and especially in his fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes (GNO 5.334–52). Gregory begins by presenting Easter as the feast of liberation. He describes the *manumissio in ecclesia* as ‘good and humane’ because it sets slaves free and does so in a dignified way (GNO 9.1.250.15–20). Gregory here assimilates slave owners to Pharaoh (GNO 9.1.250.24), who elsewhere in his works symbolises evil and the devil. Gregory, unlike many other early Christian thinkers, used arguments concerning *spiritual* slavery to conclude that *legal* slavery was illegitimate and against God, and therefore had to be abolished.

Gregory urges masters to release their slaves immediately, on that very day. He qualifies manumission as ‘good’ (ἀγαθόν, 251.2), as opposed to slavery, which is evil. Note that Gregory urges not only ascetics, but *all* the heads of households in his audience to manumit all slaves. He argues that, if prisoners are freed when a new member of the royal family is born, or on a military victory, all the more must slaves be freed on the day of Christ’s victory over death and his resurrection. Gregory’s plea extends to all those afflicted, such as the indigent/beggars (πτωχοί) and the sick. The association of slaves with the poor is no accident in Gregory, who used the same theological arguments to denounce as illegitimate both the institution of slavery and the social injustice that led to poverty. Gregory

regarded the misfortunes of the poor and the sick as a totally undeserved product of the greed of others. Gregory's appeal to choose 'virtue' and reject 'evil' in the peroration of his Paschal homily implies that he regards owning slaves as evil and manumitting them as virtuous. He admits of no exception: *all* masters should free their slaves. These are humans and, thanks to Christ's Paschal work, all humans 'inherit God', the supreme Good (GNO 9.1.251.21). Humans inherit God fully in the end, at the perfection of all, but already here and now they are heirs of God, because Christ's resurrection contains *in nuce*, and prefigures, the final resurrection-restoration of all humanity (Ramelli 2013, 372–440).

Slavery is illegitimate and against God because every human is free, in that she or he is God's image. This argument is brought forth especially in Gregory's fourth homily on Ecclesiastes. From the beginning (334), Gregory criticises a human who presumes to be the 'master of fellow humans'. This is an 'outlandish presumption'. No one can claim to possess another human being, which would be 'against God', since all humans belong only to God. Those who claim to own other persons are stealing God's possession (335) and go against God and God's decree, which made all humans free and endowed them with freewill: 'You condemn to slavery the human being, whose nature is free and self-determining, and so you make laws that are contrary to that of God'. God made each person the master of all creation, and anyone who dares enslave any human being 'goes, and fights, against God's own ordinance'. Slavery, far from being decreed by God after the Fall, as Augustine maintained, is definitely *against* God's will. Not God, but human arrogance divided humanity into masters and slaves: Gregory repeats this statement in his *On the Lord's Prayer*: 'Not nature, but spirit of dominion [δυναστεία] divided humanity into slavery and mastery'.

Gregory's condemnation of the institution of slavery is not limited to a Paschal homily and a homily on Ecclesiastes, but emerges constantly throughout his works. Gregory's injunction to all masters to free all of their slaves is rooted in his theology, on which his anthropology depends. Founding his position on *theological* arguments, in Homily 4 on Ecclesiastes Gregory claims that God's image, i.e. a human being, cannot, as a rational creature endowed with logos (and the Logos is Christ), be bought at any price. Gregory is founding his rejection of juridical slavery here upon the 'theology of the image'. Every human is free, qua image of God, who is free and powerful par excellence. God made each human person the owner of the whole cosmos; thus, no amount of money can buy a person: "I have bought for myself male and female slaves" [Eccl 2:7]. Please tell me: At what price? Among the existing beings, which have you found that is worth human nature? How many coins have you evaluated the logos? How many obols have you put on the scales as the price for God's image? Who can sell the being who is in the likeness of God, rules the whole earth, and has inherited from God power over

all creatures on earth?’ Only an insane man, deceived by the devil, could presume to be the owner of God’s image: ‘Has the devil tricked you into believing that you are the master of God’s image? O what foolishness!’ (*Hom. Eccl.* 4.337). Gregory’s argument echoes 1 Tim 6:10, where the root of all sins is identified as greed for money (*ibid.*, 4.339).

Gregory used another theological argument against both slavery and social injustice, besides the ‘theology of the image’: that from the ‘social analogy’, which argues for equality within the Trinity and within humanity. Freedom and equality within the Trinity – which Gregory supported in his anti-subordinationism (Ramelli 2011) – are reflected in freedom and equality among all humans. This argument is found in his treatise against the ‘neo-Arian’ Eunomius and elsewhere. For example, Gregory attacks Eunomius on the grounds that humans’ admitting of no master (ἀδέσποτον) is a reflection of God’s own absolute admitting of no master. A similar position is also held in *On the Lord’s Prayer*, GNO 7.2.70–1, where Gregory states that by nature only irrational creatures are slaves of rational ones. God has granted humans to be masters only of animals, not of other humans. Gregory reminds the master that his slave has the same worth as he himself from the viewpoint of the ‘dignity of human nature’. In *Against Eunomius* (1.1.526, 3.1.15, 3.3.54–5, 3.4.37–8, 3.5.12, 3.8.44, 50, 53, 54–8), Gregory argues that, just as the divine nature cannot be divided into slavery and mastery, neither can human nature; the whole creation is a slave, but of God alone. Here, the analogy of the unity of nature in both divinity and humanity substantiates the claim that slavery cannot divide a nature that is one, whether this nature be divine or human.

Rachel Moriarty (1993) draws a parallel between some of Nyssen’s statements on slavery in Homily 4 on Ecclesiastes and Seneca’s Letter 47. On the basis of rhetorical resemblances, she concludes that Gregory’s polemic against slavery is only apparent and drawn from rhetorical commonplaces, just as Seneca’s advocacy of humane treatment for slaves did not entail a condemnation of slavery as an institution. But Gregory’s theological arguments against slavery, based on the ‘theology of the image’ and ‘social analogy’, have little to do with Seneca’s: they are grounded in the Bible and its philosophical interpretation, mainly in the light of Platonism. Gregory also adduces an eschatological argument. The elimination of slavery in the eschatological scenario will result from Christ’s freeing of humans from slavery by voluntarily and lovingly taking slavery upon himself (*C. Eun.* 3.8). Because slavery cannot abide in the end, since it is against God’s will and utterly impious and evil, it must be eradicated already now. This is why Gregory insisted that all people, not only ascetics, should free all their slaves.

The theological arguments that buttress Nyssen’s condemnation of legal slavery are the same as those which underpin his condemnation of social injus-

tice and usury, the causes of the dire poverty of many. Gregory joined Origen's, John Chrysostom's, and Evagrius' conviction that excessive wealth is tantamount to theft (Ramelli 2016, 199, 204–7). From the socio-historical viewpoint, Gregory's attitudes toward poverty and slavery are grounded in the prevalence of debt slavery in Gregory's own day, and in the practice of Gregory and other members of his family, such as Naucratus and Macrina, who rejected both riches and slave ownership altogether. This life choice was profoundly admired by Gregory, who, in the footsteps of Origen, Pierius, Pamphilus, Eusebius, and other Origenians, identified the philosophical life with a life of asceticism and voluntary poverty. Thus, in *Against Fate* 34.3 he remarks that the highest kind of life is a life 'without possessions'.

The 'theology of the image' is the main basis for Gregory's condemnation of not only slavery but also social injustice. In *On Doing Good* (GNO 9.1.93–108) Gregory maintains that nobody can be considered to be less worthy than others, since all humans are the image of Christ, who is the image of God. Christ has given his very countenance to all humans alike, in that he has taken up all humanity and has become incarnate in all humans. Gregory expressly refers to Matt 25:35–45, where Jesus identifies himself precisely with the poor: 'I was *hungry* and you gave me food, I was *thirsty* and you gave me drink [...] I was *naked* and you clothed me, I was *sick* and *imprisoned* and you visited me [...] *as you did it to one of the least of these brethren, you did it to me*'.

God has given the goods of this world to all humanity equally; therefore, those who possess more than they need are in fact depriving other people of what they need.⁶ Wealth is tantamount to theft; Gregory thus exhorts his flock to refrain from unjust acquisitions and love for riches: 'stay away from iniquitous gain, starve your idolatrous greed for riches: let nothing be stored up in your house that comes from violence and robbery' (*On Doing Good* 94). When Gregory claims that those who have more than the necessary are thieves who have stolen the necessities from the poor, he is following Origen, who insisted that whatever one acquires must be acquired with justice. If one acquires a great deal of wealth, this is necessarily acquired by means of injustice: 'They do not consider whether they gain in the right way, with justice [...] One of the following two alternatives must necessarily be the case: either to gain a lot by means of injustice, or only a little, but with justice [...] abundant riches are tantamount to iniquity' (*Homily 3 on Psalm 36.6*).

⁶ See also Basil, *Homily 6* (cf. 7, 8) and Nazianzen, *Oration 14.24–6*. The principle that one's possessions should not exceed one's needs was supported by Epicureanism in antiquity: see Morel 2016.

Ascetic practices, such as fasting and abstinence, are not appreciated by God, if one is oppressing one's brothers. Taking away necessities from the poor means 'biting your brother with wickedness' and 'drinking their blood out of evilness'. Judas also fasted, but his greed for money caused him to sell Jesus: greed for money is thus worse than failing to practice fasting and other pious deeds (*Benef.* 94–5). Corporeal fasting is useless, 'if the intellect is not purified. Self-restraint is useless, unless it includes all the other aspects of justice [δικαιοσύνην] as inseparable and consequent [...] Isaiah asks: To what end do you fast, while you strike the poor with your fists?' Like Gregory, John Chrysostom too warned that alms deriving from the degrading of other people are not welcome to God, who deems such a person a murderer. Therefore, John exhorts his audience 'to abstain from greed first' and then show mercy through alms (*Hom. in 2Cor.* 4:13, PG 51.300).

According to Gregory, as well as to Origen and other ascetics, asceticism must pair acts of self-restraint with justice. Gregory invites his flock to share their food and houses with the poor: the fact that they are poor is itself a grave ἀδικία (*Benef.* 96–7). Again, he avails himself of a *theological* argument: fear of God should eliminate social and economic inequalities, by becoming 'a just balancer who makes people equal' (δικαίος ἐπανισωτής). The poor and the sick are salvation for the rich: 'Hug the disadvantaged as your own health, as the salvation of your wife and your own children' (*Benef.* 97–8). This is a threat: if the rich do not share their wealth with the poor then their own health and salvation, and those of their families, will be in danger. 'Do not despise the poor who lie down as worthy of nothing. Consider who they are, and you will find out their value/dignity [ἀξίωμα]: they have put on the very countenance of our Saviour. He, who loves humanity, lent them his own face'. This echoes the theology of the image and Matt 25:35–45.

To the argument from the theology of the image – the poor have Christ's countenance – Gregory adds another in *On Doing Good* 101–13: God made creation for all humans in equal share. All should limit themselves to the possession of what they need, because the rest belongs to the poor, whom God loves: 'Put limits to the needs of your life! [...] Let a part of your wealth belong to the poor, God's beloved. For all goods belong to God, the common Father of all [...] we are all siblings, from the same race. It is better and more just if siblings *participate in their heritage in equal parts*'. Gregory accuses those who refuse to give the poor one third or one fifth of their goods (*ibid.*, 104). In *On Doing Good* 106–8, Gregory alludes to the parable of Dives and Lazarus – on which he expands also in *De anima* – and warns the rich who give nothing to the poor that they may die in a few days and the abyss awaits them. Elsewhere, too, Gregory condemns injustice due to covetousness (ἐπιθυμία τῆς πλεονεξίας; cf. *Orat.* 284.6–9). This is why he is so severe against covetousness, calling it 'madness incapable of controlling itself', inspired by the devil (*Orat.* 286.1–9). In *On Usury* 9.201.25–9, Nyssen warns

the usurer, too, that his alms are unwelcome to God, since they come from his siblings' tears, flesh, and blood.

For Nyssen, renouncing the oppression of others through slavery or robbery – and wealth is tantamount to robbery –, and thereby pursuing justice, is a matter of asceticism. Asceticism cannot possibly do without the renunciation of all forms of oppression. This connection was already at work in the *Sentences of Sextus*, a Christianised version of Pythagorean asceticism (see Ramelli 2016, Introduction; 2016a), but Gregory makes it stronger. No Christian, according to him, can practice asceticism, even in the mild forms of fasting or almsgiving, and at the same time own slaves or keep the riches that imply the impoverishment of other people.

3 Other source texts: from Essenes and Therapeutae to late antique and Byzantine sources: asceticism and authority

My source texts, besides those by Nyssen, range from the accounts given by Philo and Josephus of the rejection of slavery and social injustice by the ascetic Essenes and Therapeutae to late antique and early Byzantine sources concerning individuals or couples who emancipated their slaves and gave up their possessions in favour of the poor upon embracing the ascetic life, as well as monastic groups who liberated all the slaves who joined their communities, and the institutional reaction of the Church of the Empire to this destabilising practice. In the case of Byzantine monasteries, asceticism could be a way to liberate slaves. Some monasteries, as we shall see, kept fugitive slaves as ascetics, even refusing to return them to their owners.

It is correct, on the one hand, that, as Rebecca Krawiec (2008, 5) notes, 'asceticism emerges as a means of legitimating authority, rather than simply a set of religious practices'. This may have been the case, for instance, with bishops or other male authorities claiming control over female ascetics. But asceticism could also be *subversive* vis-à-vis authority, both ecclesiastical and social. This is proved by the fact that, as we shall see, the 'official' church had to intervene repeatedly to curb those ascetics' revolutionary practice of freeing slaves against their masters' will when they entered the monastic life. That meant subtracting slaves from the authority of their owners and from the social system in which slavery as an institution was embedded. And those ascetics who continued that practice with regard to slaves also went against the ecclesiastical authority that ordered the preservation of the social-legal status quo.

3.1 Essenes and Therapeutae

Centuries earlier, the Jewish groups of Essenes and Therapeutae were already refusing slavery and social iniquity, both *de jure* and *de facto*. These groups represent an important strand of philosophical asceticism that had its roots already in Greek philosophy. Their rejection of slavery went hand in hand with their ascetic lifestyle, which, in the case of the former, according to Philo, entailed total dispossession. In Philo's report, the Essenes voluntarily had neither money nor possessions (ἀχρήματοι καὶ ἀκτήμονες, *Every Good Person Is Free* 1.77). This ideal of voluntary poverty, as well as of the rejection of slavery, was to be exalted by Nyssen, with specific reference to his family, and became a standard feature in Christian monasticism. The link between asceticism, poverty, and philosophy, which was taken over in the tradition of Origen, Pamphilus, Eusebius, Nyssen, and Evagrius, is particularly clear in Philo's description of the Therapeutae in *On Contemplative Life*.

According to Sharon Weisser (2010, 308), neither Philo nor Nyssen aimed at the establishment of social justice but merely condemned the vanity and arrogance of slave ownership. This was indeed the case with Philo, who did not share the ideals of the Essenes and the Therapeutae and did not personally reject slave ownership. But the Essenes and Therapeutae themselves – at least as represented by our sources –, as well as Nyssen, did focus on injustice (ἀδικία) in their discourse about the rejection of slavery and social injustice. Jodi Magness, in a personal conversation at Metochi in summer 2013, endorsed the historicity of the Essenes and the Therapeutae and of their rejection of slavery and possessions, but suggested that their reasons may have had more to do with ritual purity. If this was the case, Philo and Josephus translated these reasons into more Hellenistic and philosophical terms. The description of the Essenes, as Joan Taylor (2004) notes, resembles that of the Pythagoreans, due to the attribution of philosophical asceticism to both. Richard Finn (2015, Chap. 2) also deems the Therapeutae to be close to Levites, while Philo depicted them in a more philosophical light.

In pre-Christian antiquity, ascetic Essenes and the Therapeutae are the sole groups credited with unequivocally refusing both to keep slaves and to recognise slavery as an institution, on the grounds of the natural equality and kinship among all humans and an evaluation of slavery as intrinsically *unjust*. This presupposes a strong link between equality and justice. Philo of Alexandria, in the first half of the first century CE, spoke of the Essenes in *Every Good Person Is Free* 79. These 'Jewish sages', according to him, were superior in sanctity to all other sages with regard to 'love for God, for virtue, and for humans' (83). Philo informs us that these Essenes numbered over four thousand and their name derived from holiness/purity (ὁσιότης), which in itself suggests some form of asceticism. He describes them as 'servants of God' on account of their will to make their interior

dispositions worthy of the divinity (75). Philo's definition, *therapeutae* of God, may indicate a connection with the Therapeutae to whom Philo devoted a treatise. They avoid all that which can arouse cupidity (78). They share their possessions, meals, and homes (86) in reciprocal solidarity and renunciation of ownership (87). What inspired their ascetic practices was 'freedom, which escapes every slavery' (88). This is also why they rejected slavery both *de jure* and *de facto*.

The characteristics of the ascetic lifestyle of the Essenes are described in more detail in a substantial section of Josephus' *Jewish War* (2.120–61): 'holiness/purity', rejection of pleasure as a vice, and the embrace of 'temperance and control of passions' and sexual renunciation (120). Some of them married, but only for the sake of begetting children (160–1); all 'despise riches' and practice 'communality of goods', so that among them 'one will nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth' (122), as was also the case in the first Jesuan community in Jerusalem. The link between the excessive wealth of some and the poverty of many others was later highlighted by patristic thinkers such as Origen, Evagrius, and John Chrysostom, as well as Gregory Nyssen. They equated riches with theft, in the conviction that the wealth of some was the cause of the poverty of others.

The corresponding Slavonic tradition of Josephus' *Bellum* expands on this: 'They have no kind of property, but among them all things are communal, both clothes and food'. When new members enter the community, 'all the resources of the community are put at their disposal, as though they were their own' (124). The adherents change their garments and shoes only when they are worn out and 'there is no buying or selling among them, but they give what they have to any in need, and receives from them in exchange what is useful to themselves. They are also freely permitted to take anything from any of their siblings without making any return' (127).

The Essenes 'help those deserving, when in need, and supply food to the destitute' (133–5). The vow they made consisted in piety toward the deity, *justice* toward humans, wronging nobody, hating *injustice*, keeping faith with all people, loving truth, and abstaining from stealing, unholy gain, and robbery (139–42). Note the insistence on justice and avoiding the oppression of fellow humans.

That the Essenes rejected slave ownership is explicitly attested by Philo, who in *Prob.* 79, reports that these ascetics not only kept no slaves at all, but also rejected the very institution of slavery. They 'denounced slave owners not only because of their *injustice in violating the law of equality*, but also due to their *impiety in infringing the statute of Nature*, who, like a mother, bore and reared all humans alike, and created them genuine *siblings*, not simply in name, but *in very reality*'. The Essenes refused to keep any slave, while most Stoics did not refrain from owning some or even many. The same passage by Philo confirms this: 'It is

impossible to *find even just one slave* among them. On the contrary, *all of them are free and serve each other.*' This was also the lifestyle of the Therapeutae according to our sources. Josephus also reports that the Essenes kept no slaves because slavery is tantamount to *injustice* (ἀδικία, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.21).

Thus, Philo and Josephus concur in implying that the Essenes did not simply reject slave ownership as part and parcel of their vow of lack of property (ἀκτημοσύνη) and self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια), but because they realised the intrinsic injustice of the institution of slavery. This hypothesis is supported by Philo *Prob.* 79: the Essenes qualified the 'injustice' and 'impiety' that brought about the institution of slavery in terms of 'arrogance and avarice'. The natural kinship and equality of all humans was blurred by 'the triumph of the vicious arrogance and avarice' of some who began to oppress others.

The project of these ascetics, the Essenes and Therapeutae, was elitist, insofar as it only involved isolated ascetic groups, but it was undoubtedly also radical in its refusal of slavery both *de jure* and *de facto*, at least in the representation provided by the Hellenised Jews Philo and Josephus. The same position, that slavery and social injustice must be rejected because they entail the oppression of fellow humans, will be held by Christian ascetics such as Nyssen, but the latter thought that not only ascetics, but all humans should reject slavery and limit social injustice.

In his *On Contemplative Life*, Philo makes the rejection of slavery a core feature of the ascetic Therapeutae, both in a moral sense (18–20) and in a literal sense (70–2). In *Cont.* 18–20 Philo describes these people as 'no longer slaves of anybody', because they have renounced all their possessions, including slaves, and all their relatives. In *Cont.* 70–2 Philo is not using the Stoic metaphor of moral slavery (on which see Ramelli 2016, Chap. 1): he testifies to the Therapeutae's radical rejection of the institution of slavery and relates this to their asceticism:

They receive service, but *not by slaves*, because *they deem the possession of servants altogether against nature*. For *nature has generated all humans free*; it is rather the acts of *injustice and arrogance* of some people who pursue *inequality, the principle of all evils*, that, accumulating upon one another, conferred to the stronger *power over the weaker*. Now, in this holy community, as I have said, *nobody is a slave*, but it is *free people who serve other people*, performing the necessary services not by force, nor waiting for orders, but anticipating the requests with zeal and willingness, *voluntarily*.

These services are not performed by any free person, no matter which, but it is rather the *young* of the group, selected on the basis of their excellence, who do so with every solicitude, in the way that becomes noble and distinguished people who strive for the highest virtue. These young people, as legitimate children, diligently and happily *serve fathers and mothers, deeming them their own common parents*, closer to themselves than their biological parents. For nothing is closer and more familiar to the wise than excellence in virtue. And while they perform these services, they wear no belt and let their short frocks hang down free, to avoid bringing *even just a shade of slavish appearance*.

The motivations for the Therapeutae's rejection of slavery are similar to those of the Essenes.

Both were ascetic groups stemming from Hellenistic Judaism and roughly contemporary with one another. The tenet that all humans are free by nature fits well with a Stoic framework. However, the Therapeutae did not simply reject slavery in principle but actually refused to own slaves. And they did so not merely on the grounds of a Cynic requirement for ἀκτημοσύνη, because they renounced all possessions, among which slaves were counted, but because they considered slavery, as an institution, to be against nature and an example of inequality, which is a fruit of injustice and arrogance, resulting in the oppression of others. Just as is the case with slavery, so too are the dire poverty of some and the exaggerated wealth of others instances of inequality among humans, which here is declared the principle of all evils.

Arguments against slavery and against social inequalities – replaced among Jewish ascetics by voluntary service and voluntary poverty – are very similar in these texts, as they will be again in Nyssen, who was well acquainted with Philo's writings. He approved of the Therapeutae's rejection of slavery and the freedom and promotion that asceticism offered to women, in this case the Therapeutrides, who were 'mostly aged virgins'. They are described by Philo as women who 'have kept their virginity *without being forced to do so*, unlike some Greek priestesses, but *full willingly*, out of their ardent desire for wisdom'. Voluntary asceticism, poverty, and service are identified as the highest freedom. Origen, Gregory, and other Christian ascetics agreed.

Junior Therapeutae served the elder, as children do their parents. In *Decal. 2* Philo insists again on the rejection of injustice by the Therapeutae. Cities, from which the Therapeutae flee, are full of all sorts of injustice (ἀδικίαι) against fellow humans. The Therapeutae counted slavery among these, as did the Essenes. Some Christians, such as Eusebius, considered the Therapeutae described by Philo to be Christians (Ramelli 2011), thus idealising ascetics who refused slavery and embraced voluntary poverty. Indeed, it is from ascetics that the few condemnations of slavery in ancient Christianity arose.

3.2 Asceticism of late ancient married couples and the giving up of slaves and possessions

At the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth, some married couples who embraced asceticism, such as the two Melaniae and Therasia and Paulinus of Nola, emancipated all of their slaves and renounced their immense wealth. Paulinus was born in Bordeaux from a very affluent family; a disciple

of Ausonius, he became the governor of Campania. In 394/95 Paulinus and his Spanish wife Therasia decided to pursue a life of prayer and chastity, giving their possessions away to the poor and renouncing slave ownership. Ambrose delighted in Therasia's decision to give away all of her property and limit herself to Paulinus' 'tiny piece of turf' (Letter 6.27). Paulinus, ordained a priest, retired to Nola, close to the tomb of St Felix, became the bishop there, and promoted the cult of the saint. He also publicly renounced his senatorial seat, a decision that attracted much criticism on the part of his peers, including Ausonius.

After the death of her husband, when she was twenty-two years of age, Melania the Elder espoused asceticism in the form of renunciation of wealth and slaves. She gave up all her vast possessions and moved from Rome to Egypt, where she dwelt with the Origenian monks dubbed 'Tall Brothers', whom she followed to Palestine in 373. As ascetics, they kept no slaves, so Melania served them voluntarily in that capacity. She even wore 'the dress of a young slave' and, when the consular of Palestine had her thrown into prison, she proudly declared herself to be the daughter and wife of prominent noblemen, but also 'the slave of Christ', like Paul (Palladius, *Lausiac History* 46). She founded a double monastery in Jerusalem, which she directed and in which Rufinus too lived, supported by Melania as his patroness. For thirty-seven years she continued to give hospitality, to support churches and monasteries, strangers, and prisoners, her family, her son himself, and her stewards by providing money; finally, 'she possessed not even a span of land' and died 'having got rid of her possessions' (*ibid.*, 54). Melania persuaded her own granddaughter, Melania the Younger, her husband, and her daughter-in-law Albina, to sell all their goods and become ascetics. She read virtually all of the literary production of Origen, Nyssen, and Basil seven or eight times (*ibid.*, 55); thus, she absorbed Origen's ascetic ideals and the views on slavery and social justice of Gregory and Basil.

Indeed, Melania the Younger (Hunt 2016), aged twenty after the death of her two children, and her husband Pinianus decided to embrace monastic life, with the divestment of their massive wealth and the liberation of their slaves:

she freed 8,000 slaves [ἀνδράποδα] who wished freedom. For the rest did not wish it, but preferred to be slaves to her brother; and she allowed him to take them all for three pieces of money. But having sold her possessions in Spain, Aquitania, Tarragonia and the Gauls, she reserved for herself only those in Sicily, Campania, and Africa, and appropriated their income for the support of monasteries. Such was her wise conduct with regard to the burden of riches. And her asceticism was as follows. She ate every other day – to begin with after a five-day interval – and assigned to herself a part in the daily work of her own former slave-women, whom also she made her fellow-ascetics [συνασκητρίδας]. She had with her also her mother Albina, who lived a similar ascetic life and distributed her riches for her part privately. Now these ladies are dwelling on their properties [...] with fifteen eunuchs and sixty virgins, both free and former slaves. (*ibid.*, 61)

This report concurs with that by Gerontius, who, in his *Life of Melania*, represents Melania and Pinianus as renouncing the whole of their wealth as soon as they embraced asceticism. They may have kept some financial resources (Dunn 2014, 113–4) but they did not use them for their own comfort, as they embraced an ascetic lifestyle, but for helping the poor and other ascetics.

The example of these ascetics contributes to showing the connection between asceticism and the renunciation of slave ownership and wealth. For many patristic thinkers, and especially those of the Origenian-Evagrian line that was Melania's own bedrock, reducing one's wealth was just both in itself and for the sake of the poor, since wealth is tantamount to theft against them.

3.3 Various categories of late antique ascetics and their relation to slavery and social justice

Hermits or semi-hermits and extreme ascetics such as the stylites or dendrites – who lived respectively on pillars and on trees –, as well as the other ascetics of Syria described by Theodoret in his *Religious History*, kept neither slaves nor possessions or much money. Simeon the Stylite (c. 390–459), who lived for forty years on a pillar, led a life both of extreme poverty, with restraints of all sorts, and of renunciation of slave ownership. In *Religious History* 26, Theodoret portrays Simeon's asceticism as philosophical, calling his ascetic life φιλοσοφία and φιλοπονία (love for labour), and the monastery in which he spent ten years a 'school of philosophy'. According to the biography in Athanasius, 2–3, Antony (d. 356), the father of monasticism, was inspired by Jesus' exhortation to sell all possessions and follow him, by the apostles' leaving everything to follow Jesus, and by Acts' description of the first Christian community as holding all possessions in common for the support of the needy (on this passage and its patristic reception see, e.g., Boulnois 2014). Antony renounced all his wealth when he embraced the ascetic life, gave the possessions of his forefathers to the villagers, and sold everything else that was movable, donating the revenues to the poor. Antony liberated or sold the slaves who, presumably, worked on his parents' estate, or he gave them, too, the land he owned when he distributed it to the villagers. He kept neither slaves nor possessions during his ascetic life.

Some monastic communities may have owned slaves not individually but in common. But in some monasteries, such as that of Macrina, this was not the case, since former slaves were freed before entering the monastery and did not have to serve therein. Both the ex-slaves and the free women served. In a work devoted to monasticism and attributed to Basil, the author insists that the monk must have no possessions whatsoever, having to embrace the 'life without possessions'

(ἀκτῆμων βίος, *First Education in Asceticism* PG 31.621.16). The same is maintained in another work attributed to Basil: a monk has first of all to enter an ἀκτῆμων βίος (*Ascetic Discipline*, PG 31.648.42–3). We do not know whether here slaves could still be owned by the monastic community as a whole.

3.4 Gregory of Nyssa's depiction of ascetics as models, his theory of 'spiritual asceticism', 'invisible religion', and individual and universal salvation

Among the most significant texts that are relevant to the present investigation are those by Gregory of Nyssa, both his portrayal of model ascetics in the biographography of his sister Macrina and his theological arguments and exhortations against slavery and social injustice. As we shall see, Gregory seems to offer his portraits of Macrina, Naucratus, and other ascetics who embraced poverty and voluntary service and rejected slavery as a model for his readers to imitate.

Gregory called for 'spiritual fasting' and 'immaterial self-restraint' based primarily on the practice of justice, since he, like the *Sentences of Sextus* discussed above, maintained that ascetic practices such as fasting and almsgiving were not acceptable to God if one oppressed other people, kept slaves and excessive wealth, and did not practice justice. In *On Doing Good* 94, Gregory calls abstinence from oppressing other people 'spiritual asceticism':

There exists a spiritual fasting [νηστεία], an immaterial self-restraint [ἐγκράτεια]. This is abstinence from sin, which pertains to the soul. Fast now from evil! Control yourself in your greed for what belongs to others! Give up dishonest gains! Starve your idolatrous greed for money to death! Let nothing be stored up in your house that comes from violence and robbery. It is to no avail that you maintain meat far from your mouth if you bite your brother out of evilness. It is to no avail that you keep strict frugality by yourself if you rob the poor with injustice. What kind of devotion makes you drink mere water, while with your machinations you ignobly deceive someone else and drink their blood?

Ascetic practices are in vain if one does not renounce the oppression of other people by means of such things as slavery, usury, and theft, which are described as 'injustice' and 'evil'. This position was inherited by the Evagrian Cassian: fasting is not only abstinence from material food but also fasting spiritually (*Inst.* 5.21.1): abstaining from greed, amassing wealth, owning slaves, etc. Abba Theodore is reported to have deemed it best to possess nothing, not even books (*Apophthegmata Patrum*, alphabetic series, Theodore of Pherme 1, PG 65.188).

Macrina, the sister of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, a lady coming from a rich and noble family, lived in a house-monastery – led by herself – like,

later, the Mediaeval noble ladies Gertrude Rickeldey of Ortenberg and Heilke of Staufenberg (see Mulder-Bakker in this section). Gregory's bio-hagiography of Macrina and her fellow nuns (Ramelli 2019) could indeed be seen as an indicator of an intended institutionalisation of individualisation (bearing in mind that 'processes of religious individualisation are closely connected to the formation of institutions and traditions, and the interactions among them must be systematically examined', as remarked by Fuchs et al. 2016a, 11), for Gregory wanted all Christians – and not only strict ascetics – to renounce slave ownership as well as wealth that exceeds one's needs. Likewise, the biographers of those late antique ascetics who renounced all wealth and all slaves upon the embrace of what they represented as philosophical asceticism arguably intended to produce models to be followed. Thus, while on the one hand the house monastery of Macrina and those late antique ascetics who espoused asceticism and rejected wealth and slave ownership provide types of privatisation and 'invisible religion' (Rüpke 2015, 347) – to the point that Gregory Nazianzen exalted the secrecy and hiddenness of the life of Macrina (Ramelli 2010) –, on the other hand, the accounts of Gregory and the biographies of the other ascetics were intended to provide ideal models of religious and societal practices for a wide range of people.

Nyssen's attitude and intention can be contrasted with that of Philo: the latter reported the radical views and behaviour of Essenes and Therapeutae against slavery, private property, and social injustice, but he did not aim at providing a viable model for many people. For, unlike Gregory, Philo deemed slavery indispensable to relieve masters of menial tasks (*On special laws* 2.82, 2.123) and did not think that all should follow the example of the Therapeutae and embrace voluntary poverty and service, while renouncing slave ownership.

In the main exponents of Christian philosophical asceticism, it is possible to detect both an enhanced focus on the 'self' and individual salvation (on which see Fuchs 2015, 335; Ramelli 2019a), and, at the same time, a concern for, and theorisation of, universal salvation. Indeed, Nyssen, Macrina, and Evagrius, like their inspirer Origen, were all universalists in their soteriology (Ramelli 2013). But Origen and Gregory also stressed individual freewill. Indeed, Origen even made it a core feature of his antivalentinian polemic – and note its relevance to philosophical ethics, but also to social sciences and history, as highlighted recently by Ramsay MacMullen (2014). Moral responsibility is the gist of Origen's ethics and philosophical theology. In these religious thinkers we can see at work a focus on individual, experience-based spirituality in the mysticism and mystic apophaticism shared by Nyssen, Origen, and Evagrius (as argued by Ramelli 2018a).

4 Equality in different ascetic groups

It is interesting to examine the different practices of these protomonastic and monastic communities or individuals, from Antony to Macrina, Naucratius, Melania, Evagrius, etc. A striking discrepancy can be observed regarding the retention or rejection of slave ownership and social hierarchy: Macrina liberated her slaves and made them her own peers, *homotimoi*, sharing the same works with them. But Paula, the ascetic, wealthy friend of Jerome's, in her house-monastery in Bethlehem, maintained all social distinctions, even emphasising them spatially (Jerome, Letter 108). Here, the virgins were not at all ὁμότιμοι but were divided into three classes: noble, middle, and lowest. They worked and ate separately, only joining together for psalmody and prayer.

Macrina, instead, lived together with her ex-slaves in her monastery, sharing her ascetic life with them. She and her siblings encouraged their household slaves to enter their proto-monastic community. In his bio-hagiography of his sister (*Life of Macrina* GNO 8.1.377.25–378.5), Gregory himself, full of admiration, recounts how Macrina convinced her mother Emmelia to join her ascetic community and live together with their own former slaves, now made 'of equal dignity' (ὁμότιμοι) with their ex-masters. Emmelia made 'all the slaves and servants she had, her sisters and equals', ὁμοτίμους – not rhetorically, but because she renounced being served by her ex-slaves: she 'gave up the services performed by her slaves'. In 381.22–7, the keyword ὁμότιμος in reference to Emmelia and her former slaves is repeated, and further details about Emmelia's equality with her former slaves are given: she shared the same table and the same kind of bed with them. Religious ascetic communities such as this mostly worked in a manner closer to the 'gift-exchange mode' delineated in this section by Herrmann-Pillath than in the 'market-exchange mode'.

Gregory emphasises that for Emmelia, Macrina, and their family, embracing ascetic life coincided with giving up being slave owners. Thus, Gregory draws a close connection between asceticism – the 'angelic life' – and rejection of slavery. Gregory also extols his brother Naucratius for adopting 'a life without possessions' (ἀκτήμονα βίον, *ibid.*, 378.17) when he embraced an ascetic lifestyle, and for his 'renunciation of possessions' (ἀκτημοσύνη, *ibid.*, 382.12), 'bringing with himself nothing else than himself'. Naucratius accepted that one of his former slaves followed him, not to be served by him, but to share 'the same life choice with him' (*ibid.*, 378.19–21). Far from being served by his ex-slave, Naucratius made himself a servant of the poor, old, and ill (379.6–7). Naucratius and Peter, the future bishop of Sebaste, in the same biography of Macrina, are exalted as ascetics by their brother Gregory far more than is Basil. Naucratius is praised for refusing any ecclesiastical position and for privileging asceticism and poverty.

Peter is praised for cooperating with Macrina in the angelic life of asceticism and for being a faithful disciple of hers, who was his ‘father, professor, pedagogue, mother, and counsellor of every good’ (*Life of Macrina*, 12.11–13, 27–30). Asceticism is again paired with total renunciation of slave ownership, and even voluntary self-assimilation to slaves, as well as voluntary poverty.

5 Conflict between ascetic groups and the ‘Church of the Empire’: ascetic impulse to ‘de-traditionalisation’

This investigation offers valuable avenues for reflection on the institutionalisation of forms of religious individualisation, especially with respect to the institutionalisation of asceticism in ecclesiastical structures and the attitudes of ascetics and ascetic groups toward social justice and slavery. I think, for instance, of Eustathius of Sebaste (in Armenia-Pontus), depicted as a philosophical ascetic committed to social justice and the liberation of slaves independently of their owners’ consent, the official church reaction at the Synod of Gangra in the 340s against the practice, promoted by Eustathius and his followers, of liberating slaves even without their owners’ consent, and the resistance of monastic groups to this official ecclesiastical reaction. Eustathius was an ascetic who supervised a hospice for the poor in the 350s CE. He likely inspired Basil’s plan for his own hospice for the needy. Basil himself, in Letter 244, testifies that he had upheld Eustathius as a model since his youth. Socrates relates that Eustathius was the son of Eulalius, the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, the same seat as Basil the Great held, but Eulalius deemed his son unfit for the priesthood and the episcopal dignity (*Church History* 2.43).

Eustathius organised almshouses, hospitals, refuges, and the like (Epiphanius, *Against Heresies* 75.1 and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.14.36). He was the teacher of Macrina and Basil, who both emphasised asceticism and the rejection of slavery and social injustice. But Macrina, Basil, and Nyssen mitigated Eustathius’ radicalism, dropping especially the prohibition of marriage, at least for non-ascetics. Socrates relates Eustathius’ teaching and activity, which was full of ascetic traits, and attests to Eustathius’ commitment to the liberation of slaves independently of their owners’ consent:

He forbade marriage and taught as a dogma that it was necessary to abstain from foods. This is why he separated many people who were married from their partners and persuaded those who were averse to churches to make communion in private houses. He also snatched

slaves from their masters under the pretext of piety. He wore philosophical garb himself, and had his followers wear a strange outfit, and women cut their hair. He also taught to neglect the prescribed fasting days and rather fast on Sundays, and prohibited praying in the houses of married people. He prescribed to decline as a defilement the blessing and communion of a presbyter who had a wife, even if he had married her according to the law while he was still a layman. (*Church History* 2.43)

A synod at Gangra, in Paphlagonia, in the 340s, not only prohibited the liberation of slaves in monasteries against their owners' consent, as we shall see in the next paragraph, but in Canon 12 also forbade the use of the philosopher's mantle for the sake of asceticism – and Eustathius is presented by Socrates as a philosopher. He is said to have worn philosophical attire even when he was a bishop, like Heraclas of Alexandria according to Origen. In a letter reported by Eusebius (*Church History* 6.19.12–4), Origen defended his interest in philosophy, which he never abandoned. He adduces the examples of Pantaenus and Heraclas, both Christian philosophers in Alexandria. Pantaenus had an excellent preparation in philosophy and Greek disciplines, and Heraclas, the future bishop of Alexandria, 'who now sits in the πρεσβυτέριον of Alexandria', not only was a Christian philosopher, but even dressed as a philosopher. He was still wearing philosophical garb and studying the 'books of the Greeks' when Origen wrote his letter. There was a connection between Eustathius' being a philosopher and his asceticism, which surely had an impact on his rejection of slavery. Asceticism and philosophy went together in Origen's life, too, according to Pamphilus and Eusebius, and in Philo's life, according to Eusebius – who modelled his portrait of Philo on that of Origen (Ramelli 2011a).

Eustathius and his followers were condemned by the above-mentioned synod at Gangra for their teachings, including, most prominently, their campaign for the liberation of slaves. Sozomen, *Church History* 3.14.36, reports that Eustathius submitted to this council, but an Antiochian synod condemned him again for 'perjury' (*ibid.*, 4.24.9). The official teaching of the 'Church of the Empire', as expressed in the third canon of Gangra, was that slavery had to be retained as an institution. The canon condemned to excommunication those who exhorted slaves to stop serving their masters, which they should have done, moreover with respect and goodwill, as the deuterio- and pseudo-Pauline house codes commanded (on which see Ramelli 2016, Chap. 2).

A century later, the fourth canon of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) again forbade monasteries from offering refuge to runaway slaves without the permission of their masters. The reiteration of the prohibition suggests that ascetic groups had meanwhile continued to free slaves against their masters' will. Monasteries were used as asylum for runaway slaves (Rotman 2009, 144–50). This confirms that many ascetics within the church rejected slavery, as some Jewish and perhaps some 'pagan' philosophical ascetics had already done.

Zeno decreed that slaves, provided that their masters agreed, should be allowed to participate in monastic life (484 CE). As long as they continued to be monks, their owners had to renounce the exercise of ownership and lordship over them. But if those former slaves left the monastic life, they would automatically return to the condition of slaves (*Codex Iustinianus* 1.3.37). This points again to a strong connection between ascetic life and the rejection of slavery. The focus in this case is not on a slave owner who renounces the keeping of slaves when he or she embraces asceticism, but rather on the slave himself or herself, who is freed from a condition of enslavement upon adhesion to asceticism.

However, the need for the slave owner's permission severely limited the effects of Zeno's decree, whereas monks such as those condemned at Gangra and at Chalcedon acted independently of the consent of masters. Eustathius and his followers were undermining the institution of slavery both in monasteries and even in society at large.

The connection between asceticism, monasticism, and the rejection of slavery becomes especially clear in the age of Justinian, when monasteries were allowed to receive fugitive slaves who intended to become monks, unless they perpetrated a crime. However, the legal owner of these slaves could still reclaim their slaves within three years of their embracing the monastic life (Rotman 2009, 144–5). Another open issue, as I mentioned, is that of the possibility for the monastery as a whole to own slaves collectively, as opposed to individual ownership of one or more slaves. However, monasteries – the stronghold of asceticism – appear as the single space where slaves could actually gain independence from their owners. In some cases, poverty was mandatory not only for the individual monks, but also for the monastery as a whole. For instance, Cassian, in the early fifth century, exhorted monks to give up wealth not only individually, but also collectively: the monastery itself had to be poor and to renounce endowments from its members or rich donations from outside. And in *Conferences* 18, Cassian observes that the true monks are those who reproduce the lifestyle of the first Christian community as depicted in Acts – although in Acts the point was not poverty, but the sharing of possessions.

As in the case of the Eleusinian mysteries, not only is participation in ascetic-monastic life based on personal choice, but individual initiation promises a change of fate in the afterlife (see Patera's paper in this section). The main difference is that the Eleusinian mysteries were run by the polis, while monasteries were, in many cases, not a direct expression of political power and, indeed, sometimes came into overt conflict with it, such as when they liberated slaves against the will of their masters. This went not only against the Roman institution of slavery, but also against the church's official decree at Gangra.

The present investigation also seems to bear on, and support the notion, of de-traditionalisation as described by Jörg Rüpke (2013, 7), in which 'individual

action is less and less determined by traditional norms handed down by family and the larger social context'. Indeed, those who rejected slave ownership and possessions were going against societal norms and even the institution of slavery itself, which was a pillar of ancient society and economy; hence also the harsh criticism of 'pagan' polemicists against Christian ascetics as destroyers of society (Ramelli 2016, 219–20). Already Celsus criticised Jesus' claim that the rich have no access to God, and that people should not be concerned with food, granary attics, clothes and wealth (Origen *C. Cels.* 7.18). The practices of Eustathius and his followers, as well as monastic resistance to Gangra, clearly questioned established religious and societal norms, concepts, and institutions.

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Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker

Lived religion and eucharistic piety on the Meuse and the Rhine in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

1 Introduction

In 1323, when Gertrude Rickeldey of Ortenberg, a lay religious lady in Strasbourg, decided to renounce all property, she met with strong resistance from her confessor, a Friar Minor. Deeply frustrated by his censure, she found comfort in her friend and life companion Heilke of Staufenberg: ‘Getruwe im [unserm Herren] wol und nim din selbes war [...] volge dem daz in dir ist’ (‘Trust Him [the Lord] well and know yourself [...] follow what is inside you’).¹ These words spoken by a laywoman in the fourteenth century give food for thought to those searching for religious individualisation in the Middle Ages. They suggest that the individual as a moral category is not simply a discovery of the (Early) Modern world, as is usually held. Regarding earlier scholarship, Cary J. Nederman (2010) has already concluded: ‘Renaissance and Reformation constituted a watershed for the appearance of the individual as a moral and political category.’ In contrast, Nederman himself, in his own insightful overview of ‘Individual Autonomy’ in the medieval period, shows that individualisation started long before, from the twelfth century onwards.

Since Colin Morris published his *The Discovery of the Individual (1050–1200)* in 1972, and Caroline Walker Bynum in 1982 recast his researches in terms of “Discovery of the Individual” or “Discovery of Self”?, an increasing number of researchers have noted a growing role for free choice and individual liberty in private and public affairs in the later Middle Ages. They observe a realm of personal discretion in decision-making with which no one may interfere, and a freedom to speak critically. According to Nederman (2010, 552), ‘Know thyself typifies the individualistic outlook present among many medieval thinkers’. Already in the 1120s, Abelard gave his book on ethics the title *Scito Teipsum*

1 *The Sainly Life* 220^v. The Middle High German biography, *Von dem heiligen Leben der Seligen Frowen genant die Rückeldegen*, is kept in Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium, MS 8507–09, fol. 133^r–239^v. Derkits 1990 gives a transcript of this text with an historical introduction. See also Derkits 1991, Hillenbrand 2010, Hillenbrand 2011, and Mulder-Bakker 2014. In collaboration with Freimut Löser and Michael Hopf, I have prepared an edition of this biography in an English translation provided by Gertrud Jaron Lewis and based on the Brussels manuscript: Mulder-Bakker 2017. I quote from this edition under the title *The Sainly Life*. The edition is prefaced by a historical study written by myself.

(“Know thyself” – Clanchy 1997), and in the 1320s William of Ockham developed theories of imprescriptible natural rights and natural liberty conceded by God to mankind: rights that endowed each individual with freedom of judgement as a *ius*. The intellectual historian Larry Siedentop, in his *Inventing the Individual*, speaks of the ‘birth pangs of modern liberty’ in this context (Siedentop 2014, 281–348). Heilke’s advice to Gertrude seems to be in line with Ockham’s theory that all individuals have the right to trust their own conscience and follow their interior voice. It is no surprise, therefore, that Ockham committed his ideas to writing in collaboration with a group of spiritual Franciscans, one of whom was Henry of Talheim, a Franciscan *Lesemeister* (learned friar) from Strasbourg, and a longstanding *intimus* of Gertrude.² Forms of religious individualisation can thus be surmised for the later Middle Ages; but what of institutionalisation?

Whereas Nederman and most scholars with him limit their studies to philosophers and theologians, it is my purpose to extend my search for processes of religious individualisation to laypeople, and in particular to two pairs of lay religious women. On the first of these, Juliana and Eve, I have already published a comprehensive study in my *Lives of the Anchoresses* (Mulder-Bakker 2005, 78–147, 233–55). The second pair is Gertrude and Heilke. During my stay in Erfurt in 2014/15, as a fellow of the Max Weber College in the context of the project ‘Religious Individualisation in a historical Perspective’, I was able to complete a study and edition of Gertrude’s *Life* (Mulder-Bakker 2017). In the present text I will study these women’s claims to individual conscience and choice, and ask whether and how these were addressed by church leaders. I will pose the question whether they may have inspired theologians and prominent churchmen of their time, and ‘infiltrated’ the institutional Church. It will become clear that, from their anchorhold and their House of Souls, they did in fact inspire laypeople in the area of conventions and traditions. In this way I meant to contribute to reflections on processes of institutionalisation, which hardly existed, and of conventionalisation, which were booming.

2 Juliana of Cornillon, theologian and inventor of the Corpus Christi festival, and Eve of Saint-Martin

In 1197, two wealthy girls, Juliana and Agnes, orphaned at a young age, were entrusted to the convent of Cornillon in order to be raised there. The orphans

² See hereafter.

brought with them a huge dowry, which placed the convent deeply in their debt. Cornillon was a civic institution located just outside the city walls of Liège. It consisted of a leprosarium, rest homes for rich people of leisure, and a place for young children to be educated. It had two departments: a female convent led by a prioress, and a male convent led by a prior who acted as head of the entire institution. Its board of governors consisted of city dignitaries and episcopal representatives. It was not, therefore, an ecclesiastical institution. No vows were taken by the brothers and sisters, and no monastic rule was followed (Spiegeler 1980; 1987).

Juliana, whom we now know as Juliana of Cornillon (1192–1258), proved to be a bookish young woman.³ She could usually be found in a quiet corner, devoting herself to study and contemplation. ‘Semper meditativa erat’, her biographer tells us: she was always meditating. She received a solid education, and learned to read the psalter and the main texts of the Bible. Besides vernacular texts, she studied patristic Latin literature and the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux: she knew his sermons on the *Song of Songs* by heart. The prioress, who was responsible for her upbringing, brought the studious girl into contact with the teachers and students of the schools in Liège. Juliana may even, like Beatrice of Nazareth and others, have attended one of the excellent chapter schools. She will also have received some liturgical training (cf. Steenwegen 1983).

As a child, Juliana lived at the *Boverie*, in the meadows outside the convent buildings, and had her own *oratorium* where she could find solitude. As an adult, acting as the prioress of the female convent, she lived in her own house, separate from the other sisters. Having had to flee from Liège in 1247, she became a Beguine at Namur, and spent her last years in a *recluserium* at Fosses. It should be noted that Juliana was not a nun; she did not follow a monastic rule; and at Fosses she was not formally enclosed as an anchoress. She was an informal recluse. For us studying religious individualisation, it is good to realise that there were many more laypeople in the later Middle Ages who were attracted to a full-time religious life, but also wanted to keep their independence. They lived a lay spiritual life in an urban environment, and are not to be counted as (semi-)monastics.⁴

³ See the *Vita Juliana*, written by a younger scholastic from Liège c. 1260, in the edition by Delville 1999. This edition is based on the ‘official’ manuscript of Juliana’s *Vita*, written in Cornillon c. 1280 and now kept in Paris, B.N., MS Arsenal 945. It supersedes the edition in the AASS, and the English translation by Barbara Newman (1988) based on the AASS. Newman wrote an improved translation and a new introduction in ‘The Life of Juliana of Cornillon’, published in Mulder-Bakker (ed.) 2011, 143–302. For an in-depth study of Juliana’s life and thought, see Mulder-Bakker 2005, 78–147, 233–55.

⁴ I entirely disagree with Elm 1998 on this.

Juliana was often visited by a younger girl, Eve (d. after 1264), probably her cousin. After Eve, in adulthood, had herself formally enclosed as an anchoress at the collegiate church of Saint Martin in Liège, Juliana often visited her and stayed with her in the anchorhold, sometimes for prolonged periods. Eve proved to be a very intelligent and energetic person, who acted as Juliana's sparring partner and helped her set up the Corpus Christi festival. Anchoresses too are laywomen living religious lives on their own. They were usually held in high esteem by the lay faithful and churchmen alike. Because Saint-Martin was a meeting place for reform-minded prelates and scholastics, Eve from her anchorhold could mediate between Juliana and these learned theologians and leading churchmen, among them the Parisian Magister Hugh of St. Cher, provincial of the Dominicans at that time, and his friend Jacques Pantaléon, archdeacon of Liège, who, as Pope Urban IV (1261–1264), would institute the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264.

During the celebration of the Eucharist, at the silent part of the Mass, Juliana as a young adult habitually saw a full moon with a small portion missing. It is easy to imagine that she saw the priest in the choir upholding the incomplete circle formed by the host between his thumb and index finger. For her it symbolised an imperfect church, where the faithful hardly understood what the celebrant was doing as he muttered formulas in mumbo jumbo during the silent canon. She asked Christ what the hidden meaning of her vision was, and received the unsettling answer that a new festival had to be introduced in the Church, the feast of Corpus Christi, and that she had to prepare for it and promote it through the medium of the *humiles*, the lay faithful: 'And you cannot leave this to the *magni clerici*, the leading churchmen.' As later appears from her liturgy, Juliana's overriding concern was the communal experience of the faithful during mass, not just a new ritual performed by the clergy. Small wonder, then, that she could not leave it to the clerics to institute the festival, since they took little interest in the feelings of common believers, and, especially after the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215, when the separation between clergy and laity had become a fact, were increasingly preoccupied with their own *sacerdotium*, the priesthood.⁵

⁵ An illuminating study of the Eucharist and the spirituality it was embedded in is Macy 1974. Angenendt 2013, in his monumental *Offertorium*, 379, gives no attention to the Corpus Christi Office, mentioning only the procession in the streets.

2.1 Support from prominent theologians and prelates of the church

Juliana then commenced work on a eucharistic theology to provide justification for the feast of Corpus Christi, and devoted some twenty years to thinking through the content and meaning of the Eucharist for the purpose of a liturgical celebration. She read many church authors and theological tracts, especially from the twelfth century, including Alger of Liège and Lotharius of Segni (= Pope Innocent III); quotations from their work are discernible in her liturgy.

In the 1230s (when Juliana was in her forties) she submitted her thoughts to prominent theologians and prelates, notably Jacques Pantaléon, later to be pope, and Hugh of St. Cher, the Dominican scholastic in Paris, as well as to local Dominicans and to the former chancellor of the University of Paris, Guiard of Laon; they are mentioned by name in the *Vita Julianae*. They all approved. With the help of a skilled cleric, a *litteratus* who knew how to write Latin hymns and compose music, she invented a complete liturgy with texts and music, both for the feast day itself and the octave following: the office *Animarum Cibus*.⁶ Eve, the anchoress, started to disseminate the festival via her network of female faithful, and collected money for the altar plates. The first Corpus Christi Mass was sung in 1246 at the deathbed of Bishop Robert of Thourotte. The feast seemed on the way to gaining universal acceptance. Unfortunately, the new bishop, Henry of Guelders, was fiercely opposed to Juliana and her feast, so that she had to flee from Liège; she died in exile in 1258.

But her friend Eve did not give up. She had persuaded Hugh of St. Cher, then papal legate, to celebrate the liturgy in person in 1251 in the church of Saint Martin, the church where Eve had her anchorhold. After Juliana's death in 1258, she collected all evidence relating to her and to the origins of the festival and wrote it down in a booklet in French.⁷ This anecdotal history was developed into a

⁶ The office *Animarum Cibus* is not preserved, but was reconstructed by Lambot and Fransen in 1946. It is studied and re-edited in Walters, Corrigan, Ricketts (eds.) 2006. I consider Juliana to be the intellectual author of the office, although her Latin hagiographer writes that the cleric 'started with writing and she with praying'. When he had written a section he presented it to her: 'And what Christ's virgin had approved, he kept; and what the virgin found in need of correction, she corrected herself or left it to him to correct' [italics mine]. This is a bold statement about a female for a medieval hagiographer, so bold that the Bollandists omitted these words from their edition in the AASS.

⁷ Eve's narrative in French, qualified as *Fragments* by the Latin hagiographer and mostly considered to be some loose notes in modern scholarship, was still kept in Cornillon in the seventeenth century and then qualified as *Vita Gallice scripta* by Barthélemy Fisen in his *Origo prima festi Corporis Christi* (1628), a vernacular vita, therefore. See Mulder-Bakker 2005, 120–1 and

fully-fledged saint's life in Latin by an unknown scholastic: I surmise it may have been Godfrey of Fontaines before he left Liège for Paris.⁸ He completed the *Vita* shortly after 1260, just in time for it to be used by Jacques Pantaléon, now Pope Urban IV, to institute the festival in 1264.

The pope wrote a moving bull to Eve, the now elderly anchoress in Liège: 'We know, o daughter, with what intense longing your soul has desired the institution of this solemn festival of the most holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church [...]. Know then that we have established it as a universal feast and that we have celebrated it with all the prelates here in Orvieto' (Lambot 1969).

He attached to the bull an official copy of the Corpus Christi Office, and charged Eve that 'you respectfully receive this quire and that you freely and liberally provide a copy to all persons who request it'. An exceptional honour for the anchoress: but in fact an honour with a hidden caveat. For the quire contained a revised version of the Corpus Christi liturgy; it was not Juliana's office, but a text adapted by the leading scholastic of the day, Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas apparently convinced the pope that the office as it stood was not acceptable to him or to the Church. This adapted office is known as *Sacerdos in aeternum Christus*.⁹

2.2 Juliana's office *Animarum Cibus* and Aquinas' office *Sacerdos in aeternum*: a comparison

What, then, did Juliana write in her office, and what did Aquinas not approve of? What do we have today in the Roman Catholic Church, where we still celebrate this office as one of the popular spring festivals? Juliana's office opens with the

Mulder-Bakker 2011, 27–32. I hypothesise that Eve's narrative in French must have been similar to the anecdotal Middle High German biography on Gertrude Rickeldey of Ortenberg, also written by a female biographer; see hereafter.

⁸ Geoffrey of Fontaines, himself from the Liège area, came to study in Paris around 1270 and became one of the prominent theologians. In circles of religious women's studies nowadays, he is best known as the scholastic who approved of Marguerite Porete's *Miroir des Simples Âmes*. In a miscellany manuscript, Paris, B.N. lat. 16297, partly written in Geoffrey's own hand in c. 1270, he collected, among other things, a tract containing the latest insights into Eucharistic theology and a summary of the reasons why the Feast of Corpus Christi should be introduced. He propagated a form of incarnation theology, with the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and even a rejection of the daily sacrifice by the priest (fols. 237^a-237^b), a position that Juliana would certainly have affirmed. See Glorieux 1931, and illuminating remarks by Delville in Laffineur-Crépin 1990.

⁹ Thomas' office is not preserved either. We cannot even be absolutely sure that he is the author of the text *Sacerdos in aeternum* that we know now, but since Zawilla 1985 there is no longer any serious doubt. A new edition is still underway; I use Thomas Aquinas XV, 1864, 233–8.

antiphon *Animarum cibus*: ‘Food for souls. The wisdom of God places before us a meal of the flesh that He assumed; we are invited to taste his divinity by eating the food of his humanity.’¹⁰ Juliana envisioned a grand and solemn festival, in which the faithful gathered together in church and proclaimed their communion with God and one another, thus forging and confirming the bond of peace and love. She assigned no place to the priest as a separate actor in the drama. He is the officiant included in ‘we, the faithful’. For Juliana, the Eucharist is all about the joy of having Christ present in the community on earth. ‘I am with you always, even unto the end of the world’ (Mt. 28:20). Christ is right here, she sings, every day anew, *cotidie, cotidie*.

Thomas’s message is quite different. In keeping with his view of the *sacerdotium*, he concentrates on the priest.¹¹ ‘Sacerdos in aeternum Christus’ (‘Christ our high priest in eternity’) are his opening words, and the priestly celebrant is Christ’s representative. ‘God chose to institute this Sacrifice [of the Mass] in such a way that he entrusted the *ministerium* of it only to priests. To them it is permitted to partake [of the bread and wine] and to then distribute it to the others.’ The priest comes first, the community of the faithful follow, and individual believers disappear from sight. The messages, and the religious cultures in which they are embedded, could hardly be more different.

It is Aquinas’ liturgy that is accepted in the Church and sung today. However, as Miri Rubin has shown, the *Sacramentsfeest* or *Fronleichnamfest*, as it is called in the Netherlands and in Germany, stole out of the church building and into the streets of the city. As the feast of the urban community, it became the symbol of their communion (= common union with God and one another). It was mainly celebrated in processions and street theatre (Rubin 1991). In short, the festival of Corpus Christi became both an official feast of the Church, with Aquinas’ liturgy, and a festival of the urban community organised by the city council or the guilds and celebrated in the streets, with, for instance, Corpus Christi Plays as in York (Beckwith 2001). As one of the Erfurt fellows noticed: ‘the resulting ambivalence of the Corpus Christi festival seems still perceptible to me. On the one hand, it is

¹⁰ Lambot and Fransen 1946. See Mulder-Bakker 2005, 102–11, also for the following.

¹¹ Thomas in hymn *Ad Matutinas*: ‘Sic sacrificium istud instituit,/Cuius officium committi voluit/solis presbyteris, quibus sic congruit,/Ut sumant, et dent ceteris.’ In correspondence, Father Jean-Pierre Torrel, the eminent Dominican scholar and Aquinas expert, in answer on my questions to him in 2004, commented: ‘vous touchez un point qui m’a toujours un peu intrigué; il y a là une insistance sur le rôle du prêtre qui confine à la polémique; sur ce point, il se pourrait que vous ayez raison et qu’on trouve là un exemple de “dialogue” entre une mystique et un théologien – même si le théologien a cru devoir faire une mise au point et peut-être une rectification des idées de Julienne.’

a very “clerical” feast, the priest with the Eucharist leading the procession, often under a canopy, etc. On the other hand, in a lot of parishes it is a feast of enormous communal importance.’

2.3 Tentative conclusions

Two well-educated laywomen, schooled in theology, reflected on religion as lived in the urban community, thinking up new theologies and new forms to express the religious feelings of the common faithful. They focused on the personal and communal piety of believers, sidestepping the mediating role of the clergy. Juliana and Eve appropriated religious agency by inventing a new feast and disseminating it via lay believers, the *humiles*, mainly the network of women and men around Eve and Juliana. In Eve’s anchorhold, they met with leading churchmen and scholastics.

These women had no ecclesiastical status. Juliana and Eve were just laywomen living solitary religious lives, the one in an anchorhold, the other in an informal reclusive home. They demonstrated what pursuits well-educated and energetic laywomen were able to encompass, at least when they chose a life style where they could keep their own power of decision, and receive the support of the faithful and of reform-minded clergy. Their manner of religious life was a good model for other ambitious laywomen, at least in Northern Europe.

At the same time, the women maintained intense intellectual contact with leading theologians of the day, for instance the Dominican magister and later papal legate Hugh of St. Cher. It is my impression that Juliana’s visions and her activities as a ‘prophetic theologian’ influenced Hugh in his own work. I cannot go into detail here, but, as I demonstrated in my *Lives of the Anchoresses*, Hugh’s support for Juliana is intertwined with his own intellectual development: his new ideas about the Eucharist, and his instigation of the discussion of the nature of prophetic knowledge in *De Prophetia*. Hugh was the scholar who put the question of prophetic knowledge on the scholastic agenda in Paris, and set the entire discussion on a new footing in the years 1235–1236 (Torrel 1997). These are the very years when he was involved in assessing Juliana’s visionary and prophetic theology. It cannot be by chance that Juliana’s hagiographer in the *Vita Julianae* has a long excursus on prophecy, stressing that Juliana’s thought was a product of prophetic knowledge. Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179), the ‘Sybil of the Rhine’, may be regarded as the first medieval prophetess in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, but it is thanks to Juliana and Hugh that this prophetic ‘ministry’ was incorporated in medieval theology.

Eve's reputation as a formally enclosed anchoress offered her the freedom to ensure that the new festival was celebrated in Liège and instituted by the pope. In later years, the priests of Liège started the celebration of the Corpus Christi festival by walking in procession to Eve's anchorhold, thus making her part of the ecclesiastical tradition.

Eve certainly made the most of her position as an anchoress. In my *Lives of the Anchoresses* I set out a profile of the ideal anchoress (Mulder-Bakker 2005, 198–9). It indicates the range of activities pursued by historical anchoresses, and what the faithful hoped to receive from them. According to my profile, an anchoress has to be a free and independent spirit; strong-willed, but balanced and even-tempered. She has to love study and meditation, but at the same time possess gifts of communication. An anchoress walks the path of *sapientia*, acquiring *en route* a knowledge of the Bible and theology that equals or surpasses that of professionals. As a prophetess she is charged with proclaiming the word of God to the community. When necessary she criticises the local clergy. In her anchorhold, the anchoress lives the life of angels. Residing on a piece of holy ground, she brings salvation into the here and now, making it visible and tangible – graspable, in the full sense of the word – to the faithful. She imparts the grace of God to those to whom it is due. She is a living saint.

Eve was venerated as the inventor of the Corpus Christi festival in the later Middle Ages, and her relics are still on display in the church of Saint-Martin. She was a model of the anchoritic life style, which was, as I showed in my book, very popular among pious urban women. Juliana, the prophetess, was forgotten until recently.

If we confine our attention to the Church's own institutional documentation of the Corpus Christi liturgy – as most scholars do – we discover only the one-sided clerical perspective. Because Juliana's office is not preserved in full (as, neither, is that of Aquinas), we have to reconstruct the actual history, basing ourselves, on the one hand, on the anecdotes taken from Eve's *Fragmenta* by her Latin hagiographer, and, on the other, on the various parts of the original Corpus Christi Office that lie hidden in one manuscript or another. Most antiphons and hymns, for instance, are preserved in an *Antiphonale* in the Royal Library in The Hague. And many of the prayers are preserved in the personal prayer book of Jacques Pantaléon, Pope Urban IV.

The practice of studying only institutional documentation means that scholars miss all 'lay' material, and helps explain why we still know so little about religious individualisation among non-institutionalised women and the common faithful. What is worse, it helps explain why we still fail to recognise the reciprocal influences of leading churchmen and spiritual women in developing lay devotion and lived spirituality in the later Middle Ages. It also helps us realise that

searching for ‘institutionalisation’ is only one aspect of our task, which has to be complemented by the search for ‘conventionalisation’, that is to say the study of constant, formalised, and recognised conventions and practices that regulate and stabilise individual initiatives in societal forms, such as living in an anchorhold, the ministry of a prophetess, or reaching the age of discretion at forty (cf. Mulder-Bakker, Nip 2004).

3 Gertrude Rickeldey of Ortenberg and Heilke of Staufenberg

The noble Lady Gertrude (c. 1275–1335) was raised in the 1280s at Ortenberg castle, not far from Strasbourg. In her biography we read:

When Gertrude was still a small little daughter, there was a knight’s wife in this castle, a good lady, a *guote frowe*, who liked to speak of God and our Lord’s suffering [...]. This lady spoke quite plainly and simply of our Lord’s suffering, but the child loved to listen to her, and her heart always became inflamed when she heard the lady speak of our Lord’s martyrdom [...]. This love consumed her throughout her whole life, in desolate poverty and in the humble model of life that he had shown her out of love.

Thus we read in *The Saintly Life*, a spiritual biography written by a female lay author shortly after Gertrude’s death in 1335 (Mulder-Bakker (ed.) 2017). We also read:

Gertrude was taught the psalter at the age of nine. After she had learned the psalter so that she could pray it well, she daily prayed the seven hours [...]. She prayed so much every day that she completed a psalter every week, and in addition said many other prayers to our Lady and other saints.

As an adult, she used to pray the daily hours, and this she did at home, not in the church. These prayers framed the day, and the other members of the household shared in its sanctification. The house became a hallowed place, and the household a kind of ‘holy’ family.

The biographer regularly speaks of Gertrude’s eucharistic piety. During her marriage with a rich knight, she ‘lived in awe and great love of the Lord’ and went to the parish church to hear mass. ‘She would be very devout [...] especially during the silent canon of the mass where our Lord was elevated. For she was convinced that our dear Lord was present then; this was without a doubt certain in her faith’: the biographer takes care to stress this explicitly; apparently it could not be taken for granted; and we are glad to note that Gertrude did not follow

Aquinas.¹² Later, the biographer notes: ‘She often stood at mass imagining how, through our Lord’s presence, all graces and sweetness overflow her. She was well aware that she was granted this through grace and from God [...]. Moreover, our Lord’s suffering was quite present to her.’ For Gertrude, the celebration of the Eucharist was all about envisioning Christ’s presence, experiencing the overflow of his sweetness at the communion, just as it had been for Juliana. It strengthened her in her personal faith and her self-reliance.

3.1 An ascetic domestic household: a House of Souls

After her husband died, probably in 1301, Gertrude seized the opportunity to take her life into her own hands, and moved to the city of Offenburg where she settled as an independent woman of faith. She devoted herself to an ascetic way of life in her own house. She was soon joined by the young Heilke of Staufenberg, she, too, a noble lady and a relative of hers, who saw the chance to escape from marriage by joining Gertrude.

Heilke must have had a more thorough education. She could read and write; she could check data in her book; which means, I gather, that she had a Latin breviary. Together the women ran an aristocratic household, and Heilke guided Gertrude as Eve had Juliana: helping her to master bewildering mystic experiences, putting them into words and implementing them in action. In Offenburg, ‘everyone took her [Gertrude] as a good model, for her whole life was nothing but a perfect imitation of the model and life of our Lord Jesus Christ’. After sixteen years, in about 1317, when Gertrude was about forty years old, she experienced a religious change of life. At this time she rented out her landed estates in Offenburg and moved to Strasbourg. The two women bought a *Hofstatt* together in the patrician environs, ran an urban domestic household, lived as women of faith, and participated fully in the social, religious, and even political life in the city (Mulder-Bakker 2015).

The Franciscans in Offenburg and Strasbourg ‘liked Gertrude’s way of life so much that many friars came to her, speaking of our Lord. She felt good in their company, for she liked to hear them speak of our Lord’. These visitors included a remarkable number of *Lesemeister*, learned Friars who taught in Strasbourg and elsewhere:

¹² Juliana’s Corpus Christi Feast was disseminated by Jacques Pantaléon after he too had been urged to leave Liège. He became bishop of Verdun and travelled to the east. The feast was first celebrated in Cologne in 1264. See Martinet 1998.

She would also ask learned people when our Lord gave her some special understanding that she could not well assess herself. She was not ashamed at what she could not well understand. It seemed to her that if she just let these things remain unexplained, it would have been terrible toward our Lord.

Her own Psalter readings, her conversations with Heilke and the friars, caused Gertrude to have visionary experiences that completely overwhelmed her. She then needed Heilke to understand what overcame her and to capture it in words. Heilke incorporated into her responses the knowledge and insights she had acquired elsewhere. She also regularly ‘re-preached’ at home the sermons they had heard. Evidently, the women held services at home in which Heilke fulfilled the role of *clerica*.

The Sainly Life creates the impression that there was a lively community of discourse in and around the house, one in which occupants, visitors, and learned Franciscans met informally to discuss their faith. Referring to such group-building phenomena, Robert I. Moore speaks of ‘communities’ in which participants develop ‘a sense of belonging together’ and a ‘group identity’ by means of shared learning and discussion (Moore 1996, 37). This holds as true for the household of Gertrude and Heilke as it did for Eve’s anchorhold. Unlike Eve, however, the two ladies in Strasbourg did not choose full-time religious life in a *reclusorium*, but stayed in their home. They had the means to set up an ascetic domestic household, in what I have termed a *House of Souls*.

3.2 Striving for Christian perfection

Over the years, Gertrude became more diligent in her struggle for complete detachment, and *wore Armut*, espoused personal poverty. According to the biographer, twelve years prior to her death, hence in 1323, she was commanded by God not only to live a poor and ascetic existence but completely to renounce all possessions. She had to give away her money, her house, and the clothes that she wore. She was instructed to give up her status and noble identity. The final transition to complete detachment was to surrender her family property. Here she encountered principled objections from her confessor, but was supported by her friend Heilke. How is this to be understood?

It was during this very period 1322/23 that the controversy about the Franciscan ideal of poverty between Pope John XXII and the Spiritual Franciscans, including William of Ockham and Magister Henry of Talheim, reached its peak. A war of pamphlets was waged, one to which Henry of Talheim contributed, and papal bulls were issued (Gál (ed.) 1996, 67–82; Gonzales 2006). Magister Henry,

who had studied in Paris, was Provincial of the Franciscans for upper Alemannia, and set up the General Chapter of his order in Strasbourg in 1325. As we read in *The Sainly Life*, he was intimate friends with Gertrude, *der ir denn heimlich war*. Inspired by the spiritual Franciscans, Gertrude took completely to heart what was at issue in the fundamental debate on poverty during these years. Just as the Franciscans had to exist without property or security, Gertrude would similarly live in *woren Armut*. By breaking all connections with family, church, and city, she was thrown upon her own conscience, trusting her own will and her own wisdom. In consequence – and this is vital for her significance –, she was no longer an interested party to the many conflicts in the city. She stood above the warring factions, and could take action against *unglimph*, outrage and injustice.

When Gertrude heard talk about the great lords who treated the poor with such great violence and haughtiness or about others who undertook and accomplished such terrible things and thus were greatly despised by the people and were lamentably judged for it, she was seized with great compassion.

Clearly here was one of the common faithful, in this case a woman, standing up for her personal autonomy and the right to make her own moral decisions, such as to be a pauper, and to venture to enter the realm of public morality.

3.3 Further contacts with learned mendicants

In the last ten to fifteen years of their lives, Gertrude and Heilke exhibited spiritual insights that they shared with Magister Eckhart. In describing Gertrude's spirituality in *The Sainly Life*, the lay author uses words and anecdotes of her own, but we recognise commonality with Eckhart's thinking. When Magister Eckhart, the Dominican who had also studied and taught in Paris and served as provincial of his order in Germany, returned from Paris to South Germany in 1313, and worked in such places as Strasbourg, he found himself surrounded by dozens of *virtuosae* (women and men), striving for Christian perfection in the midst of their fellow citizens (Mulder-Bakker 2014). His writings and vernacular sermons suggest that he then saw that his primary task was to keep these women within the bounds of orthodox Christianity. He felt sympathy with their ideals but saw the dangers as well; he perceived their intellectual power but also noted their lack of both scholastic training and sense of moderation. He certainly felt inspired by their inner-worldly perfection. He understood that he should offer them inspiring secular models of Christian perfection, and create a path for women's spiritual and moral solidarity within a domestic setting.

Eckhart summarised his new philosophical and theological thinking in a number of vernacular works, most notably in his *Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*. His work is well-known in modern scholarship, and much studied. But women too started to record their insights. Their work is hardly studied at all; it has often not as yet surfaced, and so is not investigated. But here now is *The Sainly Life*. I show in my book that the laywoman from Strasbourg, in writing this spiritual biography in her native tongue, tried, in an innovative way, in graphic exempla and brief narratives, to catch the spiritual ideas underlying the lives of Gertrude and Heilke. In her proven ability to capture in images the ideal of inner-worldly perfection, she also reveals that those ideas frequently coincide with the thinking of Magister Eckhart.

4 Conclusions

Gertrude received a basic education at home. As a noble young lady, she was taught mainly the Psalter by a *grote frowe*. Other girls were taught by their mother or grandmother. Heilke must have received further schooling in a similar way to Juliana and Eve a century earlier. Because women, both laywomen and *moniales*, were barred from schools and academic training, they depended on private education. As a consequence, they never penetrated the academic world of learning or entered (male) institutions.

Together, Gertrude and Heilke set up an ascetic domestic household, in and around which a lively community of discourse arose, and within which the two women and their visitors, including learned Franciscans, discussed their faith. Heilke regularly ‘re-preached’ sermons she had heard. The women built a religious culture in which learned *Lesemeister* and lay religious women inspired each other and developed a shared inner-worldly spirituality. As we saw above, Eve the anchoress at Saint-Martin and Juliana had also gathered a network of women and men around them. At Eve’s anchorhold they met with leading churchmen and scholastics.

Gertrude and Heilke’s home was a House of Souls. In the fifteenth century, reformist Dominican Johannes Nider gave a description of the model of lay religious life in a domestic setting, applying to it the term *domus animarum* (House of Souls; see Van Engen 1999). We learn from this that the owners of such a House of Souls and their company could lead a religious life without requiring any special religious status. Due to their ownership of property, they were citizens within the community of citizens. It is significant that Nider locates their houses in the proximity of the centres of learning of the mendicants. The women evidently

had studious dispositions, and valued their contact with learned brothers. Nider defines the women as lay religious. He does not label them semi-religious and place them halfway between the laity and the monastic state, as modern scholarship often does.

From her House of Souls, Gertrude ventured to enter the public ethical discourse in Strasbourg. Inspired by the Franciscans, Gertrude and Heilke stimulated new systems of ethics and morality that benefited the entire community. Moreover, *The Sainly Life* is an ideal embodiment of a religious culture in which learned *Lesemeister* and lay religious women inspired each other and developed a shared inner-worldly spirituality.

In sum, two types of autonomous religious life are presented in this chapter, types that were to gain more widespread recognition in the later Middle Ages. The first is that of the anchorhold, and the second that of the House of Souls; in both of these, self-confident and ambitious women could strive for religious perfection in secular forms, and in an urban environment. Moreover, in *reclusoria* as well as in Houses of Souls women could give effect to the human right to make their own decisions, pursue their own personal aspirations, and – to a certain degree – appropriate religious agency in the urban community.

Their communities of discourse yielded a lived faith that was founded on incarnation theology, a eucharistic piety that had its source in a direct relationship between the believer and God, and a shared endeavour by learned mendicants and lay religious women to provide guidance to the common faithful.

The two types were never institutionalised in the Church, and gave rise to no official, institutional locations where women could give expression to their personal aspirations.¹³ The women grew into exemplary models in the field of conventions and traditions, there to inspire women and men over the generations. The evidence given here testifies to women's religious individuality, their independent intellectual culture, and their collaboration with learned mendicants to develop new communal festivals and a new, inner-worldly spirituality. In cases where women wished to penetrate the institutional world of the Church, they needed short-cuts, and depended on their personal contacts with leading churchmen, for instance to give effect to their insights, as in the celebration of the Corpus Christi festival.

As I argued above, the practice of studying only institutional documentation means that scholars miss all this 'lay' material. The quest for religious individu-

¹³ Canon Law knows of hermits and recluses only within a monastic (Benedictine) setting, where monastics could aspire to leave the community and fight the devil on their own as a kind of super-monk or super-nun in a hermitage or anchorhold. The Church also recognised male eremitical orders such as the Carthusians and the Hermits of Saint Augustine.

alisation in the context of ‘institutionalisation’ yields only failed institutionalisations; the approach has to be complemented by a search for ‘conventionalisation’, that is to say constant formalised and recognised conventions, which also regulate and stabilise individual initiatives in societal forms.

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Michael Nijhawan

Migrant precarity and religious individualisation

1 Introduction

This chapter examines social processes of religious self-making and self-reflection in the context of precarious social and cultural encounters associated with global migration. More specifically, I examine the everyday life of Sikh asylum seekers who have left the Indian border region of Punjab since the political upheavals in the 1980s and 90s to seek asylum in Germany. When compared to the situation of Ahmadi Muslims discussed in my second contribution to this publication, the success rate of Sikhs in asylum hearings was significantly lower. The reasons for this were that, on the one hand, the category of ‘religious persecution’ was not applied to their situation while, on the other, the state, with striking parallels to current discussions about deporting young male refugees, suspected Sikh migrants to be supporters of militancy. For the Sikh individuals who I encountered in the period between 2003 and 2013, the suspension of rights and the general uncertainty they experienced demanded various adaptation strategies as well as the ability to manoeuvre through social and legal grey zones for prolonged periods of time. My analytic work in this chapter pays close attention to how refugees caught in these social and legal grey zones articulate aspects of the religious self. The dialogues below advance ideas about how such a self is expressed through individual conduct and forms of agency that are not scripted by the standard vocabularies of religious norms or ideologically charged faith talk. The ability of these individuals to act and make sense of the world around them is mediated by the fact that their own religiosity is politicised as a consequence of their social isolation by highly individualising tendencies. When highlighting aspects of self-making and self-reflexivity in this context, I aim to illuminate how socio-legal processes of exclusion intersect with emergent ideas of how to be Sikh. In more abstract terms, I discuss ontological conditions of ‘diasporic displacement’ (Bakare-Yusuf

Note: This is a fully amended version of an earlier published chapter titled ‘Religious Subjectivity in Spaces of the Otherwise’ originally appearing in my book *The Precarious Diasporas of Sikh and Ahmadiyya Generations* with Palgrave Macmillan (2016). The German Research Council (SFB 619) as well as the Canadian Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences provided generous support for this project in addition to minor grants by the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University. I use pseudonyms throughout this chapter to refer to all of my research participants.

2008) that are multifaceted and not reducible to established representations of Sikh religious identity or prevalent claims to tradition, even as elements of Sikh tradition remain a source for articulating sentiments of togetherness, suffering, and resilience.¹

The relationship between migrant precarity and religion as discussed below is an issue of much wider scope than can possibly be covered by this small qualitative case study. What my case study can perhaps accomplish is a charting out of the realm of the ordinary (see Das 2007) that, because of its presumed historically inconsequential dimension, is often glossed over in political and sociological analysis. As this section's emphasis is on new possibilities of religious expression and new options for its realisation, it seems beneficial to trace such possibilities in ordinary language and with regard to the experiences of ordinary people at the social margins. I gesture here towards emergent life worlds and words that oscillate between everydayness and spontaneous articulations. I think about those who, feeling wasted, continue to labour and reach out to others even as they are abandoned by loved ones and about how they still find themselves in a creative process of forging relationships and relatedness to the world. We could say that they are forced to do so but they are also committed to something that lies elsewhere and that something goes beyond the need for wellbeing in conditions of depravity. As soon as we pay attention to people-on-the-move who face the material conditions of socio-legal exclusion, social marginality, and the difficult process of recovering memories of loss and violence, precarity becomes a concept loaded with heavy and often contradictory meanings.

Precarity is a term that circulates widely in public discourses today. It points to social vulnerability, the loss of income security as well as the curbing of individual rights and forms of human dignity. Whereas Standing (2011) and others have understood precarity in terms of a systemic change characterising global capitalism and, hence, the (demise of the traditional) working class more generally speaking, sociologists working on migrant precarity have emphasised the 'hyper-precariatization' (Lewis, Waite 2015) of migrant labour resulting from the combined workings of de-regulated, low-wage sectors and the exclusionary mechanisms of state institutions that curb free movement. In the light of the massive uprooting of people and the emergence of growing refugee movements

¹ When it comes to the social and political contexts of contemporary diaspora formations, I refrain from positing a *deterministic* corporeal scheme of loss and self-fragmentation, inasmuch as I resist celebrating a model of 'the diasporic' to capture a purely discursive form of self-reflexivity. However, I cannot explore here the complex histories of capitalist labour, migration and state violence in which much of the contemporary forms of Punjabi migration are rooted (see Nijhawan 2016).

globally, sociologists have further challenged common categorizations of illegality and quasi-legality as these, in the words of one prominent author in the field, ‘do not adequately capture the grey areas experienced by many migrants’ (Gonzales 2011, 605). The extant literature provides a sound critique of the political economy of migrant precarity and the ways in which those deemed ‘inadmissible’ and ‘illegal’ face exclusion, if not an outright denial of their social identities. But inasmuch as these grey areas affect how migrants struggle in their everyday lives, it is within such scenes of fragmentation, and often devastation, that people realise potentials to creatively re-imagine their sense of (religious) self, person, and agency as a way of surviving, coping, enduring, and showing resilience. I thus wonder how we might look at the relationship between precarity, diasporic displacement and religious belonging.

Courtney Bender (2003) suggests that one way of tracing the meaning-making processes of such a tenuous relationship is by paying attention to recurring genres and speech patterns that illuminate how in ethnographic encounters social actors articulate the generally fluid and often ephemeral concepts of ‘the religious’ in their interactions with others in specific social and institutional settings. This is not just about the actual words and how they might register in an established religious vocabulary, which might or might not be part of the equation. More importantly, we need to pay attention to how concepts acquire specific form, meaning, and affective layers, which in contexts defined by precarity occurs in particularly nuanced ways. The strength of the ethnographic encounter is to make visible this emerging sense of what we can understand and agree upon as the common ground of our relationships. It can contribute to an understanding of how we perceive our differences and how those differences are actually constituted, and, finally, of how we make sense of words and things that might seem evidently ‘secular’ or ‘religious’ in connotation and yet we cannot just assume to be transparent.

I read the voices below in how they lend themselves to such an emerging sense of (religious) subjectivity; that is, for how they become embedded in unfolding relationships in which claims to belonging are of existential concern. This does not amount to idealising the ethnographic encounter. Ethnography, understood here as a critical praxis of theorising cultural articulations, translations and encounters, lends itself to a contextualised understanding of what religious individualisation might entail, much in the way Martin Fuchs (2015) has delineated it. Ethnography nonetheless bears its own ethical and political challenges and is thus not offered as a methodological blueprint here. Living under precarious conditions entails that the very horizon of interpretation and social interactions involves a careful process of negotiating positionality and of assuring mutual trust, commitment, reliability, and sincerity.

Consider for example the following interaction involving Harjeet Singh, one of the interlocutors we meet again later, and my research collaborator Khushwant Singh.² As we were cautious in our initial tape-recorded interviews about how to address the everyday struggles and hardships around migrant precarity, we had asked Harjeet about his thoughts on participating in (tape-recorded) interviews. This is how he responded:

'I will talk about my personal opinion', Harjeet said, 'There is a reason why someone does something. Like when I came to Frankfurt from Limburg today, there was a reason for it. Each person has a way of thinking. That is a personal thing. And if you want me to talk about that, it will be from a personal point of view talking about my conditions only. And it is something else if you want me to talk about the field in general, Punjab's condition, like the percentage of Sikhs coming because of all the difficulties, and how many are coming because of other reasons. So what do you want me to talk about?'

'First tell us on a general level, what your insights are about the conditions to migrate', we inquired.

'Do not mind what I am saying, it is my personal opinion about coming here. For about the last three years, the Sikh parties here have approached me about a dozen times, asking me to join them. Even the good leaders have asked that I join their parties. But I personally feel that, being a Sikh, this is my own mission, it is my own struggle (*larai*), which I have to fight myself, alone. There are many things that I have kept to myself. My cousins probably don't even know about this, why all of a sudden I left all my work and life there. Even my girlfriend asked me what was the main reason for coming here. "What should I think about why you have come? Do you really have a problem there?" Sometimes, when I don't feel like speaking about it, I just stay quiet. You might pose a question that to answer truthfully would put me in trouble, so in that case I would not answer because I cannot lie. And if you have to answer, then answer truthfully because I do not lie. So if a question of yours could cause harm (*nuksan*), I might not be able to answer. With regard to turning the tape recorder on or off, I think trust is bigger than anything else. When you trust, and you give everything you have, then inevitably there can be damage. But one day you will get ten times the reward because there is one thing that is in all human beings, which makes the whole world work, what sustains our relationships (*nirbah*), you can also think of God (*rab*) or if you think differently, you can call it a system. The one who is running the system, whoever he is, he always does justice, when the time is right. And you are the second person maybe, I told my girl friend the first time, she had asked me the same thing. I had told her that until now my answer has always been that, "I cannot talk about this". And because you have come into my personal life, later on you might not like me being quiet, and I do not lie, so listen to what I have to say carefully if you want to hear the story. And it is the same with you that I can live peacefully even without having to say anything. There is no pressure on me. Yet I feel that since you are going to do a good deed, then maybe I can contribute a little bit to it. I will find happiness in this.'

² Interview conducted February 7, 2004 Frankfurt a.M.

Harjeet employed the term *nuksan* frequently in this segment, but he used it with strikingly different connotations. He clearly recognised the danger of damaged social relationships in our research context and contemplated on the potential harm of being exposed as a person with insecure status. He also switched between different ethical and theological concepts, from using *rab* (a name for the divine that is more common in devotional movements) to terms such as *nirbah*, which evokes key tenets of the Sikh Guru's hymns, to repeating English loan words ('system') that invite an immanent frame of deliberating on ethical responsibility. Damage is a real threat and yet the encounter was seen as a potential to open horizons, as a possibility of togetherness, of making friendship even, and of understanding the world better and making sense of the prevailing situation. It had to be clearly articulated that our desire to know entailed a responsibility to respond – framed in terms of the damage it could do to relationships and the reality of a broader 'system of justice' that he evoked. We had spoken many times before about issues surrounding Sikh institutions and Sikh teachings with Harjeet, so he did express here a sense of moral obligation too. Such claims were a common thread in conversations that pertained to specific aspects of the social worlds of precarity, which often have to remain under the radar of public visibility and recognition.

Anthropologist Elisabeth Povinelli (2011) was concerned with this issue, asking how we might imagine alternative social projects and ways of life through the capacity to *endure* the structural violence of 'late liberal modernity'.³ More specifically, she tells us something about relationships to place and what she holds to be the more ambivalent question of one's embodied commitment (ibid., 112) in situations in which one is exposed to forms of chronic depravity and suffering. She poses these questions in the context of her longstanding ethnographic work with indigenous peoples in Australia. Not unlike other settler states, Australia's policy towards indigenous populations has been characterised by neoliberal restructuring enacted through massive economic projects, such as mining, but also through the legal and bureaucratic technologies of managing indigenous affairs and an official policy of recognition. The latter, couched in the language of benign intervention, has turned indigenous life into the object

³ Povinelli's use of 'late liberalism' is directly linked to the neoliberal project of the 'governance of the prior' (ibid., 34). By that she means the technologies of sovereignty that are built upon a scheme of cultural recognition through which settler state violence becomes intelligible and, in the eyes of the state, legitimised. Both liberalism and settler colonialism are, for her, diasporic objects as well (ibid., 38), which means that rather than there being a singular logic of the 'governance of the prior' in the context of settler states, there is an uneven dispersal of how these principles apply to those affected by land theft, land treaty and genocide.

of the managerial order and made it subject to the regulative norms set up by the settler state. At the same time however, when speaking about potentiality and the capacity to endure in contexts of other alternative social and religious movements, she advances the question of where to locate the ability to endure and the will to persevere. Her work as ethnographer is placed firmly within this specific situation. When thinking about such forms of endurance, she doesn't slip into the resistance narrative of the 'weapons of the weak'. Instead she points at a recursive relationship between corporeality and carnality.⁴ This relationship is meant as a corrective to the current social theoretical trend of seeing all material formations in terms of their elasticity or plasticity. Povinelli instead wants to speak to and about indigenous ontologies in a way that accounts for social change and alterity, particularly for those who have to struggle in their everyday lives with conditions of fixation, immobilisation, precarisation, and bodily disintegration.⁵ Let me quote one of her paragraphs to illustrate this:

To what are we committing ourselves if we commit to a freedom that is the undefined and undefinable trajectory of a radical otherwise in our world's scenes of abandonment? This otherwise may lie in shattering the life-world in which a person finds herself situated, but it also might mean maintaining a life-world under constant threat of being saturated by the rhythms and meanings of another. The conditions of excess always sit side by side with conditions of exhaustion and endurance that put into question the neat capture of substance by capital and other biopolitical projects and complicates the simple ethical investment in the thresholds and transitions of becoming within biopolitics. In these situations, to be the same, to be durative, may be as emancipatory as to be transitive. To live the present as if it were this future demands that a social world learn how to maneuver illegally. Those who must hide out within this environment, appearing to be in a time they are not even as they must go on heightened alert because the time they are in is a time no one wants to recognize. (ibid., 130)

In what follows below, I want to explore the durative aspects of spatiotemporal processes, emphasising the embodied dimension of social worlds in which one maintains an existence. I see the circumstances of my Sikh interlocutors as being defined precisely by this durative quality. It is expressed through many everyday references and idioms. This process is discursively over-determined by the language of legal toleration and the sheer inaccessibility to the public realm of debating cultural

⁴ Corporeality is understood by Povinelli as 'the discursive construction of materiality' or 'the arts of material formation' (ibid., 108–9), whereas carnality is defined as 'the unintegrated, errant aspect of materiality' (ibid., 109) or the spill-over effects that cannot be reintegrated into the order of things.

⁵ Note that Povinelli speaks of the ordinary in ways that distinguish how people are situated in late liberalism so that for some the ordinary becomes generalisable whereas for others it does not. 'We can think of the ordinary as the local spacing of eventfulness' (ibid., 133).

citizenship. In our conversations, each of my interlocutors articulated their relationship to the teachings of the Sikh Gurus as an evolving effort and commitment, something that is never finished but requires an everyday labour on the self.

Experts in Sikh philosophy have underscored the non-dualistic configuration of the Sikh self (Singh 2003; 2014; Mandair 2009). Commenting on key texts in the Guru Granth Sahib such as the *Japji* (one of Nanak's key compositions), they emphasise how attributes that are associated with the ego-self in its desires to draw boundaries between the ego and the other and its preoccupation with all kinds of repetition in the form of 'concepts, rituals, or austerities' (Mandair 2009, 370) ultimately work, in the words of the Sikh Gurus, as impediments to realising a state of mind-being referred to as *gurmukh*. Paradoxically, argues Arvind Mandair, while in Sikh thought, 'the ego might be the problem [...] the solution to the problem also lies in [how we understand] the constitution of the ego' (ibid., 370). He goes on to explain the specific facets of this ego-problem that have been addressed by the Sikh Gurus. One aspect is that which causes the separation or duality when we project qualities onto another, whereas one's own cherished qualities 'become the basis for normative reality' (ibid., 371). With Lacan, Mandair explains this as a psychic mechanism that singles out aspects of the self that, as estranged and separated parts, are then projected outwards as attributes to which we must remain attached. This affective process instils a norm of what is good, cherished, desired and, thus, implicitly leads to a self-affirmation by repetitively 'solidifying our experience of the temporal world' (ibid., 371).

How does one struggle with such inherited concepts of ego-loss and the non-dualistic self when at the same time the attachment to material realities and the daily encounter of conditions of alienation arrive through a particular set of forces and social obligations from which distancing oneself does not appear to be a realistic option? I address this question in the subsequent sections on '*sangat*' (congregation), '*dukkh*' (suffering), and '*charhdi kala*' (resilient ethos) in which we encounter individuals who engage in practices of learned spontaneity that defy the biopolitical projects of citizenship and belonging. Whether these take the form of re-inhabiting scenes of abandonment and concepts of spirituality that must remain under the radar of legal recognition, as Povinelli suggested, or emphasise a relationship to community under conditions of social and legal precarity, each scenario suggests a durative practice that keeps the self open to modes of alterity. A Sikh self engages here that struggles with the social and economic realities of the world in pragmatic ways without adhering to 'narcissistic self-love' (Mandair 2009, 377). This is not about utopian counter models, nor do I want to gloss over the differences between notions of sacrificial love (ego-loss) engendered in Mandair's readings of Nanak and Povinelli's attempt to think love within the framework of immanent critique as she distances herself from the

sacrificial norm (with regard to nationalism, a concept that is rejected by Mandair too). The key point is that ‘being for another’ in Sikh ethical thought engenders the image of a non-dualistic self that requires a durative quality: not in the sense of an identity that is upheld, but rather in terms of an aesthetic-meditative-social practice of other-relatedness. This construction of the self echoes a different temporality from that produced by the politico-economic order. Hence, I situate interlocutors somewhere between the two scenes captured above. As sojourners who strive to stay committed to the principles of *gurnat* and of becoming *gurmukh*, their orientations to place and existence carry something into their narratives on contemporary forms of exclusion and the specific diasporic conditions they face (that is, the forces that potentially erode the very conditions from which creative praxis might originate). The commitment to withhold and ‘stay the same’ in such scenes is a difficult achievement that requires both an unconscious and conscious effort to resist the ‘rhythms and meanings of another’ (Povinelli) so as to avoid complete fragmentation or the usurpation by powerful normative regimes. Povinelli’s idioms of ‘hiding out’ and ‘manoeuvring illegality’ are closely related to my own exploration of ‘precarious diasporas’ (Nijhawan 2016), for those captured in their commitments to place, space and religion are always engaged in specific acts – acts of inaugurating relationships and acts that differentiate and subvert the social and political field of belonging.

2 Sangat: discourses on maintaining self-integrity

The term *sangat* carries historical weight and depth for Sikhs and is one of those long-established terms for which one finds widely used definitions. A *sangat* or congregation would originally form around the historical figure of a Sikh Guru, from Nanak in the late fifteenth century to Gobind Singh in the early eighteenth century. This memory is relived in the manner in which activities are organised around the Adi Granth (Guru incorporated in the ‘book’), like the sung repetition and bringing to life of the Guru’s *bani* (speech, hymns). Sangats are always evaluated in dimensions other than mere face-to-face relationships. Being a member of a *sangat* also entails, for many, being on a spiritual trajectory for which the language of the Sikh Gurus offers the concept of the *sat-sang*, an emergent sense of a *sangat* that is better understood in temporal rather than spatial dimensions (Mandair 2009, 31). However, as mentioned above, such terms acquire very specific meanings when seen in social practice. Let me explore this with Harjeet Singh’s voice, as I have spent many hours with him debating issues pertaining

to the lived sociality in and around the Sikh gurdwara. His frequent references to *sangat* indicated to me shifts between a more individualist approach and moral commentaries on the erosion of collective values.

In our interviews and informal conversations, as indicated above, he often rebuked the approaches by different parties at the gurdwara to join their ranks and he instead referred to Sikhi as ‘his own mission’.⁶ In doing so, he did not reject being part of a congregation but, rather, reclaimed a notion of *sangat* on the basis of specific participatory engagements that allowed him a sense of autonomy in this togetherness. In other words, he did not rule out the networked social group that forms a *sangat* but rather considered his struggle in relation to it. *Sangat* was certainly seen to be built on a set of shared commitments, values and cultural ideas, but what comes to the fore in his colloquial speech is a kind of self-reflexivity that repeatedly juxtaposes socio-spatial aspects of how a particular *sangat* has been formed with his own quest for religious becoming.

For example, Harjeet deliberated on the specific conditions facing a *sangat* here and elsewhere. Drawing on such differences became a way of asserting his current position, of reassuring himself of the meaningfulness of what he did on a day-to-day basis as he then still lived with uncertain status. There were all the lingering doubts about having left his mother and siblings behind, as the prospect of contributing to livelihood through remittances and other socio-economic transactions had been curtailed by the conditions of the precariousness he endured: work permits were either temporary or not granted for prolonged periods and movement was bureaucratically restricted by the visa-issuing office. Thinking about and comparing different *sangats* thus facilitated the ordering of memories and moral as well as political judgments. His reflections were triggered by social interactions and transactions in the present, for he clearly felt trapped in unhappy circumstances and difficulties. Harjeet said: ‘There are some real difficulties here. In Punjab for example, you can go to the gurdwara freely [...]; here the conversation is always about legal and illegal. Over there anyone can come and live with the *sangat* [...] but here you cannot keep too many in the gurdwara, because if you do, then you have to figure out who has their papers or not.’

The circular movement of people, things and ideas along transnational routes becomes an occasion for memories to evolve around personal objects, thoughts and policed trajectories. The social and economic debts one has

⁶ The interviews with Harjeet Singh I draw upon in this chapter were been conducted in the period between January 2004 and August 2005.

accrued become enmeshed with the processes of forming ethical substance. There was the sense of fluctuation and unpredictability when, for instance, I saw Harjeet making calls to brokers to secure a day job or to make sure that enough people would be present for the morning and evening prayers in the gurdwara: 'It is never the same people who come', he said, making it also hard to establish a pattern of participating *sangat* members. But the point about ethical substance is not merely one of organising routines, of assembling bodies for a religious ritual; it is rather about honing one's own virtues and forming embodied relationship to others. This is where a common notion of *sangat* among Sikhs is affirmed and where it opens itself to Harjeet's personal memories. The notion is also concerned with the transposition of experiences of *sangat* to unlikely times and places. For Harjeet, this comprised the daily work in the gurdwara kitchen, the informal interactions and transactions in asylum homes, the conversations and exchange of information and support that we observed occurring daily between those with precarious status. It was through all of these scenarios that a sense of sociality and moral obligation to the other was maintained and that he became reflexive of his circumstances, projects and aspirations to belong.

For Harjeet, the religious routine of *nitnem* (daily prayers) was at the centre of his reflections connecting *sangat* to the formation of an ethical self. This entailed taking a bath, then reciting *Japji*, *Jap* and the ten *savayyas*. At sunset, he said, he would always recite *Rahiras* and *Sohila*, followed by the *Ardas*. The turn toward such practice was, in his recollections, directly linked to how ethical substance is formed. As he maintained in our conversations, his 'turn' to stick to a daily routine of recitations, that is, to do proper *nitnem*, involved a feeling of emancipation. It was relative to roaming around hungry with no *roti* (bread/food), as another kind of hunger was stilled. But he also expressed a transitive dimension, for he contrasted the rural spaces of his upbringing with his current spiritual quest. 'Initially,' he said, 'I didn't know anything about Sikh religion or the problems our people faced, so at that time my *nitnem* was just to get up in the morning, say *satnaam waheguru* [repetitive recitation of the 'name'] for some time, then have breakfast, and continue with my daily chores'. Harjeet did at some point join Sikh missionary reading circles and was part of a group that drove around in the villages to preach. His deliberation on the gurdwara custodian in his village, and the manner in which daily life was enacted, was thus inflected by Sikh reformist ideas. If one listened closely, however, it became apparent that his narrative conveyed sentiments of a political climate of fear and moral resignation in Punjab after a decade of violence and suspicion against Sikhs. What resonated in his remarks were ideas about corporeality and evaluations of embodied practice that were responsive to a particular political climate. He recognised that this climate,

in other words the material conditions putting constraints on peoples' abilities to act, had an eerie resemblance to the material conditions he later faced as an asylum seeker. As we talked about the issue of where and how to hold *nitnem* (in solitude or with others) and what to expect from it, Harjeet's thoughts oscillated constantly between a sense of how to maintain psychic integrity and how to perform *nitnem* with a mind for another:

'Today, whatever we do, we seem to do it just for ourselves. According to what Guru says, your own self comes only after taking care of everyone else's wellbeing first. So when I do *nitnem* it should only have an indirect effect on the self, and most of the time I try. But sometimes in a state of worry, I do think about my own wellbeing first and pray to be relieved of the problem before even thinking about others. But the principle rule is that, everyone, not only oneself – that is, the person who lives with you, your neighbour, someone from the same village, city, country, or on this earth – we should think about the wellbeing of all beings.'

He signalled here a form of precarity of self that translates between forms of sociality and ethical orientations (how to maintain other-relatedness as guiding principle) that make it difficult to keep a sense of stability and routine. Surely routine here should not be read as habitual repetition of the same. Harjeet spoke about how keeping up the *nitnem* was contingent on the place one stayed and the social relationships that enabled or disabled such practice, even if it ought to be otherwise. In the context of living in asylum homes or changing one's residence and status as one moves along in the citizenship regime, it meant that the sense of who belongs to one's *sangat* constantly changed. Harjeet only recently moved to what he calls a 'decent home', finding time to stay with his girlfriend in Frankfurt once in a while. He told us about the difficulties of living in larger accommodations with people from all over the world gathered together on the same floor and sharing the same bathroom. They were not allowed to buy their own food initially and received non-vegetarian dishes. What to eat and how to keep in physical shape to get up at four in the morning became important issues. People on the floor would smoke and drink and those in the adjacent room complained about the noise. Upholding *nitnem* in such circumstances became a reflexive practice that was formative of the spatiotemporal conditions of precarity. Spatial arrangements of sociolegal restrictions and classifications, state regulations and surveillance of spaces associated with the *sangat*, and the difficult journeys of transit and entry all represent processes that interfere and intersect with social and religious imaginaries in such circumstances. Moreover, it is a practice through which the self-in-migration can evaluate their own pursuits and ways of enduring difficult situations, even to the extent that they experience a sense of lost reputation.

‘When I think about how I was coming here, they would sometimes make us sit in the forest for two hours, you know. I would check the time and if it’s morning, I would do *nitnem*. Although there was no way of taking a shower or washing my hands, I had the gurbani memorized, so I would just sit on the ground there and do path. This would bring peace to my mind and even give us some strength, even the people with me.’

Here he talks about a situation that occurred somewhere on his journey to Germany when they had to walk for hours in the forest when trying to make it across the border. There were pressures by others to get on moving but Harjeet, knowing it was a special day in the Sikh (lunar) calendar (*sangrand*), was firm to keep up with the *nitnem* and did path:

‘I started doing the *Barah Maha shabads* [hymns by Guru Arjun Dev recited for this purpose]. They got up, one after the other, and started walking, but no one told me to get up. I glanced once and saw them leaving but decided not to leave until the recitation was completed. Because of the delay, we missed the border patrol by just two minutes, so the danger was averted. The others got so happy that, on the way, whenever there was drinking water, they would let me have it first. They would always ask me what I was doing. And whenever it was time to go, they would wait until I had finished. That way they knew they would be safe. It had become such a good thing in their minds. So they liked it that I did this, because whenever I did it, we would not get caught and would not get checked. They felt safe this way. And even after coming here, in my first year or two, the routine was complete. I would do prayers in the morning and evening. Even in the afternoon, during free time, I would do shabad because I am not too fond of television. Even back in India, I never watched television. I would do shabad and memorize gurbani from the Guru Granth Sahib. Sometimes the guys with me would say that I keep on repeating the same thing over and over again and they would insist on me going out with them. But this is how my nature is; even if I am sitting alone all day, I do not get bored. Sometimes it would be hot in the room, and others would tell me to come out, but I thought the more I pray in my spare time, the better it is. Pray or read or memorize more gurbani.’

Whereas this last segment produces a certain aura of piety around him – which he expresses as manoeuvring high risks but also being bestowed with a sense of knowing how to remain unscathed – within the same conversation, he suddenly switched to the fragmentary character of practicing *nitnem*. Over time ‘the system’ seemed ruptured and the recognition he received from others shifted to a sense of alienation and isolation.

‘But now the situation is different. If I am ever at the gurdwara, or when I am in the room alone, I used to keep a *gutka* (booklet with the daily prayers) with me before but I don’t anymore. I still do *nitnem* every morning, though I do it a bit late. The 4am thing does not happen anymore, but I try to do it at 6am. The system here is like that. It would get late going to bed at night. Because I don’t have any regular work, I have not been able to make it a new routine. It is very hard to keep something going without a system. Now, I never know where I am going, Frankfurt or Hoechst or Offenbach or Giessen. Where to go to sleep and when to wake up? The routine is completely broken now. But still I attempt to do it when I wake up

in the morning. For example, today I could not complete *nitnem*. I had to go to the doctor, so I did part of it there. Even if I don't have time to sit and do *nitnem*, I will do it when I'm on the move. Like in the doctor's office, everybody else was talking but I sat on the chair and did my prayers. I would just complete the time that I had left. If there is no one to talk to you, you can do it going or coming in the train. But the evening routine has remained, I intend to do path before going to sleep. That has been there since the beginning.'

3 Dukk: on the material effects of deportability

Let us now inspect the imbrication of everyday speech with legal categories. For migrants with precarious status, the very process of language acquisition and translation is overburdened with the materiality of language. Court orders, doctor's certificates, police warrants, official notifications, which must appear as opaque to the addressee, are simultaneously felt to be bestowed with the state's power to transform everyday life for better or worse. There are the spoken promises, phone calls to resourceful brokers, references to others in the *sangat* who might have a reputation and be able to 'do something'. Sometimes, as refugees struggle month by month, there is a sense of being given over that comes to the fore and manifests in the words that are spoken, and how they are spoken. References to *Behörde* (office), *Krankenhaus* (hospital), *Dolmetscher* (interpreter), or waiting for a *Schein* (certificate or official document) occur as German loanwords in the Punjabi vernacular, signalling ironic self-distancing and the untranslatability of bureaucratic terminology. The Kafkaesque character of the situation was hard to miss, considering the state bureaucracy's notorious suspicion, enacted, for instance, by only granting short temporary permissions and requiring constant reporting, which signalled to those seeking refuge the sense of an absurd transitory existence that Anna Seghers (1951) so nicely portrays in her novel. Yet the transitory and transitive here was entangled with somatic conditions that were deeply troubling, especially for refugees who suffered from posttraumatic stress. One such individual is Gurpreet, known to us through prior contact and, at the time of the research, residing near Cologne.⁷ As a trauma victim his status was contingent on medical certificates that the bureaucracy and courts often dismissed as favouritism (in German legal jargon: 'Gefälligkeitsgutachten'). State bureaucrats are often suspicious of renewed medical certificates, and consider medical professionals cooperating with NGOs as not being impartial enough. On the other hand, asylum policy is precisely designed so that the re-issuing

⁷ This interview with Gurpreet Singh was conducted on February 19, 2004.

of medical reports becomes a necessity for the system to work.⁸ To what extent does the regime of health assessments and the re-issuing of short-term residence permits itself produce a discourse on the self in pain? Gurpreet's story below might provide us with some insights.

After we joined Gurpreet for one of his medical consultations, he talked to us about how his efforts to be granted extensions of his stayed deportation affected his sense of self. During our conversation he talked about depression and the strong side effects of the psychiatric drugs the doctor prescribed:

'The medicine should help me sleep because sometimes I think too much and cannot fall asleep. But after taking the pills, I fall asleep and do not feel awake for quite some time, almost up to twelve or fourteen hours. My body feels numb. It becomes like a dead body walking. The other medicine is for the days when I feel too lazy. Taking that the person becomes more active. He has given me these two. When I tell him that it causes problems, he changes it to a different brand.'

'That's why you have grey hair now, whereas you are actually still young?', Khushwant asked him.

'It happens, if you have to think constantly', was Gurpreet's reply.

His stay of deportation was then being renewed on a monthly basis, which meant that he had to get new certification from the psychiatrist every other month. It is an irony that part of what brought Gurpreet to this kind of impasse was the decision of the officers not to issue work permits any longer. As soon as these permits are issued on a continuous basis, they would give him the legal right of residency. At the point of our interviews, he had been stuck in limbo for three years without permission to work. For considerable periods of time he lined up daily to receive his social assistance payment and get his visa renewed:

'I do not even have permission to go outside of my *Kreis* (district). There's actually a *gurdwara* within this district to which we count Düsseldorf, but in my case they have expressed in writing that I cannot leave the city.'

'It is like you are being treated like a criminal who wants to run somewhere', we said.

'I told them', said Gurpreet, 'that I want to do some volunteer work for the *sangat*, but they didn't even give me permission for that.' [All the letters that were sent through lawyers and community representatives were to no avail.]

'How many years has it been?', we asked. 'And even after having faced so many problems, you are still able to take care of the family? You doing so much even after having so many problems. How do you do this?'

8 There are generally two aspects to consider here: prevailing issues with health from which a person currently suffers (*Kriterium der inlandsbezogenen Gesundheitsprobleme*) and a risk assessment of health-related issues in the country of origin (*erhebliche Gesundheitsgefährdung* amounting to *Abschiebungshindernisse* according to §§ 51, 53 AuslG [foreign law]). Both assessments are temporarily valid and are required to be renewed.

‘You know that in our religion, you are not supposed to leave your family behind. I cannot leave my family and children because of my own problem. If I have a personal problem, I can face it and fight it, but that does not mean I should stop taking care of my family’, Gurpreet answered.

‘And how old are your children?’

‘The oldest daughter is 12 or 13. The other was born last August.’

‘And when did your wife come?’

‘She arrived about four years ago’, he confirmed.

‘And she gets the same visa as you do?’

‘Yes, she and my daughter get the same monthly visas just like me. But my younger son [who is born here] gets a visa for four months. They go by their own will. The director is up to no good. He does whatever he feels is best. He actually said to me that I am the first Indian who he has allowed to stay for this long, otherwise he does not let anyone stay for this long.’

‘He really said this to you?’, we wondered.

‘Yes! And when I had seen him initially the first thing he did was to end my work permit. And I said to him that in my religion, we are to work as long as we are able to work with both of our hands and feet. But he said that you are here on political stay, so you do not need to work. We will give you food, and you eat it, that’s all.’

‘But you still work right?’

‘No.’

‘We know you worked for some time, right?’

‘Yes, I did work before.’

‘You did pizza delivery?’

‘Yes.’

‘How many years have you been here for now?’

‘It’s almost ten years.’

‘Ten years and nothing in return’, we remarked. ‘You know the law they made that whoever has been here for so many years and who is able to work [...]’

‘But yes, that’s exactly why they stopped giving me permission to work. If they kept on giving me permission, I would eventually have the right to get my papers. So they killed my right. They stopped it.’

With precarious status, minor transgressions suffice to get people in trouble. Gurpreet was in danger of violating zoning laws of asylum residency when he wanted to participate in religious rituals. Similarly, the bureaucrats might take issue with having a ‘wrong address’ after he just been relocated from the asylum homes to a social housing unit. Sometimes he had to pretend not to know some of his closest relatives, as their legal status might affect his own. Constant negotiations and endeavours to try to find some way into legality have an impact on wellbeing, especially for those already traumatised. While there are legal mechanisms to incorporate those who stay in limbo for too long, such regulations can, as we have seen, be manipulated. Work permits can be cancelled and deportation slips issued, even if their enforcement is likely to be stopped by medical intervention or through the intervention of lawyers. Gurpreet told us that he once hurt himself

when the police picked him up to bring him to the Indian embassy in Bonn. He feared they would confirm his identity and deport him.

'I have seen how they kill in Punjab and have tolerated things myself. We had the bodies to bear it before, but not anymore. I used to play *kabbadi* (a popular contact sport) there before and now I sit around and the body has become soft. When they hit us, it will hurt more than before. The way they hit you is not normal. No one even hits animals in such a manner. So instead of going through that, it is a lot better to kill oneself.'

There were claims that the police wouldn't allow him to return home but instead abandoned him when he started hurting himself with his *kirpan* (small ceremonial knife typically worn by Khalsa Sikhs) and being admitted to hospital after two bystanders found him in distress. After eight stitches, he was later released, knowing that he could not bring forward any charges. He feared that next time they would arrive with the entire border enforcement team. Meanwhile, deportation procedures would include so-called *Abschiebebeobachter*, who are appointed by NGOs and who overlook deportation procedures at the airport.⁹ Ten years is a long time for a stayed deportation. Until recently, asylum seekers were only temporarily allowed to work as the permits had to be constantly renewed. Children have the right to go to school but adult refugees spend their days wondering what their future might bring. The fear of being deported is like a shadow that follows these migrants through every single aspect of the chores of everyday life. If you go out to buy groceries, the police might arrest you. The psychiatrist resorts to antidepressants to make you sleep and feel at ease but these make you feel incapacitated. You have a difficult time thinking. It is painful to see things in clear perspective.

In Punjabi, the common reference to such embodied states is *dukkh*, an idiom that conveys a prolonged form of pain or suffering and expresses something about how negative social transactions result in embodied states of mind. References to *dukkh* in the Sikh imagination also evoke a state of existence through which subjects acknowledge the idea of Guru's grace. The issue then becomes a question of acceptance and resilience, of seeking explanations in *gurbani* and of seeking answers and responses to political conditions that cause harm, for the teachings of the Sikh Gurus are not interpreted by these men as some sort

⁹ This became necessary after several dramatic cases of deportees' deaths received media attention, especially the case of the Sudanese refugee Omar Mohammad Ageeb. See the detailed report: "Bericht an den Innenausschuß des Deutschen Bundestages über den Tod des sudanesischen Staatsangehörigen Aamir Omer Mohamed Ahmed AGEEB bei dessen Rückführung am 28. Mai 1999."

<http://www.augenauf.ch/bs/doku/chukwu/ageeb1.htm> (last access April 10, 2018).

of fatalistic acceptance of their current destiny. Considering, for example, Guru Nanak's *Malar* hymn, *dukkh* seems multi-layered, capturing the idea of suffering as existential condition, separation from Oneness/the divine that results from ego desires, and ailments that result from unbalanced mind-body relationships.¹⁰ But comparable with the use of *sangat* in my participants' responses, the use of vocabularies of pain, suffering and sorrow in Gurpreet's account are of a political register that juxtapose his own somatic state with the injustice of the bureaucratic handling of his claim and the ignorance the state displayed in letting him linger on in a state of depression and posttraumatic stress.

Hence, when we look at how Harjeet and Gurpreet relate to prevailing ideas of ethical conduct in Sikhism, we notice how they invest these ideas with different meanings. Harjeet sees irony in the fact that current circumstances push him constantly into situations where he puts his own interest and ego-desires first. When for example we asked him more about the personal poems he collected, he said: 'Whether I talk about my current situation according to what it says in the Sikh teachings (*gurmat*) or in my words will be a completely different story,' adding that, 'a *gurmukh* [someone who has overcome ego and follows the Sikh Guru's example] is never in a state of sadness. One should always remain in *charhdi kala*. And these poems I read they reflect how time passes, sometimes they express things that make you revolt inside. So I can only read you their key message, not the entire thing'. By contrast, when Gurpreet contemplates dimensions of the self, it is striking how he makes a concession to, on the one hand, a loss of masculinity (having a soft body) and, on the other, a loss of capacity (having nowhere to go), both of which affect his sense of resilience.

4 *Charhdi Kala*: fragile and resilient selves

I have argued that those struggling with a precarious status and the socio-political conditions of expulsion articulate a sense of becoming that does not simply draw on standing vocabularies of culture, rights, and religion. This is because the very foundations of their relationship to others and the quests for making themselves at home are constantly rendered vulnerable. There is a critical mediating element here. The notion of being resilient emerges from within the specific encounters that I have described. But a 'resilient ethos' is often explicitly cited in reference to the principle of *charhdi kala*, as we just heard from Harjeet. In this concluding

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the meanings of *dukkh* in Sikh theological interpretations, see Pashaura Singh (1998). My reading in this chapter is not oriented towards issues of theodicy.

section, I want to briefly address such references to the art (*kala*) or ethos (in the Geertzian sense) of being resilient. As the interactions described in this chapter unfold in a predominantly male world, the question is how such references to a resilient ethos relate to a dominant discourse on Sikh masculinity and heroism. I cannot describe this discourse in detail but it certainly matters in the context of post-1984 identity politics and the focus on militancy and martyrdom. There is also a link in the liturgical context: in the Ardas prayer, *charhdi kala* is evoked precisely in the context of commemorating all the Sikh martyrs, including those who died during the events of 1984. By including here the story of Rajinder, one of Gurpreet's close acquaintances, I demonstrate that even among those who had identified with pro-separatist politics in Punjab, there is a significant shift in how such an ethos is defined once it is placed in the context of the everyday struggles of those with precarious status.¹¹ The story also provides us with an opportunity to look at yet another common genre of speech in contexts where conversations evolve around filing documents and writing letters to various adjudicators. This constitutes an ordinary activity and modality of perseverance but, as we shall see, it also triggers particular representations of the self, as writing to lawyers, receiving letters from doctors and waiting for letters from the courts is part of the very condition that defines the asylum seeker. There is more to be said here about the resilient self when we consider the kind of connections that are being drawn between registers of legal speech and those that appear as magical or transcendent.

We met Rajinder after receiving a call from Gurpreet, who mentioned that his friend couldn't leave the asylum home because he was subject to a deportation order. He had just had his temporary stay renewed for another month. Gurpreet was quite worried about him, so we agreed to go there. Rajinder was an active member of one of the Sikh political youth organisations back in the 1990s and he explained that, as a result, his name appears in Indian police records. When we met him, he had just trimmed his long hair hoping to appear less suspicious upon his return to Delhi. He told us about how a recent 'gurdwara brawl' in which he was implicated was a trigger for the current deportation slip. I want to briefly comment on how he rationalised his interactions with lawyers and judges as a form of resilience and his unwavering trust that some miracle would occur to help resolve the impasse he found himself in. Rajinder is someone who documented his activities in political exile meticulously, from photos taken during protest rallies to the various legal communiqués with lawyers and institutions. He even

¹¹ Interviews with Rajinder Singh were held on February 20 and March 13, 2004.

wrote letters to the judges who were working on his case. As he sorted through his heavy folder, he took out one such letter to share it with us:

'I just made a request to him [the judge] that said [reads] [...] "I met you three years back and you had told me you would respond in six months and that I could stay here. I asked you to please respond." I actually wrote him two letters. He then got annoyed [...] When I went on protocol [in the court hearing] he rejected my case. He asked me only a couple of questions. These were not even related to my political status. He asked me really odd questions. For example, he asked, "Tell me what type of help you want from us?" I asked him, if he just meant myself or if he implied all of us. He then confirmed that he meant the plural. So I said that, "we want help from you in the same manner that you helped people from Vietnam or Kosovo in the past. We want that kind of help from your country!" And that's when he answered, "You can forget about that for the next one hundred years." Luckily, there were people sitting with me there, who knew German very well, one of them asked the judge to give him two minutes to speak. So he gave him the two minutes. My friend asked him that as a judge what type of a relationship he has with the government; how it is possible he could say such a thing? He then gave in, saying, "This was not really one of the questions, but I ended up asking it anyway." But he continued to ask me a couple of other such questions. After a while I got a letter that my case had once again been rejected.'

At each step of the legal process that involved appeal courts and bureaucrats, Rajinder receives written notice and in turn writes letters, struggling with the material consequences of such legal documents, keeping up a file with all documentations and using all kinds of tactics to avoid receiving a deportation slip. In the process of such interactions and the constant endeavour to manoeuvre around illegality and deportability, he displayed resourcefulness and an almost stubborn belief in the potency of his words and letters. I don't suggest here that this forms a paradigmatic way of understanding the resilient self in the context of precarity. It is, however, striking that, whereas Rajinder was the least explicit in claiming spiritual dimensions of Sikhi as a way of self-making, his explicit political struggle pointed to the transcendent in different ways, assuming notions of miracle and magic. I show this with a reference to a well-known activist and petitioner among the Sikh refugees who Rajinder looked up to for his unbroken spirit. Buddha Singh was someone who, despite a disability, continued in his efforts to document human rights violations and in that manner helped Rajinder maintain a sense of hope:

'Buddha Singh has all of the records. December 20 is human rights day, so he told us to distribute a thousand papers each, wherever we live. Even though Buddha Singh has a back problem, he still gave out two thousand papers himself that day. We also handed out papers. If five or six of us handed out a thousand papers, he alone handed out two thousand [...]. Let me tell you one more thing. There was a program on television some time ago. Buddha Singh said that initially he was doubtful about stories such as that of Baba Deep Singh, the warrior who fought with his neck cut off. And the same he used to say about the martyrdom of the Panj Pyare [the five individuals originally selected by Guru Gobind Singh for their

willingness to self-sacrifice to form the nucleus of the Khalsa brotherhood] and how they had their heads cut but still managed to appear unharmed. But then he mentioned to have watched this program on television. In that program they cut a fish into pieces and put the pieces apart. Slowly, as it suffered and suffered, the fish was able attach its parts together. Buddha Singh said he called the producers of the show and asked how that could be possible. They said that it was indeed possible; we did a scientific experiment. So he found that if the fish can be restored into one form, then God can also re-attach Baba Deep Singh's head. So he can tell you quite a lot, Buddha Singh.'

5 Conclusion

In each of the three thematic sections above, I have portrayed the ways in which individuals relate to their contemporary struggles with social and legal exclusion through everyday speech, some of which was inflected by registers and genres associated with Sikh gurbani. Although this strategy precluded a more systematic analysis of the German Sikh diaspora as a nascent immigrant community, it could be shown that Sikh refugees, who form a large segment of that population, articulate experiences of migrant precarity not by simply employing religious signifiers but by using these as a modality to reflect existential and political concerns. Within the broader communicative and political context of refugee adjudication that guided the analysis in my two contributions to this publication, this chapter shows that moments of self-making under conditions of prolonged uncertainty were never simply rooted in a given 'belief system' or cultural fabric. On the contrary, each individual struggled with some of the inherited vocabularies as they tried to re-evaluate their own precarity and vulnerability.

When delineating the key conceptual pillars for a theory of religious individualisation, Martin Fuchs (2015, 341) argues that such a project needs

to engage with the comparative investigation of self, person, identity and agency and reconceptualise them as contingent processes – processes of self-formation and self-transcendence. Only then will research on individualization allow us to shed more light on the distinction between articulate and inarticulate, explicit and implicit forms of self and identity, elaborating on the tensions between individualization and countervailing tendencies.

This quote relates directly to the ambivalent notion of individualisation that comes to the fore in this chapter, for not only are processes of self-formation precarious by definition, considering that the human rights context is paramount for understanding the predicaments discussed above, but also must we recognise the eroding forces within the broader cultural and social fabric that put stark constraints on religious agency itself.

The heuristic use of labels, such as ‘migrating precarity’ above, only partially captures this problematic and runs the risk of a potential complicity in portraying people affected by the loss of home, family, safety and social citizenship, with categories that have become instrumental to social and political regulation. I have argued elsewhere that the general suspicion against racialised religious bodies such as the Sikh body exceeds the specific context of asylum regulation that provided the backdrop for this chapter (Nijhawan 2016). Considering the broader context of targeting Sikh bodies (see Thobani 2012), it is incumbent to read the voices above beyond their idiosyncratic expressions as moments of political critique. Throughout the text, I have also considered questions of religious agency carefully and asked in each instance what to make of ‘creative turns’ once they appear in my ethnographic setting as ‘noteworthy’ or maybe, ‘too ordinary’. Certainly, the use of the term ‘creative’ should be broadened beyond capturing historical evidence of ‘re-inventing tradition’ or ‘re-signifying religious meanings’. Following Martin Fuchs, I consider creativity as an aspect of interactive and inter-subjective processes of encounter and thus have given it a more micro-sociological dimension here with the hope of contributing to a comparative discussion of religious self-formation.

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Bernd-Christian Otto

The Illuminates of Thanateros and the institutionalisation of religious individualisation

From the perspective of recent research on ‘religious individualisation’, modern groupings of ‘learned magic’ seem to entail a striking paradox. For large parts of Western history, ‘learned magic’ has been a decidedly individualistic enterprise, given that: (1) the bulk of the sources provide ritual prescriptions for pursuing individual goals or desires, and thus aim at facilitating or improving one’s individual life (be it in the realm of love, wealth, protection, harm, or healing); and (2) most premodern ritual prescriptions assume the ritual soloist.¹ Even from the late 19th century onwards, when group formation and sophisticated group rituals came to the fore, the goals of ‘learned magic’ remained largely individualistic, independent of whether they shifted towards individual apotheosis and self-deification, or continued to focus on inner-worldly and purely instrumental matters (see Otto forthcoming). It therefore comes as no surprise that the textual-ritual tradition of ‘Western learned magic’² triggers most, if not all core notions of ‘religious individualisation’ (see Otto 2017), and thus seems to represent an important individualising current in Western history from antiquity till this day.

In the light of this basic characterisation, group formation might be a particularly difficult enterprise in the realm of ‘learned magic’. If its practice is ultimately individualistic, it seems to collide with typical group dynamics, such as the need for shared rituals and mythologies, the development of binding teaching curricula and organisational structures, the institutionalisation of authoritative leadership, and the dogmatisation of ‘learned magic’ by means of selecting or discarding specific ritual techniques or by stipulating homogenous concepts of ritual efficacy. In other words, group formation, as soon as it became historically

1 I would like to cite a recent Chaos Magick practitioner in this very first footnote, Ray Sherwin, who seems to confirm my claim. See Sherwin 1978, 2: ‘Since magick is an individualist pursuit the individual must always be of paramount importance and anyone who denies this is looking for profit or power or does not know any better’. In this regard, I shall point out that many written works of Chaos Magick authors are today out of print, and can only be accessed either via rare and excessively over-priced ebay offers, or through electronic texts on the internet, whereby the latter may circulate in many different versions. In the following, I will usually rely on the latter, but do my best to precisely indicate the online version used (in the references section), in order to avoid confusion.

2 On its conceptualisation see Otto 2016.

relevant (that is, mostly from the 19th century onwards), must have undermined the overly individualistic impetus that underlay ‘learned magic’ ever since. Unsurprisingly, there have been major schisms in major groupings of ‘learned magic’ all throughout the 20th century, such as the disruption of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn between 1900 and 1903, the secession of the *Typhonian Order* from the *Ordo Templi Orientis* between 1955 and 1962, and the schism between the *Church of Satan* and the *Temple of Set* in 1975, to name only three prominent examples. Yet, if we subsume all these groupings under the conceptual umbrella of ‘new religious movements’ (NRMs) and acknowledge one of the most common characterisations of NRMs – namely, that these tend to be generally short-lived, as schisms, trans- and re-formations, or complete demises are the historical rule rather than the exception (see, for instance, Stark 1996; Melton 2007; Cusack 2010, 1) –, then this is not very surprising. So, is there is a particular instability in modern groupings of ‘learned magic’, or were and are these just as fragile as many other new religious movements in the 20th and 21st centuries?

Inspired by this question, the present paper investigates a recent case which has not yet received much scholarly attention, namely, the so-called ‘Ice Magick War’, which led to a substantial schism between different sections of the Illuminates of Thanateros (henceforth IOT) in the early 1990s. This ‘Chaos Magick’ group is particularly appropriate to discussing the aforementioned individualistic-collectivistic-paradox in the realm of ‘learned magic’, and the schisms that may have arisen out of it. If one tentatively splits the (Euro-American)³ history of ‘learned magic’ in the 20th and 21st centuries into a few major currents (‘major’ here mainly refers to historical impact; there are countless minor currents which will not be part of the following sketch),⁴ namely: the (1) Golden Dawn (and post-Golden Dawn) current, which includes various off-springs such as Dion Fortune’s Fraternity of Inner Light; the (2) Thelema and Ordo Templi Orientis current, which later also includes the pivotal works of Kenneth Grant and his disciples (Typhonian OTO); the (3) Wicca current, with its countless splits and branches, including further Neopagan adaptations of ‘learned magic’ (e.g., Starhawk); the (4) Satanic

³ As scholarship has concentrated on the history of modern ‘magick’ in Euro-America or even only the Anglosphere, there is not much descent scholarly information available on recent developments in other parts of the world, such as South America, Northern Africa, or even some parts of Europe (consider Portugal, Spain, Italy, Eastern Europe, etc.). Thus, the following sketch is necessarily limited and open to future revisions.

⁴ Yet the selection reflects, it is hoped, recent practitioner perspectives: compare, for instance, the topics discussed in Evans 2007 and Drury 2012. Note that, even though here divided for analytical purposes, most of these currents are historically related or have influenced one another, thus indicating fluid borders.

current (e.g., Church of Satan, Temple of Set); the (5) Chaos Magick current; the (6) Dragon Rouge current (which includes further ‘Draconian’ orders as well as the debate on ‘Uthark’ practices); the (7) Martinism current (with roots in France, but now almost global scope); the (8) Hoodoo / Voudon current (which includes further African-American or Afro-Caribbean adaptations by Western practitioners) and (9) modern ‘Seiðr’, ‘Asatru’ and related ‘Neo-Shamanic’⁵ adaptations, Chaos Magick is clearly the most individualistic and has, not least due to its decidedly individualistic agenda, also yielded numerous innovative impulses, thus influencing the overall development of ‘learned magic’, or ‘magick’, as we shall call it in this article,⁶ over the past decades.⁷

According to Colin Duggan, the importance of individualism in Chaos Magick cannot be understated: ‘The emphasis on personal experience, personal experimentation, personalised rituals, personal beliefs, self-development, self-conditioning, individual potential, individual creativity, and individual creation and dissemination of knowledge is evident in all aspects of Chaos Magick discourse’ (Duggan 2014, 411). In fact, typical modes of group formation (that is, in the realm of ‘learned magic’, the foundation of an elaborate order or fraternity) were neither considered inevitable nor necessary in the discourse on Chaos Magick, due ‘its strong rejection of the hierarchical structures of other magical orders or groups’ (ibid., 408). In contrast, individuals ‘choosing to involve themselves in the practice of Chaos Magick more often work alone or in loose networks. The anarchic elements of Chaos Magick [...] allow each individual to create or choose their own mode of participation in

5 ‘Shamanism’ entails many discursive meanings but is nonetheless embedded in this historical sketch as it has often been used as a pivotal concept in modern literature on ‘learned magic’, particularly in the discourse on Chaos Magick: see on this observation also Duggan 2014, 100f; for Chaos Magick adaptations of ‘Shamanism’ see, for example, Carroll 1978; Sherwin 1978; Hine 1989/90. Interestingly, the latter relies on Mircea Eliade’s *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1951, transl. 1964) in his attempt to construe shamanism as an ‘archaic technique of ecstasy’ that would underlie much of modern magick: see Hine 1998 (1989/90), vol. 1: 5.

6 Most modern practitioners, not least those belonging to the Illuminates of Thanateros, fall under my criteria of conceptualizing ‘Western learned magic’ as outlined in Otto 2016 (such as Western-ness; the self-referential, identificatory use of the term ‘magic’; literacy; striving for lengthy, sophisticated rituals; etc.). Yet, in the following, I will, mostly for aesthetic reasons, abstain from labelling their ritual art as ‘learned magic’ (which, as an analytical category, makes more sense in premodern scenarios), but instead use the term ‘magick’, which is the main spelling found in the practitioner literature; going back to Aleister Crowley, said spelling is mainly used by authors and practitioners to acknowledge the reality of ‘magic’ despite living in modern secular or post-secular environments.

7 See also the self-perception of Peter Carroll, one of the founders of Chaos Magick: ‘Its paradigm has influenced virtually the whole of western magick with a current of eclecticism and a rejection of the principles of absolutism, guruship and totalitarianism’: Carroll 1997.

the discourse' (ibid., 409). The foundation of the IOT was thus 'more the exception than the rule' (ibid., 409),⁸ whereas a loose network like 'Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth' (TOPY, originally an avant-garde group of artists dedicated to Chaos Magick, the most prominent being Genesis P-Orridge) could be considered a contemporaneous counter-example, or even the more common form of social organisation in the Chaos Magick milieu of the 1970s and 1980s (see Cusack 2011). The IOT is thus a good case study for the issues discussed in this publication, as it was and still is an unprecedented attempt of institutionalising one of the most individualising currents in the history of 'Western learned magic'.

The article is structured as follows: In the first section, Chaos Magick will be analysed from the viewpoint of the overall history of 'Western learned magic', thereby focusing on its contributions and innovations to the latter, particularly with regard to its individualism and its relevance for dynamics of religious individualisation. The second section provides a brief sketch of the history, organisational structure and ritual workings of the Illuminates of Thanateros. Thereafter follows a re-narration of the Ice Magick War and the IOT's major schism in the early 1990s, which will be interpreted from different angles. A Conclusion rounds up the discussion, highlighting open questions and apparent paradoxes of the analysis.

1 Chaos Magick and 'Western learned magic'

The year of birth of Chaos Magick is usually considered to be 1978, which is the publication year of *Liber Null* (Peter J. Carroll, b. 1953) and *The Book of Results* (Ray Sherwin, b. 1952). Yet, both authors had met and coordinated their literary and ritual activities before that date, at least from 1976 onwards, when Sherwin's journal *The New Equinox* first appeared, to which both regularly contributed (the journal's title was a reminiscence of Aleister Crowley's *The Equinox*, founded in 1909). In the year 1976–77, Carroll and Sherwin had already announced the foundation of a new order dedicated to the practice of Magick, the Illuminates of

⁸ See also Versluis 2007, 142: 'One is struck by the individualism that resonates throughout the chaos magical movement to such a degree that one can hardly speak of a chaos magical tradition even if there is an order of "Magical Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros"'. Note that there are other groups dedicated to Chaos Magick, such as the Autonomatrix or the Covenant of the Ancient Ones (see for a short discussion of these groups Houston 1995, 58; see also Hanegraaff 2007, 104), but the IOT is clearly the most important one, operative until today.

Thanateros, in *The New Equinox*.⁹ According to Peter J. Carroll, Thanateros ‘takes its name from the gods of sex, Eros, and death, Thanatos’ (Carroll 1987, 9).¹⁰ The birth years of Chaos Magick and of the IOT thus somewhat collide (even though the IOT really got started in 1986, see below), but the debate on Chaos Magick was much broader and only a small number of Chaos Magick sympathisers or practitioners were ever members of the IOT.

In the following years, apart from Carroll (see also *Psychonaut*, 1981) and Sherwin (see also *Theatre of Magick*, 1982), numerous further authors, artists and sympathisers contributed to the discussion, among them Lionel Snell (see, e.g., *Thundersqueak*, 1978; *Words made flesh*, 1987), Genesis P-Orridge (co-founder of Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth; for his textual contributions see foremost *Thee Psychick Bible*, 1994), Joel Biroco (editor of the popular magazine *Kaos*, publ. between 1980–1989), Julian Wilde (e.g. *Grimoire of Chaos Magick*, 1986), Phil Hine (e.g., *Techniques of Modern Shamanism*, 1989/90; *Condensed Chaos*, 1992; *Prime Chaos*, 1993; *Oven-ready Chaos*, 1997), Stephen Sennitt (editor of the magazine *Nox*, publ. between 1986–1991, and of *Infernal Texts: Nox and Liber Koth*, 1997), or, more recently, Stephen Mace (e.g. *Stealing the Fire from Heaven*, 2003).¹¹ If one interprets their written works from the perspective of the overall history of ‘Western learned magic’, their main contributions and innovations seem to be: (1) the adaptation of scientific chaos theory; (2) ritual individualism, pragmatism, and instrumentality; (3) relativism and constructivism with regard to belief systems; (4) sophisticated conceptualisations of the human self; (5) anti-hierarchical distribution of knowledge; and (6) an ambivalent ‘appeal

9 The announcement ran as follows: ‘Spiritual heirs to the Zos Kia Cultus, the Illuminates of Thanateros are the drinkers of the dual ecstasies of the sex- and death- gnosis. The IOT represents a fusion of Thelemic Magic, Tantra, the sorceries of Zos and Tao. The non-mysteries of symbolic systems have been discarded in favour of mastery of technique. Studies may be accomplished in a minimum period of 6 months and consist of a series of techniques to be mastered by lone effort. Students will then be tested. Having shown themselves acceptable, initiates will be put in contact with other members of the order and more complex instruction will be given. Applicants should write c/o Box 333, Morton Press, enclosing a blank £1 postal order for the complete studentship curriculum and instructions’: See The Council of the Magi (= The Book) 2014, 4.

10 See for further explanation *ibid.*: ‘Apart from being humanity’s two greatest obsessions and motivating forces, sex and death represent the positive and negative methods of attaining magical consciousness’.

11 The literary output of the Chaos Magick scene was and is enormous and can only be taken into account rudimentarily in this article, with a particular focus on publications from the 1970s–1990s. Apart from the monographs just mentioned, there were also the ‘zines’, self-produced fan-magazines devoted to Chaos Magick, which are today only partly accessible via the internet, as well as numerous other never-published texts and thoughts: the most complete online database seems to be http://www.chaosmatrix.org/library/chaos_all.php (last access October 17, 2017).

of tradition', i.e. innovative ways of positioning themselves within an alleged age-old tradition of magick (mainly due to the strategy of 'iconoclasm', which has been described in detail by Duggan 2013 and will thus be omitted in the following brief discussion of each facet).

1.1 Chaos theory

Numerous cultural and intellectual influences underlay the emergence of Chaos Magick in the 1970s, among them the written works of Aleister Crowley, Austin Osman Spare (foremost his *Book of Pleasure*, 1913), Kenneth Grant (*The Magical Revival*, 1972), Anton LaVey (*The Satanic Bible*, 1969; *The Satanic Rituals*, 1972), and Lionell Snell (*S.S.O.T.B.M.E. an essay on magic*, 1974); the psychedelic revolution of the 1960s with its 'search for ever new, more extreme, and otherworldly states of consciousness through marijuana, hashish, psilocybe [sic], mescaline, LSD, and other hallucinogens' (Urban 2006, 234); novels like Robert Anton Wilson's *The Illuminatus! Trilogy* (1975); new religious movements such as Wicca, Discordianism (see Cusack 2011; Greer 2017), or the Church of all Worlds (Oberon Zell-Ravenheart); contemporaneous debates on constructivism, poststructuralism and postmodernism in the social sciences (see Urban 2006, 222–54); counter-cultural artist networks such as Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth and magickal study groups such as the 'Stoke Newington Sorcerers group' (see on the latter The Council of the Magi 2014, 4); and, last but not least, quantum physics and chaos theory, which 'radically altered traditional conceptions of matter, space, and time' (Urban 2006, 234). Of all these influences,¹² chaos theory is the most interesting one, as it led to innovative modifications of the theory and practice of magick.

What Chaos Magick authors took from chaos theory was foremost the idea of 'nonlinear dynamics', often associated with the so-called 'butterfly effect', which was derived from the observation that small causes may have very different and potentially much larger physical effects, thus calling into question deterministic interpretations of reality. The term 'butterfly effect' was coined by mathematician and chaos theorist Edward Lorenz in the year 1972, when he presented some 'chaotic' meteorological findings to the American Association for the Advancement of Science and was looking for a good metaphor. It is in fact fascinating to note that, inspired by Edward Lorenz's works, and only shortly before the publication of Carroll's and Sherwin's works (namely, in December 1977), the New York Academy of Sciences organised the very first Symposium dedicated to chaos

¹² See also the summary in Mayer 2008, 58–63.

theory, which led, in the following year, to various ground-breaking articles that permitted the application of chaos theory to many different phenomena. In other words, Chaos Magick emerged almost simultaneously to its counterpart in the natural sciences.

Chaos Magick authors adapted the idea of a ‘chaotic’, or non-deterministic and non-predictable, universe mostly by relating it to processes of the human brain. Phil Hine, in his *Condensed Chaos* (later renamed *Oven-Ready Chaos*), writes for instance that ‘the Universe [...] is stochastic¹³ in nature. Magick is a set of techniques for rousing a neurological storm in the brain which brings about microscopic fluctuations in the Universe, which lead eventually to macroscopic changes – in accordance with the magician’s intent’ (Hine 1997 (1992), 21). This argument is obviously related to one of the most classic esoteric ideas, namely that there is an intrinsic relationship between macrocosm and microcosm (‘As above, so below’), which now serves ‘to emphasise the connection between biological activity in the brain and the universe’ (Duggan 2013, 107). Yet, according to Carroll, the result of this reinterpretation is nothing but the emergence of a new Aeon, the ‘Chaoist Aeon’¹⁴:

‘In the Chaoist aeon, on whose threshold we stand, a new conception of psychic reality is forming. [...] The leading edge of quantum physics seems to be providing a theoretical basis for many of the phenomena rediscovered by the renaissance of interest in parapsychology and ancient magical practice. In this new paradigm [...] the animating force of the vast universe can be called Chaos’ (Carroll 1987, 157).¹⁵

In contrast to its rather abstract meaning in scientific chaos theory, the notion of ‘chaos’ is here promoted to a universal life force, and thus described in religious rather than scientific prose. Carroll even equalises it with ‘God or *Tao*’, as it is ‘the force which has caused life to evolve itself out of dust’ and claims that it is ‘currently most concentratedly manifest in the human life force, or *Kia*, where it is the source of consciousness’ (ibid., 28). Magick works because it allows the practitioner to influence, via his or her mind or brain, *Kia*, which is connected – via

13 By ‘stochastic’ Hines apparently means non-deterministic: a system in which its current state does not determine its next state.

14 The metaphor of the ‘Aeon’ has been a common topos in ‘learned magic’ discourse ever since Aleister Crowley: see Bogdan 2012.

15 See also Hine 1991, who states that if the ‘Quantum revolution dealt a death blow to the dualistic perception of the universe, Chaos physics will more or less finish it off. [...] We know that the Universe is much too complex (and wonderful) to be neatly labelled into opposites. [...] Anything might be possible, if we allow ourselves new possibilities. The best kind of magick [...] is magick that liberates us from the chains of oppression’.

an intermediate realm called *Aether* – ¹⁶ to the overall life force of the universe, namely Chaos. That practitioners can influence reality through their minds is, of course, not a novel idea and reminiscent, for instance, of Marsilio Ficino's re-conceptualisation of the Plotinian 'world soul' (*anima mundi*) or, a bit more recently, of Éliphas Lévi's Mesmerism-driven concept of 'astral light' (on the latter see Otto 2011, 520f). Yet, chaos theory provided practitioners of the 1970s and 1980s with an up-to-date scientific framework that seemed to heighten the plausibility of neurological processes affecting outer realities, whereby TOPY practitioners even coined the notion of 'neuromancy' (word-playing on necromancy: see Greer 2003, 474).¹⁷ Carroll went as far as to suggest that 'the higher reaches of scientific theory and empiricism actually demand that magic exists' (Carroll undated (b)). Out of this novel interpretation arose a particular focus on extraordinary experiences, or ecstasy, as an important tool of magickal practice, as we will see below.

1.2 Ritual individualism, pragmatism, and instrumentality

If scientific chaos theory provided Chaos Magick practitioners with a novel theoretical framework, Austin Osman Spare's concept of 'sigilisation' fostered a fundamental change in their ritual art. Formulated as early as 1913 (*Book of Pleasure*), Spare's innovative idea that sigils – i.e. those usually predefined 'sophisticated circular or rectangular arrangements of drawings, "voces magicæ" and/or "characteres"' that had pervaded the *Grimoire* genre for many centuries (Bellingradt, Otto 2017, 74 and *passim*) – could be tailor-made by writing down wishes and re-arranging the letters above one another¹⁸ was hardly recognised during his lifetime and popularised only during the 1970s, first by Kenneth Grant (1972, 180f.) and thereafter, with somewhat greater impact, by Peter J. Carroll and Ray Sherwin.

16 See also Carroll 1987, 29: 'Between Chaos and ordinary matter, and between Kia and the mind, there exists a realm of half formed substance called *Aether*. [...] It consists of all the possibilities which Chaos throws out which have not yet become solid realities. It is the "medium" by which the "non-existent" chaos translates itself into "real" effects. It forms a sort of backdrop out of which real events and real thoughts materialize. Because aetheric events are only partially evolved into dualistic existence, they may not have a precise location in space or time. They may not have a precise mass or energy either, and so do not necessarily affect the physical plane. It is from the bizarre and indeterminate nature of the aetheric plane that Chaos gets its name, for Chaos cannot be known directly'.

17 The term 'neuromancy' was first adopted from W. Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* (1983). Thanks to J. Christian Greer for this hint.

18 See Spare 1913, 29f; for a concise technique see Carroll 1987, 20–2.

From the viewpoint of the history of ‘Western learned magic’, the ritual technique of ‘sigilisation’ implied two important innovations. First, it allowed practitioners to produce individualised sigils that were construed according to their personal wishes and desires. Compared to the slavish repetition of predetermined iconographies beforehand (which usually referred to hierarchies of demons and other intermediaries in the *Grimoire* genre),¹⁹ the technique of ‘sigilisation’ thus represents a crucial shift towards the psychologisation and individualisation of magick. If the production of sigils was individualised, so, secondly, was their ritual implementation: namely, through their casting onto the practitioner’s subconscious mind by means of ecstatic techniques (based on either sex, drugs, meditation, music, dance, or other similar means)²⁰; techniques of ‘sexual magick’ were of particular preference here.²¹ As it is here indeed nothing but ‘the mind that works magic’ (Luhmann 1989, 120), Spare’s technique of ‘sigilisation’ pushed the so-called ‘psychologisation of magic’ forward, as it was now systematically applied to all facets of ritual practice and theory, thus going beyond earlier psychologisations of the art.²²

A crucial facet of the ritual pragmatism inherent in Chaos Magick was its systematic, experimental, and results-oriented approach, which was devoid of any obedience to authority.²³ From the viewpoint of the history of ‘Western learned magic’, the game-changing impact of this impulse is, again, noteworthy. Chaos Magick practitioners apparently burst apart the idea that ritual scripts,

19 I believe that Spare’s inspiring sources may have been Mather’s edition of *The Key of Solomon the King* (1889) and particularly Crowley’s edition of the *The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King* (1904), with its list of 72 demons and their respective sigils.

20 See for instance Carroll 1987, 70, on the use of sexuality: ‘As the body goes into the orgasm phase, and in the seconds following, the whole force of the will and perception is focused on the desire, or more conveniently, its sigil. In that brief instant when he is no more, the alignment is made, the obsession formed, the demon bom, or the sigil charged, his will sent forth’.

21 See for instance Hawkins 1996, 103: ‘Spare often charged sigils with his semen, though many of his sigils were simply written on card and held to his forehead while muttering some form of incantation, leading to instant results’.

22 See on psychologisation Pasi 2011 and Plaisance 2015.

23 See for instance Wilde 1998 (1986), 26: ‘I find it inconceivable that so many talented occultists still cling to a perverted, post-victorian [sic] perspective of reality. The Golden Dawn and other movements of that ilk bestowed upon the world great pioneers/warriors (and I here acknowledge my debt and gratitude to them) but one can no longer trudge drearily in their well-worn footsteps, hoping that (by some process of sympathetic magic?) some of their accomplishments/abilities will rub off – if you pursue dinosaur tracks all you are likely to acquire are dinosaur droppings and a few bones – small reward for a life-time’s work. A fossil is not a living creature – discovering someone else’s reality and making it your own may be convenient and gratificatory [sic], but it is also second-rate’.

only because they have been written down centuries ago or were practiced by acclaimed individuals or groups, were to be considered more trustworthy and efficacious, thus paving the way for a more systematic, experimental and innovative ritual agenda.²⁴ In fact, practitioners were encouraged to record all their ritual experiments and results in ‘magical diaries’,²⁵ thus following Aleister Crowley’s earlier suggestions – yet, compared to Crowley (whose ritual successes and/or failures we may never be able to verify, due to the hagiographic impetus of his entire work), Chaos Magick practitioners might have been more open-ended and results-oriented, given that their diaries should record any ‘data pertaining to both positive and negative results’ (Duggan 2014, 407–8).²⁶ Accordingly, Chaos Magick practitioners ‘see their practice as scientific, results-based, and experimental’ (ibid., 406), or, in the words of Phil Hine, ‘What matters is the results you get, not the “authenticity” of the system you use’ (Hine 1997 (1992), 10).²⁷

Next to this drift towards ritual individualism and pragmatism, Chaos Magick practitioners tossed away all those moralistic and ideological reservations that have led many practitioners of the late 19th century onwards to neglect

24 See also Davis 1995, 59: ‘For today’s Chaos mages, there is no “tradition”. The symbols and myths of countless sects, orders, and faiths, are constructs, useful fictions, “games”. That magic works has nothing to do with its truth claims and everything to do with the will and experience of the magician. Recognizing the distinct possibility that we may be adrift in a meaning less mechanical cosmos within which human will and imagination are vaguely comic flukes. [...] the mage accepts his groundlessness, embracing the chaotic self-creating void that is himself’. See further Duggan 2014, 408: ‘The [...] way in which Chaos Magick appeals to tradition is in the form of iconoclasm, which is understood figuratively as the strategy of disregarding the established ideas of one’s predecessors in favour of one’s own innovations. [...] Iconoclasm is the active form of perennialism in Chaos Magick discourse as tearing down existing structures and hierarchies makes way for new systems, cultural spaces, and individualism that can be included in the tradition’.

25 See for instance Carroll 1987, 13: ‘A magical diary is the magician’s most essential and powerful tool. It should be large enough to allow a full page for each day. Students should record the time, duration and degree of success of any practice undertaken. They should make notes about environmental factors conducive (or otherwise) to the work’. The advice is repeated some ten times in *Liber Null*. See also Sherwin 1978, and Hine 1997 (1992), 45f.

26 See also Sherwin 1978, 12: ‘By keeping an accurate record of his workings, when his inaugural experiments are completed the magician is able to review his methods and observe which of them were effective and which of them he might now discard as being of no pertinence. The Book of Results should be kept in as scientific a manner as possible. The magician realizes, of course, that no experiment can be repeated exactly since there are circumstances which he is unable to control (e.g. the motion of the heavenly bodies, the weather etc.) but as far as his own preparations are concerned (the time of day, the ritual trappings, his own state of mind) he should record these as precisely as possible’.

27 See also Urban 2006, 226: the ‘guiding principle here is not “what is the Truth” but rather the pragmatic stance of “what works for me”’.

instrumental or ego-centred ritual goals and focus instead on apotheosis as the ultimate objective of magick (see on this development Otto forthcoming). Chaos Magick practitioners were certainly not unique in their countermovement towards instrumentality (that is, in their pursuing of short-term, inner-worldly ritual goals) in the 1970s and 80s – think, for instance, of the publications of Anton LaVey – but from the viewpoint of religious individualisation it is nonetheless worth noting that Chaos Magick practitioners were not ritually wedged into a system of spiritual purification or soul ascension (compared to, say, the contemporaneous followers of Dion Fortune or the several re-foundations of the Golden Dawn), but allowed and encouraged to pursue any ritual goal they desired, even odd ones.²⁸ Take one of the oldest desires that ever manifested in the ritual art of ‘learned magic’ as a telling example, namely economic advantage – or simply money –, about which Carroll writes in his *Psybermagick* (Carroll 1995, 21): ‘Never insult money or blaspheme it [...] If you want money, then sacrifice it only on opportunities which will make money. Treat money as a major God: for its capricious and awesome power rivals that of even love and war. Money acts as a vast, intelligent organism which lives by occupying the brain of nearly everyone on this planet. Mammon seems far more awake at this moment than many gods we could mention’. Following such advice, Chaos Magick practitioners developed countless ritual techniques for money gathering (many, unsurprisingly, focused on sexuality).²⁹ Pondering this interesting inclination towards instrumentality, one might conclude that apart from the individualisation of ritual theory (through psychologisation), and of ritual practice (through sigilisation), Chaos Magick also implied a significant individualisation of ritual goals.

1.3 Relativism and constructivism with regard to belief systems

In a manner somewhat similar to this individualised, pragmatic and instrumental approach towards ritual practice, Chaos Magick practitioners also adopted

²⁸ See for instance Carroll 1987, 98: ‘At odd moments he [the magickal practitioner] may pick various persons around him and make them stand up, sit down, or move around and do particular things’.

²⁹ See for a few practical examples Urban 2006, 250–3; see for instance LaSara Firefox 2003, 11: “‘But how did you get your computer?’ you ask. The answer is simple: lots of masturbation whilst focusing on a series of lovely little sigils. I started with sigil phrases like ‘I will own a Mac Laptop’ and progressed to ‘I will be gifted with a Mac Laptop.’ Sex is energy, so I suggest masturbating while chanting, rubbing the piece of paper on your body or maybe drawing it on yourself with sensual oil. Let your imagination run wild’.

creative and pragmatic attitudes towards the issue of ‘belief’. ‘Do you know, that there may be no Ultimate Truth?’ figures prominently on the title page of one of the main teaching documents of the Illuminates of Thanateros (see The Council of the Magi 2014, title page) – thus mocking the desire of many former and contemporaneous practitioners.³⁰ This renunciation of the existence of ‘ultimate truth’ had two driving forces. On the one hand, Chaos Magick practitioners generally ascribed negative effects to belief systems as ‘belief is responsible for all the limiting conditions placed on the subjective individual and therefore, in order to break free of the conditions, one must break free of belief and learn how to use it as a tool for the development of the self’ (Duggan 2014, 409). Carroll thus suggests different ‘techniques of liberation’, thereby referring to ‘those which weaken the hold of society, convention, and habit over the initiate, and those which lead to a more expansive outlook. They are sacrilege, heresy, iconoclasm, bioaestheticism [sic], and anathemism’ (Carroll 1987, 45–7). On the other hand, Chaos Magick was influenced by contemporaneous debates on relativism and constructivism in the social sciences. In his essay ‘The Magic of Chaos’ Carroll argues for instance that an ‘implication of the principle of relativity of belief is that all beliefs are considered to be arbitrary and contingent. Consequently, all notions of absolute truth only exist if we choose to believe them at any time’ (Carroll undated (b)).

Thereof derived another ground-breaking innovation of Chaos Magick, namely the idea that instead of being controlled by belief systems, practitioners should begin to control belief systems. In other words, beliefs should be considered as mere tools, adapted to the respective situation, and interchanged when necessary (see further Duggan 2014, 409). Carroll devotes an entire chapter in *Liber Null* to diversifying six ‘random beliefs’ (namely paganism, monotheism, atheism, nihilism, chaosism, and superstition), which should be adopted and adjusted by the practitioner depending on each situation’s necessities: ‘Try each or any of them for a week, a month, or a year. This exercise may save one an unnecessary incarnation or two’ (Carroll 1987, 73–7). Chaos Magick practitioners were quite aware of the innovativity of this theoretical turnaround and engaged in interesting comparisons of different historical explanations of magickal efficacy.³¹

An interesting consequence of this relativistic and constructivist attitude towards belief was that Chaos Magick practitioners became ‘uninterested in

30 Another prominent slogan is ‘Nothing is true, everything is permitted’, taken from William S. Burroughs’ *Minutes to go* (1960). It can also be seen as a partial inversion of Discordianism’s slogan ‘Everything is true; everything is permissible’: see Malaclypse the younger 1965, 88. Yet, the line already appears in Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1969, 150). Thanks to J. Christian Greer for these suggestions.

31 See, e.g., Hine 1997 (1992), 19–22. See also Tegtmeier 1991.

whether deities invoked exist, or whether formal rituals are performed' (Cusack 2011, 142). On principle, any being could be invoked, any ritual tradition adopted and tested for its efficacy, including self-invented or fictional entities or cosmologies. Thus, the particular interest of Chaos Magick practitioners in the latter, particularly in Lovecraft's Cthulhu myth (on which see Frenschkowski 2011), which also served to undermine 'those culturally-indented categorical distinctions which separate the "real" from the "unreal"' (Hanegraaff 2007, 102).³² Again, from the viewpoint of the overall history of 'Western learned magic', the ground-breaking impetus of this move is fascinating. Instead of stipulating a coherent cosmology or belief system which would explain the workings of magick, Chaos Magick practitioners simply filed away the whole issue of truth, thus liberating and instrumentalising individual belief as a mere tool of ritual practice.

1.4 Sophisticated conceptualisations of the human self

Chaos Magick's instrumentalisation of belief systems is related to another innovative idea, namely that the mind, and particular the conscious self, has to be looked upon differently than has been done thus far in the history of 'Western learned magic'. Broadly speaking, according to Chaos Magick practitioners, the average, everyday state of mind is incapable of producing any magickal effects (see also Duggan 2014, 410). In contrast, Chaos Magick strives for overcoming 'the gods of logic and rationality' through ritual and other means, for instance through an ecstatic ceremony called the 'latter day black mass':

'Drumming, leaping, and whirling in free form movement are accompanied by idiotic incantations. Forced deep breathing is used to provoke hysterical laughter. Mild hallucinogens and disinhibitory agents (such as alcohol) are taken together with sporadic gasps of nitrous oxide gas. Dice are thrown to determine what unusual behavior and sexual irregularities will take place. Discordant music is played and flashing lights splash onto billowing clouds of incense smoke. A whole maelstrom of ingredients is used to overcome the senses' (Carroll 1987, 44).

Phil Hine considers sexual ecstasy, pain overload, and LSD to be the 'nukes' that provide 'a powerful form of gnosis' necessary for the 'continual process of

³² See further *ibid.*, 103: 'A preference for precisely the kinds of beings described by Lovecraft – entities that have come from other-dimensional "spaces between the stars" – fits very well with the importance to Chaos Magick of Spare's concept of "Kia", described as "the space between the worlds", or the "neither-neither" realm beyond the duality of objectivity and subjectivity (and hence beyond the duality of fiction and reality as well)'.

Deconditioning’ (Hine 1997 (1992), 43). Hine also suggests performing a ‘Discordian Opening Ritual’, where the practitioner asks the ‘Blessed Apostle Sri Syadasti,³³ patron of psychedelia’ to ‘blow our minds’ (ibid., 26).

According to the Chaos Magick literature, such practices serve two goals: (1) the liberation or ‘deconditioning’ of the mind from oppressive beliefs and thinking habits, which may obstruct efficacious ritual practice; and (2), even more importantly, the achievement of ‘gnosis’ – which is also called ‘magical consciousness’ or ‘absolute consciousness’ in the literature –, as ‘Altered states of consciousness are the key to magical powers’ (Carroll 1987, 31). For the achievement of ‘gnosis’, Carroll distinguishes two different modes or paths, which he calls the inhibitory mode (mostly equated with sensory deprivation and meditation techniques) and the excitatory mode (where ecstatic and ‘mind-busting’ techniques come into play).³⁴ The final goal and aspired state of mind is equated with *samadhi*, or absolute quiescence: ‘Stopping the internal dialogue, passing through the eye of the needle, *ain* or nothing, *samadhi*, or onepointedness’ (ibid.). Carroll claims that it is only ‘during these moments of single-pointed concentration, or gnosis, that beliefs can be implanted for magic, and the life force induced to manifest’ (ibid.).³⁵

With its focus on altered states of mind and the achievement of ‘gnosis’, Chaos Magick was in line with many new religious and New Age movements of the 1970s and 80s. Yet, when it comes to ritual practice, Chaos Magick’s urge towards ‘shattering [...] the boundaries of the self’ (Urban 2006, 253) was nonetheless an innovative – and, again, individualising – move when interpreted from a bird’s eye perspective upon the history of ‘Western learned magic’. The mere re-enactment of pre-arranged ritual scripts from previous centuries obviously ceased to be a plausible enterprise, when it is ultimately ecstasy, or ‘gnosis’, that

33 This figure is taken from the *Principia Discordia*: see Malaclypse the younger 1965, e.g. 39, 89. Sanskrit ‘Syadasti’ means ‘could be’ (Syād) and ‘be’ (asti), hence ‘could-be-and/or-be’, ‘may-be-ism’, or ‘non-absolutism’ (as everything could be or not be, or both be and not be). Thanks to Rahul Parson for this clarification, who points to the related Jain term ‘syādavāda’ in his article ‘Individualization and Democratization of Knowledge in Banārasidās’ Samayasāra Nāṭaka’ (in this publication).

34 See Carroll 1987, 31: ‘In the inhibitory mode, the mind is progressively silenced until only a single object of concentration remains. In the excitatory mode, the mind is raised to a very high pitch of excitement while concentration on the objective is maintained’; see also the table on p. 33, where 20 different techniques are assigned to either type.

35 To be fair, I simplify things a bit for the sake of the argument, as ideas ‘of the self in Chaos Magick are ambivalent and the singularity of self, the essentialism of the idea that there is one self, sometimes in two parts, and that that self corresponds to the physical individual, and to that one individual only, has been a source of contention’ (Duggan 2014, 410).

taps onto 'Kia', thus setting magick in motion. Again, the practitioner is thrown back onto him- or herself, being responsible for his or her own self-transcendence through techniques of ecstasy or deprivation, which, expectably, led to manifold individualised ritual variations.

1.5 Anti-hierarchical distribution of knowledge

Last but not least, the debate on Chaos Magick yielded individualised publication strategies already in the early 1980s, which went beyond the regular and occult book and journal markets. Crucial in this regard was the genre of 'zines' which could be produced and shared by any individuals interested in Chaos Magick. 'Zines' (an abbreviation of 'fanzine' or 'magazine') were self-produced texts, usually in A4 or A5 format, that were printed privately and circulated in low quantities, thus also reflecting an anarchistic or 'punk' element inherent to the emergence of Chaos magick.³⁶ They included home-made texts devoted to theories of magick and related topics, accounts of ritual experiments and results, or excerpts from magical diaries, and often 'a networking section and/or a review section of other zines along with contact details of their producers and information on how to obtain them' (Duggan 2014, 410). 'Zines' were an individualised publication tool that foreshadowed the democratisation of knowledge production and distribution which has become so crucial to the universal success of the world wide web. Long before the latter become the most democratic communication medium of all times, 'zines' led to a striking individualisation as well as interconnectedness of grass-root communication about Chaos Magick in that 'zine consumers are zine producers, and the act of distributing zines becomes the act of gaining access to other zines' (ibid.). In other words, in the Chaos Magick discourse basic communication strategies, too, were individualised, thus verifying the above claim that Chaos Magick indeed represents one of the most individualistic currents within the textual-ritual tradition of 'Western learned magic'.

This finding is even more striking when acknowledging that 'Western learned magic' *per se* triggers most, if not all, core notions of 'religious individualisation' (see Otto 2017, 46–50). Yet, it may be reasonable to argue that there are different grades and strengths of 'religious individualisation' even within single religious traditions (in this case, within the textual-ritual tradition of 'Western learned magic'), depending, for instance, on the temporal and spatial focus, or concerning different individuals or groups that belong to the same tradition. As we have

³⁶ See on this issue Greer forthcoming.

seen, Chaos Magick is highly individualistic in various domains, be they ritual theory (psychologisation; neuromancy); ritual practice ('sigilisation', experimentality, diaries, instrumentality); its interpretation of belief systems (relativity, constructivism, utilisation); its sophisticated conceptualisation of the human self ('gnosis'); or its democratic and anti-hierarchical publication strategies ('zines'). Against this backdrop, it is even more fascinating to note that an organised fraternity arose out of this movement, the Illuminates of Thanateros, to which we shall now turn our attention.

2 The Illuminates of Thanateros

Before we delve into the history and workings of the IOT, a word on methodology is necessary. The IOT is a small modern grouping of magick which has hardly evoked the attention of the scholarly community, so that there is almost no 'independent' information available on its history and workings, apart from texts and accounts produced by the group itself or occultist historians. It is hence impossible to verify or falsify any of the order's historical claims, and the fact that IOT members are not allowed to communicate freely on internal matters, does not rectify the situation. There are indeed order historians (also called 'archivists': see *The Council of the Magi* 2014, 9) who may have produced accounts of crucial events such as the Ice Magick War,³⁷ but these texts are usually not accessible by outsiders (such as scholars). We therefore have to work with what we have, but as we will see there is enough material to scrutinise for the time being.

A basic outline of the order's history is provided in a document entitled 'The Secrets of the Illuminates of Thanateros', also called 'The Book', which is available on the internet in two different versions (2002 and 2014). According to the 2002 version, which, by the way, 'is accepted by all Sections and all Pact members as valid' (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002, 14), the IOT was, in the first years after its announcement in 1976/77, 'rarely more than a loose correspondence network and a few people meeting for rituals in East Morton' (*ibid.*, 6). Until the mid-1980s, the IOT never advanced to a fully operating order with regular ritual (group) practice but remained instable, with occasional meetings at different places and short-term group formations and dissolutions. Peter Carroll (also known as 'Fater Stokastikos' in the IOT) equipped a temple in Bristol in 1982, the 'The Bristol C.H.A.O.S. Temple' or 'Cabal Heraclitus' (*ibid.*), which remained operative until Carroll's resignation (on which see further below). Apart from another small (8–14

³⁷ An example may be DeWitt 2000.

members) short-lived group (The ‘Circle of Chaos’, 1984–87), the IOT as we know it today only got started when Peter Carroll, together with German practitioner Ralph Tegtmeier (b. 1952, also known as ‘Frater U.:D.:’),³⁸ ran a public seminar in Bonn-Ramersdorf ‘in a former cloister in the Rhineland over four days in October 1986’ (ibid., 7). During this seminar, ‘certain tests’ were made with the practitioners and those passing were invited to a ‘Mass of Chaos’, whereby the decision was made to form ‘a new magical order of some kind’. This event was also called ‘The Founding of the Pact’, and the IOT also synonymised as ‘The Pact’ thereafter. In the official IOT calendar, 1986 is thus the year ‘0’ (ibid.). The re-formation of the now re-named ‘Magical Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros’ was announced in another manifesto called ‘The Pact/Liber Pactionis’, which was published in August 1987 in the journal *Chaos International* (#3). The same event led to the formation of a UK section, whereby a ‘UK Pact Temple’ was equipped in London, and to the formation of a German-speaking section (comprising, at that time, Germany, Austria and Switzerland). The first ‘World Pact Meeting’ was held at Raabs (Austria) in August 1987, and 25 new members were initiated (ibid.). These meetings have been held ever since, with the 28th AGM meeting held in Germany in 2014 (see The Council of the Magi 2014, 22). In the years after 1986, various independent national sections or ‘satrapies’, as they are called (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002, 3), were founded, such as Australasia (1988), USA (1989), Bulgaria (1995), Brazil, Denmark, and Holland (1997).

This (hi)story is at least partly confirmed by an interview with Ralph Tegtmeier conducted by German psychologist Gerhard Mayer on June 21, 2004, when the latter did research for his monograph *Arkane Welten: Biografien, Erfahrungen und Praktiken zeitgenössischer Magier* (2008).³⁹ Tegtmeier maintained an occult bookshop called Horus in Bonn between 1979 and 1981 and founded several book labels (Verlag Ralph Tegtmeier; Edition Magus), wherein he published a German translation of Carroll’s *Liber Null* in 1982 under the title *Liber Null: Praktische Magie* (with reprints and revisions in ²1984 and ³2003). In the aftermath of this translation, Carroll and Tegtmeier eventually met and decided to offer ritual workshops together. The aforementioned seminar in Bonn (October 1986) was the first of these joint seminars and it led, as indicated above, to a re-foundation of the IOT, or ‘The Pact’, as it was now called. Technically, thus, Tegtmeier is a

³⁸ On Tegtmeier’s biography see Mayer 2008, 72–8.

³⁹ I would like to thank Gerhard Mayer, who has been so kind as to provide the interview transcript. Additionally, I would like to thank Ralph Tegtmeier for the opportunity to conduct an interview on the matters discussed here (on May 21, 2019).

founding member of ‘The Pact’,⁴⁰ which is a crucial piece of information as in the early 1990s a severe dispute between Carroll and Tegtmeier was one of the underlying motifs of the Ice Magick War.

From the viewpoint of the institutionalisation of religious individualisation, it is interesting to note that the order attempted to be decidedly: (1) anti-hierarchical; (2) anti-dogmatic; and (3) anti-secret. Concerning the first issue, *The Book* states:

‘In traditional secular as well as in mystical organisations we find the form of the pyramid, at the top of which there is a leader or Guru or similar person. The position of the Guru is above all other members and above all criticism. The Guru teaches, commands and criticises those who hold a lower degree. [...] No one, regardless of degree or post, may command another member of the Pact. Criticism in the Pact flows from the bottom to the top. Those in higher degrees must refrain from critical remarks towards members with lower degrees [...]. Every Magister Templi, Section Head, Adept and Magus is assigned an Insubordinate as personal assistant. This assistance consists of providing feedback to the recipient of the insubordination on their actions. The office of the Insubordinate ensures that criticism flows from the bottom to the top. The Insubordinate acts independently from the Pact hierarchy’ (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002, 12 = The Council of the Magi 2014, 3).

As we see, the IOT attempted to overcome or even reverse – through the position of the ‘Insubordinate’ – power imbalances which the founders have observed in other magical (or ‘mystical’) organisations.⁴¹ The IOT distinguishes four standard degrees – Neophyte (4°), Initiate (3°), Adept (2°), and Magus (1°) – and a range of offices which shall not interest us here (see Illuminates of Thanateros 2002, 13–4; the 2014 version differs slightly: The Council of the Magi 2014, 6). Interestingly, it is claimed that ‘rising within the hierarchy and mastery is based on actual magical and organisational achievements’ (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002, 13; in the 2014 version, ‘hierarchy’ is replaced with ‘antiarchy’: The Council of the Magi 2014, 8). The anonymous authors of the English Wikipedia article on the IOT thus speak of a ‘magical meritocracy’,⁴² whereby it is to be noted that a

40 See the unpublished interview transcript with Gerhard Mayer (June 21, 2014): ‘das führte auch dazu, dass wir den I.O.T., den es offiziell zwar gab, aber der eigentlich nie formal gegründet worden war, [...] in den USA, in Großbritannien, dass wir den also dann tatsächlich formal auch noch gegründet haben in Deutschland und äh .. insofern bin ich, wenn man so will, was den formalen Aspekt angeht, ein Gründungsmitglied des I.O.T. gewesen’.

41 See also Urban 2007, 236: ‘The organization of this order was, from its origins, intentionally “chaotic,” that is, antihierarchical and fluid, with “less emphasis on discipline than on enthusiasm and creativity,” in the hope of “calling the bluff” of the “great almighty gurus” who run most modern magical groups’.

42 See, e.g., Anonymous 2017: the IOT ‘was based on a hierarchy of magical ability rather than invitation, a magical meritocracy’.

‘degree raising may occur either at the request of a candidate or at the proposal of the bearers of the according degree and higher degrees. For carrying out a degree raising the presence of at least one bearer of a higher degree is necessary’ (The Council of the Magi 2014, 8).⁴³

Apart from this anti-hierarchical approach, the IOT also attempted to be anti-dogmatic in the sense that local temples, sections or so-called ‘satrapies’ were self-governed, particularly with regard to their ritual practice(s): ‘Each section is autonomous. The autonomy of each section ends where the unimpeachable autonomy of the Pact is affected/concerned’ (Illuminates of Thanateros 2002, 14).⁴⁴ Carroll indeed stressed the need for innovation and creativity in each section, as ‘dogmatic ideas, rigid hierarchies and fixed teachings and beliefs will kill its creative spirit rapidly’ and thus encouraged sections to ‘experiment with whatever techniques, rituals and ideas they please’ (Carroll undated (a)). Finally, at least in the 2014 version, the IOT claims to be anti-secret: ‘The structure of the Pact and the responsibilities of its degrees and posts are laid open in this book. There are no secret oaths and no secret inner circles’ (The Council of the Magi, 3).

Even though each IOT section or group was encouraged to operate freely, independently, and creatively – thus mirroring the individualist agenda of Chaos Magick as outlined above –, there were, of course, standardised scripts for individual as well as group rituals. Particularly for the first degree, the Neophyte (4°), a summary of basic techniques is provided in a document called *Liber MMM*, which was already included in Carroll’s *Liber Null* (see Carroll 1987, 12–25), but now also circulates independently on the internet.⁴⁵ It includes instructions on mind control, visualisation techniques, sigilisation, and dream control or

43 See also the overview in Woodman forthcoming: ‘Whilst adherents emphasise the individualistic, anti-dogmatic and anti-structural nature of Chaos magic, the IOT replicates aspects of the initiatory and hierarchical grade structures common to Western esoteric sodalities. Nominally under the authority of “The Council of Magi”, the IOT is comprised of quasi-autonomous “Temples” and its formal degree structure is subverted by inclusion of the ritual office of “the Insubordinate” (whose role is to contest abuses of power within Temple hierarchies). Temples do, however, perform institutionally-shared rituals, including “The Mass of Chaos B”, an invocation of Baphomet, who is seen as the mystical figurehead of the organisation, embodying the “current” of Chaos magic’.

44 Again, the 2014 version slightly differs: ‘The rules and procedures described in this Book are valid on a global level throughout all Sections. All Sections are otherwise autonomous. Every Section may add rules and procedures as it is considered necessary by the Section’ (The Council of the Magi 2014, 2).

45 See, for instance, <http://www.chaosmatrix.org/library/chaos/texts/libermmm.pdf> (last access November 14, 2017).

divination.⁴⁶ Concerning group rituals, various scripts are outlined in Carroll's *Psychonaut*, such as the five 'Rites of Chaos' of which the 'Mass of Chaos' seems to be the most important one. This group ritual is performed to raise 'a particular manifestation of energy for inspiration, divination, or communion with particular domains of consciousness', but also to 'modify physical reality' (ibid., 130), and consists of six steps, which revolve around group invocations of Chaos (here understood as an entity)⁴⁷ and Baphomet (understood as 'the representation of the terrestrial life-current': ibid., 131). Against the backdrop of the individualist agenda of Chaos Magick, it is interesting to read here that the

'purpose of structuring group activity with ritual is to generate more power than individual efforts might achieve. Synergistic effects will come into play in a properly synchronised working, and the collective power will exceed the sum of individual powers participating. Group working also makes possible many experiments requiring more than one operator and allows for a division of labor when some participants can contribute abilities which others lack' (ibid., 117).

Yet at the same time, Carroll stresses that any group ritual should be experimental and research-like, as it would otherwise be 'unnecessary to do it' (ibid.). In other words, there are tendencies of ritual standardisation within the IOT, but the experimental, creative and individualist agenda prevails even here.⁴⁸

As we will see shortly, it is precisely the anti-hierarchical, anti-dogmatic, individualist and experimental agenda of the IOT which may have fostered developments that led to its schism in the early 1990s. This may not be utterly surprising: 'After all, an organised movement of Chaos Magic is inherently contradictory and could only logically end by dismantling itself in its own act of total liberation' (Urban 2007, 243).⁴⁹ In fact, already around 1986 Ray Sherwin resigned from the order, that is, he 'excommunicated himself because he felt that the Order was slipping into the power structure that he had intended to avoid with this group' (Hawkins undated; see also Woodman forthcoming). In a similar vein, Peter

46 Another document called *The Book of the Novice* outlines 11 basic ritual techniques for beginners, which are a bit more precise and also includes a chapter 'magical weapons' and banishing rituals as well as the suggestion to find a mentor: see The Council of the Magi 2014, appendix (16–8).

47 See ibid., 130: 'I Reign Over You Saith | The Dragon Eagle of the Primal Chaos | I Am the First the Highest That Live In the First Aether' etc.

48 See for some interesting descriptions of group rituals DeWitt 2000.

49 See also Anonymous undated (a): 'Das Vorhandensein einer Hierarchie im IOT hat viel Streit über ihn in der chaosmagischen Szene verursacht. Gegner denken, dass das Konzept un-chaotisch sei und einzelne Mitglieder einschränke, während Befürworter glauben, der geringere Chaosismus mache wesentlich effektivere Gruppenarbeit vor allem in internationalem Maßstab möglich'.

Carroll backed out from the IOT shortly after the Ice Magick War, though it was only in 2016 that he ‘publicly announced withdrawal of support for the organisation’ (Woodman forthcoming).

Apart from these resignations by (both) founding figures of the group, it is particularly the Ice Magick War which may have revealed the weak spot, or Achilles’ heel, of the IOT. It is thus time to discuss the IOT’s major schism and the events that preceded and followed in the early 1990s.

3 The Ice Magick War

In all wars, there are at least two sides to the story, and this is equally true in the case of the Ice Magick War. There are several sources for the conflict authored by protagonists (such as Carroll and Tegtmeier), and these, as we might expect, differ in their respective narrations and interpretations. But before delving into the story and its interpretations, we should first understand how modern practitioners of magick actually engage in war, that is, how they do battle. After all, we may suspect that they have more nuanced weapons at their disposal than fists, knives or firearms. A brief detour into modern ‘battle magick’ may also help to understand what actually happened during the Ice Magick War.⁵⁰

Let us start with two texts on ‘battle magick’, authored by Peter Carroll and Ralph Tegtmeier, respectively. In the chapter on ‘magical combat’ in Carroll’s *Psychonaut*, he states that ‘Magical attack takes two forms. At long range, telepathic information is sent which makes the target destroy itself. To make a man fall under a vehicle is not impossible; to make a vehicle fall on top of a man is something else entirely. At short range, it is possible to injure or drain an adversary’s energy field using one’s own. This demands close proximity, usually contact. Magical close combat of this type is not effected by mere will or visualisation, but by projecting a force that can actually be felt, usually through the hands’ (Carroll 1987, 125). The theoretical approach is again mostly psychological, even though he also refers to the invocation of entities for attacking – ‘A skilled sorcerer may succeed in projecting a purely aetheric entity across space to harass his opponent’ (ibid., 126) – and for defensive purposes: ‘The most effective defenses are provided by sentient or semi-sentient entities’ (ibid., 127). When it comes to the use of ritual artefacts, we find an interesting list of quite stereotypical elements – ‘The image of the target wounded in the required manner is used to send the

⁵⁰ I have adopted the term ‘battle magick’ from the practitioner literature, even though, of course, much of what it covers had previously been labelled ‘black magic’.

attack. Wax images, photographs, hair, or nail pairings help to form a connection between the visualised image and the target' (ibid., 126). Here, again, the attack is mostly a matter of the projection of 'psychic energy': 'the attack is launched from a state of deepest concentration or from a pinnacle of ecstatic excitement. Hate and anger aroused during a full ritual destruction of the image may serve' (ibid.). Carroll does mention the dangers involved in malevolent magick ('It is the height of un wisdom to enter into situations where conflict is the only option left. Magical attack is the direct opposite of occult healing, though it uses similar forces. As with all things, constructive activities are a far greater challenge to our skills than destructive ones': ibid., 127), but his approach is quite pragmatic and far from being moralistic.

Ralph Tegtmeier, in a chapter on 'Kampfmagie' in his *Die Hohe Kunst der Magie* (2011 II: 564–79), claims accordingly that a fully-fledged battle between practising magicians is the rare exception, as it spins out high amounts of energy; yet, there are also unconscious threats and attacks derived from emotions such as hate, envy or jealousy which call for sufficient knowledge of protective measures (Tegtmeier 2011, 565). Tegtmeier calls into question the 'myth', widely spread in modern esoteric and 'white magic' discourses, that the negative energy of malevolent magick ultimately falls back onto its arouser, claiming that this would be nothing but a misleading Judaeo-Christian imprint.⁵¹ He provides a disturbing list of some 17 effects of successful magickal attacks, based on those instances in which he was able to verify that magick was indeed responsible (ibid., 574). There are some further reflections on defence, the deployment of psycho-terror, and 'micro-magic' (the use of figurines or magickal weapons), but Tegtmeier does not provide any detailed ritual prescriptions, apart from basic partner exercises that aim at sharpening one's senses (ibid., 577–9). Tegtmeier provides a few more specific instructions in his brief articles on 'Kampfmagie' published in 1986–7 in

51 Ibid., 569: 'Fataler ist allerdings die Sicherheit, in die der Esoteriker damit gewiegt werden soll: Denn nichts wäre falscher als die Annahme, daß man vor kampfmagischen Aktionen anderer allein schon deshalb geschützt sei, weil irgendein göttliches Vergeltungsprinzip die Bösen schon bestrafen werde. Abgesehen davon, daß es selbst in einem solchen Fall alles andere als wünschenswert wäre, erst zum Opfer zu werden, um sich dann – möglicherweise auch noch posthum! – an der Bestrafung der Bösewichter zu erfreuen, verkennt diese Spießeridylle leider die Grundmechanismen, nach denen die Kampfmagie funktioniert. Tatsächlich läßt sich zwar recht häufig beobachten, daß Magier, die einen Angriff gegen andere starten, mit plötzlichen Rückstößen (im Fachjargon: "Reperkussionen") zu kämpfen haben, doch beweisen andererseits die vielen erfolgreichen Schadensmagier, daß dies wohl kaum an irgendeinem die Schwachen schützenden "Naturgesetz" liegen kann'. See also Tegtmeier 1986, 36.

Anubis (issues 3–5), which were partly inspired by Peter Carroll’s previous writings on the matter.⁵²

Before delving into the Ice Magick War itself, another brief detour on ‘Eismagie’ is necessary, given that it is the name-giver of the events discussed in the following. *Eismagie* is the title of a short booklet published by Tegtmeier in 1996, i.e., years after the schism of the IOT. *Eismagie* is a highly sophisticated discussion of human reality that is sometimes hard to digest, not least due to its narrative style (the text uses plenty of unusual German terminology, partly invented for the purposes of the argument). It is mostly an essay on what it might actually mean to be a ‘magician’ if ‘magic’ were to imply *really* doing the impossible.⁵³ Apart from one practical ‘arrangement’ (‘anordnung’), to be performed once in a lifetime, which consists of lying on the ground – as motionless as possible – for eight hours and marking down one’s experiences thereafter (Tegtmeier 1996, 37–39), and an uncommented list of bodily and linguistic exercises for the first degree or ‘Laborstufe’ (ibid., 78–84), there are no ritual scripts provided in the 84-page book. ‘Ice Magic’, at least as Tegtmeier conceptualises it here, rather seems to be a philosophical or even phenomenological attempt to fundamentally

52 See for instance Tegtmeier 1986, 38. Anton La Vey, in his *Satanic Bible*, is also quite transparent regarding the precise performance of malevolent rituals: see LaVey 1976 (1969), 63f.

53 See Tegtmeier 1996, 5. For the German reader, and for the purpose of understanding the difficulty of the text, I shall quote the entire first paragraph of chapter 1, despite feeling incapable of offering any sensible translation (note that Tegtmeier uses small letters throughout the entire book): ‘reduziert auf ihre kernaussage – und “reduziert” meint hier: unter außerachtlassung der kulturüblichen verbrämungen, folkloristischen schnörkel, verkennungen und mehr oder weniger wohlformulierten ausflüchte – besagen alle gängigen definitionen, wenn auch nur ahnungsweise, daß “magie” bedeutet, unmögliches zu tun. wir wollen das hier ganz wörtlich nehmen: “unmögliches” heißt also nicht, “(vorläufig) für unmöglich gehaltenes”, denn damit erschöpfte sich jede begehung in den zirkelschlüssen bloßer mutmaßung. (hier, wie so oft – das werden wir noch sehen –, bietet die sprache einen nutzbaren fingerzeig: eine mutmaßung ist ein akt, durch den der eigene mut – genauer, das fehlen oder die beschränktheit desselben – zum maß der dinge gemacht wird. sicherlich läßt sich beispielsweise die position vertreten, daß man es für durchaus wünschenswert hielte, wenn es keine unmöglichkeiten gäbe; es aber a priori anzunehmen, daß dem so sei, kündigt lediglich von mangelnder streitbereitschaft gegenüber der eigenen ohnmacht). zwar ist der reflex, der unzuverlässigkeit aller aussagen den vorzug zu geben (“wie kann man behaupten, daß etwas unmöglich sei, da solche anmutungen in der vergangenheit doch immer wieder von der wirklichkeit überholt wurden?”), prinzipiell instinktsicher. doch werden wir an späterer stelle in einiger gründlichkeit ausführen, daß es im sinne dessen, was hier als “eismagie” noch zu definieren und entwickeln ist, zugriffsbefestigendere herangehensweisen an die problematik gibt als die der resignativen, achselzuckenden anpassung an die unhaltbarkeit schematischer konturierungsstrategien’. For some English reflections on the matter, see Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006.

change the practitioner's perception of reality,⁵⁴ particularly against the backdrop of Tegtmeier's claim that 'Ohnmacht' (powerlessness) is necessarily and inevitably the basic state of affairs in human life.⁵⁵ To be fair, the book only provides a basic outline of 'Eismagie' and rarely dips into the practical side of the art, the encounter of which seems to be reserved for workshop-participants and personal disciples.⁵⁶ It is worth mentioning, however, that there is certainly no right-wing, fascist or 'völkisch' ideology present in the work. Tegtmeier does his best to emphasise that 'ice' implies neither geographical nor ideological connotations or preferences but is used as a mere metaphor for something 'that actually does not exist'.⁵⁷ He even engages, presumably from a perspective of hindsight on the Ice Magick War, in a lengthy apology on the matter.⁵⁸

54 See also the summary in Mayer 2008, 61–3.

55 See for instance Tegtmeier 1996, 16: "wirklichkeit" ist in ihrer urbedeutung "das, was wirkung ausübt". was aber wirkt, ist dadurch mächtiger als der empfänger oder erleider dieser wirkung. im allgemeinen hat der mensch sich evolution gegenüber anderen lebensformen als überlegener anpassungskünstler erwiesen. In unserem zusammenhang aber bedeutet das nur, daß er sich mit seiner ohnmacht arrangiert, also abgefunden hat. nicht so der zauberer: will er unmögliches tun, kann er sich weder mit der wirklichkeit begnügen noch sich mit ihr arrangieren. tatsächlich ist die magie im hier entwickelten sinne ein "totalangriff auf die wirklichkeit" (genau genommen sogar der einzige).

56 Tegtmeier provides a concise outline of 'Eismagie' in his translation of John Michael Greer's *The New Encyclopedia of the Occult* (Engl. 2003; Tegtmeier added a range of self-penned articles to his translation of the German *Enzyklopädie der Geheimlehren* [2005], such as that referred to here), in which he points to further definitions of 'Eismagie': 'Magie ist die Kunst, die eigenen Interessen ohne Bedingungen, Hilfsmittel und Ausschmückungen durchzusetzen'; 'Es geht darum, die Reichweite vorbehaltlos *auszuschöpfen* – nicht versuchen, mehr zu tun, als man kann, sondern sich darum bemühen, nicht weniger zu tun, als in der eigenen Reichweite liegt'; 'Magie ist die Erschließung zielentlassener, hochdifferenziert nutzbarer Flachpotenziale': Tegtmeier 2005.

57 See, for example, *ibid.*, 22: 'halten wir noch einmal fest, daß es sich beim "eis" im hier verwendeten sinn also um etwas handelt, das es grundsätzlich nicht gibt, folglich um etwas allenfalls herzustellendes oder, genauer, durchzusetzendes'. See also Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006.

58 Tegtmeier 1996, 75: 'gerade dieser letzte Punkt wurde in der Vergangenheit von einschlägig interessierten kreisen in absichtlichem mißverständnis und als manipulative taktik dazu benutzt, abstruserweise ausgerechnet der eismagie "rechtsradikale" oder "neofaschistische" anliegen nachzusagen. freilich gehört es zu den faderen treppenwitzen westlicher magiegeschichte der jüngeren Zeit – sofern man derlei belanglose miszellen überhaupt in den rang historisch relevanter ereignisse erheben und ihnen somit eine folgenschwere zusprechen möchte, die in keinem vertretbaren verhältnis zu ihrer durchsichtigen einfältigkeit steht –, daß ein teil dieser kreise ausgerechnet selbst erklärtermaßen aus dem neonazistischen lager stammte und sich diesem bis heute zugehörig und verpflichtet fühlt. daran wird aber immerhin offenbar, welche denunziatorischen spasmen die vertreter magischer orthodoxie aufzubieten imstande sind; sobald sie ihre mehr oder weniger mühsam erwirtschafteten sozialen pfründe gefährdet wännen'.

The exercises on ‘Körperführung’ in the final part on the ‘Laborstufen’ point, in particular, towards Tegtmeier’s main inspiration, namely the martial arts concept (called ‘Tan Tien Tschüan’) of his part-time mentor Helmut Barthel.⁵⁹ According to Gerhard Mayer’s interview with Tegtmeier (2004), Barthel contacted Tegtmeier after the latter had published his articles on ‘Kampfmagie’ in *Anubis* (1986–87).⁶⁰ Barthel suggested a meeting, with the result that he became Tegtmeier’s teacher for several years.⁶¹ Tegtmeier claims that Barthel could perform incredible deeds with his martial arts technique, deeds that were usually called ‘magic’ by laymen (an example may be ‘kontaktloser Stoß’).⁶² It was from Barthel’s abilities that Tegtmeier derived the above definition of ‘magic’ as doing the impossible.⁶³ Tegtmeier even lived with Barthel for roughly a year, before breaking off the contact for unspecified personal reasons. Nevertheless, ‘Eismagie’ is derived from Tegtmeier’s experiences with Barthel,⁶⁴ although it is to be noted

59 There is still an operative website dedicated to the art, where texts and images of Helmut Barthel can be found: <http://www.tantientschuean.de/tan/boxen.html> (last access November 16, 2017).

60 See also Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006, 8.

61 See the unpublished interview transcript (Mayer 2004): ‘Das hat dessen Aufmerksamkeit erregt und er hat mich dann zu einem Interview eingeladen, in Norddeutschland.mhm [zündet sich eine Zigarette an] und besagter Herr wurde dann .. zu meinem eigenen, nicht geringen Erstaunen, dann eigentlich auch zu meinem Lehrer. Ich hab ne Menge Lehrer gehabt, wenn auch nicht im Bereich der Magie, also Lehrer beispielsweise: Yoga, Tantra, .. in dieser Art ja? Da habe ich auch bei ... teilweise bei ganz bekannten Leuten dann auch gesessen und [lacht] mich belehren lassen. In der Magie eigentlich nich. [...]’.

62 See *ibid.*: ‘Da war es in sofern ein bisschen anders, weil der, dieser Mann, ... m...äh .. Kampfkunstexperte war, aber in seiner Kampfkunst auch .. also .. rekurierte, beziehungsweise, wiederherstellte, wenn man so will, .. ähm ... ne ganze Menge von dem, was man sonst eigentlich in der Kampfkun// in der asiatischen Kampfkunst nur in den Legenden .. ke// oder aus Legenden kennt. [unklar: Also das sind auch// – 0:24:28] angefangen bei kontaktlosem Pushen .. bis zu den äh wirklich.. äh abstrusesten.. sagen wir mal .. für den .. Laien-Beobachter eigentlich nur als magische Phänomene zu bezeichnenden.. [...] ..äh Effekten .. und äh der hat mir so manchen Zahn gezogen auch, was meine ... mhm.. bis dato natürlich nicht so def// von mir nicht definierte, aber.. dann äh .. versucht zu definierende, wenn man so will, auch Kritik .. unkritische Haltung, was, was die konventionelle Magie anbelangte’; see also Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006, 8. In my own interview, Tegtmeier described further ‘miraculous’ capabilities of Barthel.

63 *Ibid.*: ‘Also mit anderen Worten: Von ihm stammt eine Formulierung äh: “Magie heißt unmögliche Dinge zu tun!”’.

64 *Ibid.*: ‘Es gab, ich bin ja auch äh .. mit ner Gruppe von Leuten dann dort gewesen, hab dort praktisch gelebt .. für’n Jahr so. Ich hatte da noch meine ... meine Hauptwohnung in .. damals in U. Aber es kam dann [sogar?] aus persönlichen Gründen auch zu nem Bruch, und äh seit dem haben wir auch keinen Kontakt mehr. Aber ich habe da im Zuge dessen, und das war durchaus zumindest am Anfang mit seinem Einverständnis ... dann das entwickelt, was ich dann die “Eismagie” genannt habe’.

that Tegtmeier claims full responsibility for the invention of the term and for the contents of his later book on the matter.⁶⁵

So, what happened during the Ice Magick War? In order to facilitate the analysis, I shall mostly rely on an internet document composed by an anonymous member of the IOT at some point after the year 2000, which neatly combines several versions of the story (Anonymous undated (b)). The document includes Peter Carroll's essay 'The Ice War', which he had published in the journal *Chaos International* (#23) in 1997; a comment by practitioner Ryans Run on an interview quote from Carroll published in *Chaos International* 17 (1993); an email statement on 'Ice Magic' by Frater U.:D.: (Tegtmeier) from the year 2000; and a critical comment by an anonymous German practitioner of the IOT. Finally, I shall use another insider account of the events produced by eyewitness Michael (now Zoe) DeWitt (2000), and the transcript of my own interview with Tegtmeier (conducted on May 21, 2019). As we will see, this ensemble of perspectives reveals quite some food for thought with respect to the issues discussed in this publication.

According to Peter Carroll's account of the story, the conflict began during the third 'AGM' (International Pact Meeting) in 1989, when Tegtmeier told his then-friend Carroll about the incredible deeds of Barthel, thereby evoking Carroll's criticism.⁶⁶ In the year between the third and fourth AGM, more and more members of the German section began to sympathise with the Barthel-Tegtmeier approach causing Carroll to believe that Tegtmeier had actively 'attempted to lead sections of the pact into it' (Anonymous undated (b)). Carroll thus decided to publicly accuse 'Fra. U.D. of abusing his position and of membership of an ultra right wing [sic] mind control cult with a seriously nasty agenda. All hell broke loose [...] The ice magick philosophy appeared to be a grim and paranoid thulean atavism which might have had ghastly consequences if Fra. U.D. had spread it through the fabric of western esoterics' (ibid.). In sum, there seem to have been five reasons for Carroll's concerns: Tegtmeier's alleged adoption of an 'ultra-right-wing' agenda; his shift towards non-transparency and secrecy; his

⁶⁵ See Tegtmeier 1996, 7; Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006, 8.

⁶⁶ See Carroll 1997: 'The Chancellor or "Kohl"', as I shall call him for reasons of girth, first spoke to me about the Ice Lord on the eve of our best ever combined seminar and Order meeting at Castle R's. According to Kohl, the Ice Lord's theories and methods lay aeons ahead of anything our magical order got up to. As a reputed master of internal martial arts, the Ice Lord could apparently deliver lightning bolts with his fingertips and paralyse adversaries at a distance [...] Kohl, who favoured a decidedly old-aeon authoritarian master-acolyte approach to magick, could hardly contain his excitement at the prospect of such power. I found all this highly alarming, as Kohl seemed likely to lose interest in what we had created together, in favour of what the Ice Lord apparently had to offer'. During my own interview (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019), Tegtmeier confirmed that Carroll reacted very negatively when Tegtmeier told him about Barthel's capabilities.

shift towards hierarchical, dictatorial forms of leadership; his (and Barthel's) abuse of power (allegedly including threats to and punishments of members), which seemed to undermine the magickal freedom and individualism for which the IOT stood; and, finally, Tegtmeier's alleged attempt to take over the entire IOT, thus disempowering Carroll. Carroll concludes:

'Reports spoke of Aryan supremacism, survivalist paranoia, and cultic levels of obedience. My heart sank: the usual aeons old crap with a charismatic figure, this time with a few good tricks up his sleeve, pandering to cultural fears and desires, with probably enough intelligence to make it all end in tears bigtime if he got hold of a suitable communications infrastructure, i.e., my Order! [...] If things had gone badly, Kohl [Tegtmeier] and the Ice Lord [Barthel] would have ended up at the head of the cream of the western world's magicians with the Order's communications infrastructure in their hands.' (Carroll 1997)⁶⁷

Notably the conflict was not, thus, about eventual incompatibilities between Chaos Magick and the techniques promoted by Barthel and Tegtmeier.⁶⁸ However, 'ice magick' nonetheless seemed to contradict or undermine basic pillars of the IOT as outlined above, particularly its anti-hierarchical, anti-secret, anti-dogmatic agenda – at least from the viewpoint of Peter Carroll.

Before the fourth AGM, which took place in August 1990 at the same Austrian castle as the third AGM (Burg Plankenstein), Carroll sent memos to all section heads mentioning his serious concerns,⁶⁹ in response to which Tegtmeier

67 For a German summary of further rumours, see DeWitt 2000, 28–9. However, DeWitt's report is problematic as he was excommunicated from the IOT – due to 'harmful behaviour directed against pact' ('wegen paktschädigenden Verhaltens') – at the beginning of the very pact meeting he describes in his report (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019). See from DeWitt's perspective DeWitt 2000, 33–38.

68 See also Ryans Run in Anonymous undated (b): 'The IOT was not opposed to innovative magical creations. Nor was the IOT interested at all in dictating to Frater VD concerning his magical goals etc. For sure, there was substantial interest in Helmets abilities. He could after all raise his Chi to a high level of circulation; and hence had developed extraordinary sexual [the claim that Barthel practiced sexual magick is incorrect, according to Tegtmeier] and magical powers. His training program was based upon a strict program of activity often spanning many hours or at least as some opine, days without sleep. Magical exercises combined with a rigorous training period created an accelerated experience, however stressful. The Ice Mage was not actually the problem, it was the underpinnings of dictatorial control which created a fiasco for the IOT'.

69 See DeWitt 2000, 30: 'In dem Rundschreiben, das Carroll für der Tempel CHAOS beisteuerte, forderte er unter der Überschrift "Grade A Priority Request" alle Mitglieder des Pakts zur zahlreichen Teilnahme am kommenden Pakttreffen auf, da es bei dieser Gelegenheit eine Diskussion darüber geben würde, ob die "innerhalb des Pakt im Geheimen entwickelte Eismagie" wie folgt einzustufen sei: "A) paranoide und apokalyptisch – der selbe alte Trick, B) neofaschistisch, autoritär, elitär und rassistisch, C) gegründet auf Charisma, Hypnose und Bullshit, D) eine Kult

authored a critical reply and declared a state of ‘pact emergency’ (*Paktnotstand*).⁷⁰ Tegtmeier, who was responsible for the organisation of the event (which was, incidentally, masked as a *Mythologenkongress* towards the owners of the castle),⁷¹ first attempted to prevent Carroll from coming to the castle, but later re-invited him (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019); Carroll, for his part, claims to have arrived at the event with a bag full of magickal weapons.⁷² According to the latter over the following days both he and Tegtmeier (note that Barthel was not there)⁷³ tried to convince participants to join their respective sides, whereby ‘Conspiracies, factions, and private briefings sprung up everywhere amongst the forty plus magicians present’ (Carroll 1997).⁷⁴ Apparently, there were almost no physical encounters involved, even though Carroll and Tegtmeier exchanged ‘Grim accusations of treachery, deceit, and megalomania [...] for several hours with no ground given [...] Perhaps only the presence of the aristocratic Section Head prevented the massively-built Kohl and my athletic self from seeking a resolution on the physical plane’ (ibid.). Nonetheless, Carroll, Tegtmeier, and all other participants held a regular pact meeting at some point, which, according to Carroll, ‘became mired down at many points with debates about procedures and precedents and rules, and with what seemed to many, attempts by Kohl to introduce authoritarian and centralist measures’ (ibid.). The most important magickal ‘battle’ involved in the entire event⁷⁵ seems to have happened on the last night when, according to Carroll,

von Machtfanatikern, die Menschen in die unausweichliche Katastrophe zu führen versuchen, E) dem Geist der Chaosmagie entgegengesetzt, F) dazu geeignet, den Pakt zu zerstören”.

70 Ibid.

71 See ibid., 37.

72 See Carroll 1997: ‘He then cancelled my appearance at the impending event. He could do this as he had made the Seminar and accommodation arrangements. However, the membership forced him to recant, and I eventually got on a plane with a rucksack full of heavy duty magical weaponry, including a huge oversize dagger acquired from a leading American occult swordsmith with a thirteen-inch drop-forged carbon steel blade, ironwood grip, phosphorbronze fittings which had had no expense spared, was bought without haggling, was aether-fixed and consecrated to Baphomet knows what’.

73 See ibid.: ‘I never met the Ice Lord, nor ever saw his image, during the whole conflict, and he declined a challenge to meet me in person at the siege of Castle L??..s, during one of the major battles of the campaign’.

74 See in much greater detail DeWitt 2000, 34–7. Note that DeWitt speaks of ‘circa 35 participants’ (37). According to Tegtmeier (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019), ca. 60 members participated in the event.

75 On another magickal encounter, see DeWitt 2000, 39: ‘Während ich mich selbst noch in der Taverne befand, fand draußen – mit dem Einbruch der Dunkelheit – jene schicksalshafte Konfrontation zwischen Alhia und Neonfaust statt, in deren Verlauf als Höhepunkt des äußeren Geschehens eine verzögerte Ohrfeige und ein laut ausgesprochener Fluch standen, über deren

Tegtmeier and a few supporters were sitting in a local taverna. Carroll acquired two supporters,

‘charged down to the taverna and announced to Kohl’s table that I would be the “last to leave”. [...] Kohl prided himself on his ability to have the last word in any session lasting into the small hours. [...] At my insistence the three of us sat at a table with hands joined in a triangle whilst I shouted bizarre occasional comments at Kohl and his entourage. [...] Madman strategy works, however, as I have discovered. If you appear prepared to do ANYTHING to beat the other bastard, you probably will. [...] Eventually, at about three in the morning, Kohl led his followers out first. Soror Crazy and Frater Hardman seemed at the end of their respective tethers; I thank them for their fortitude, I was hallucinating’. (Ibid.)⁷⁶

Whatever happened during this encounter, magickal or otherwise, we know only the basic rule that whoever left the taverna first would lose. On this basis, Carroll won, at least according to his own narrative (for Tegtmeier the described event never actually happened), yet the schism remained. In the aftermath of said AGM, ‘Kohl [Tegtmeier] led a number of German members plus the UK Section Head [Ian Read] and his other half to the Ice Bunker. [...] As I had suspected, Kohl had done a deal with the Ice Lord [Barthel] to bring him more people in return for sharing some of the absolute authority over them and for receiving a priority line to Ice Magick teachings’ (ibid.).⁷⁷ Carroll apparently engaged in practices of hostile long-distance magick for some time,⁷⁸ and attempted to acquire and convince sympathisers, eventually persuading the Austrian section leader

weitere Einzelheiten ich jedoch – auch wenn ich darüber Bescheid weiß – nicht Auskunft geben kann, da ich zum einen nicht selbst Zeuge der Vorfälle war, und zum anderen ein rein äußere Beschreibung des Geschehens im Sinne dessen, was die am Hof befindlichen Zeugen davon mitbekommen hatten, der eigentlichen, zutiefst magischen Interaktion nicht im Mindesten gerecht werden würde, da diese vorwiegend auf telepathischer Ebene, im Bewußtsein der beteiligten Personen, stattfand und somit in erster Linie allein deren Angelegenheit ist’. Tegtmeier does not recall this event, but mentions an encounter with Carroll in the castle courtyard who, apparently drunk, threatened Tegtmeier with his magickal dagger; Tegtmeier responded by applying the Chaos magick technique of ‘laughter’ (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019).

76 Tegtmeier does not recall this event (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019). Even though he concedes that the participants often spent time in said taverna he asserts that he never shared a table with Carroll.

77 Tegtmeier confirms that he, together with eleven of his own disciples, lived at Barthel’s commune for some time before and after the fourth pact meeting in August 1990 (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019).

78 Carroll 1997: ‘Protecting myself with semi-sentient combat servitors against attacks Kohl had reputedly launched, I struck with dissaffinity wedge enchantments between Kohl, the Ice, and the UK Section Head [Ian Read, according to Tegtmeier]. One can never tell what effects such conjurations have, except perhaps statistically but, fairly soon after, the UK No.1 and his other half made an escape from the bunker and returned to the UK with grim tales confirming all suspicions about Ice Magick in detail, much of which I published in memos to all Sections’. Tegtmeier

to prevent Tegtmeier's participation in the forthcoming fifth AGM. In reaction to several Tegtmeier sympathisers who 'proclaimed themselves in charge of the Order, almost certainly on Kohl's command' (ibid.), Carroll formed an agreement with 'the remaining loyal Section Heads for an excommunication of Kohl. I also excommunicated the gang of four who now claimed to lead the Order' (ibid.).⁷⁹ During the fifth AGM in Austria, Tegtmeier did not appear,⁸⁰ and 'no hardcore Ice magicians attended, although a few Germans with ambiguous feelings and loyalties came to argue for a while'. According to Carroll, this is basically when the 'war' ended, with casualties of some '30 % of its membership [...], including most of the Swiss and Germans' (ibid.).

Compared to Carroll's account, Tegtmeier's version is, as we might expect, quite different. In an interview with Gerhard Mayer (2004) and another one conducted by myself (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019), Tegtmeier concedes that there was a major dispute with Carroll but claims that he never intended to take over the IOT, nor to abolish its grade structures, nor to establish authoritarian or secretive principles of leadership.⁸¹ On the contrary, Tegtmeier had announced to step down as head of the German section already before the fourth pact meeting in 1990, which he in fact did at the beginning of said meeting (a decision that was confirmed by the 'council of the magi', i.e. the holders of the first degree of the IOT: Tegtmeier, Otto 2019). What is more, the Swiss and Austrian satrapies, whose leader Tegtmeier had previously been, became independent sections with new section heads during the fourth pact meeting (this re-grouping was likewise confirmed by the 'council of the magi'). Tegtmeier thus technically gave up his position as leader of the German section – which had previously included Austria and Switzerland – at the very meeting during which Carroll accused him of craving

claims to never have performed long-distance magick against Carroll (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019); see also Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006 and below.

79 According to IOT rules, an 'Excommunication is the expulsion of a Pact member. An excommunication can only be executed by a temple or Section with the full knowledge and approval of the Section Head and their Insubordinate' (The Council of the Magi 2014, 8). Interestingly, this rule does not allow for the excommunication of section heads (i.e., holders of the first degree), which may explain why Carroll needed the support of other section heads to excommunicate Tegtmeier.

80 From Tegtmeier's perspective, it would have made no sense to participate in meetings of the 'old' pact after the foundation of the 'revolutionary IOT' – on which see below –, thus he never actually intended to come to the fifth pact meeting: Tegtmeier, Otto 2019.

81 See also his email statement from 2000: 'never was there any intention to split let alone gain control over the IOT. I actually resigned from my post as head of the All-German section as announced a year before, splitting it up into a German, a Swiss and an Austrian section with someone else taking over' (Anonymous undated (a)).

power within the order. Tegtmeier claims that he never felt comfortable as the leader or spearhead of a magickal grouping, a disposition which also led him to reject various offers to become grandmaster of the *Fraternitas Saturni* (in which he is still involved today). In fact, frustrated by the events surrounding the fourth pact meeting and particularly Carroll's 'excommunications', Tegtmeier founded, together with some 75 German members of the German section,⁸² a schismatic spin-off named 'Revolutionary IOT' –⁸³ but Tegtmeier did not seize leadership of said spin-off either, that is, he merely became a regular member. Tegtmeier furthermore stresses (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019) that neither himself, nor Barthel, nor any members of the German section were entrenched in political right-wing ideologies; in stark contrast, both Tegtmeier and Barthel had rather been committed to socialist ideas in their past, while the majority of the members of the German section were either politically disinterested or belonged to the Green and/or leftist-liberal side of the political spectrum.

For Tegtmeier, the core of the matter were misunderstandings, anti-German prejudices, and paranoia, aside from a more theoretical underlying dispute: 'We got into an argument not least because I simply posed the question, and this was actually a very old question: "Well? Does it work?"'.⁸⁴ This question, as well as 'ice magick's' seemingly radical approach (in that it calls into question the efficacy of most 'conventional' forms of ritual magick and strives for nothing less than a 'total attack onto reality'⁸⁵), tended to fuel fear and aggression, as attested by the emotional reactions and statements of Peter Carroll. Carroll, in fact, never even attempted to engage in an open-ended discussion with Tegtmeier on the matter (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019), a discussion that might have called into question the validity of his apprehensions. To be fair, Tegtmeier's teacher Barthel indeed

82 According to Tegtmeier, most German members of the pact were shocked by Carroll's seemingly totalitarian and paranoid behaviour.

83 See also Anonymous undated (a): 'In den frühen Neunziger Jahren litt dieser chaotischmagische Orden unter dem sogenannten Eiskrieg und mehrere Streitigkeiten zwischen den Hochgraden zerbrachen die Gruppe in Fraktionen wie den Reformierten IOT (RIOT) in Deutschland und The Autonomatrix in Kalifornien. Kurz danach trennte sich Carroll selbst von der Gruppe und zog sich von der aktiven Mitarbeit zurück, wobei er ausdrücklich betonte, dass das nicht in Unzufriedenheit mit dem Zustand des Paktes begründet läge, sondern eine Angelegenheit seiner persönlichen Entwicklung sei'. The agenda of The Autonomatrix can be studied online: <http://www.arcane-archive.org/occultism/magic/chaos/autonomatrix-1.php> (last access November 17, 2017). See also DeWitt 2000, 40.

84 See Mayer 2004: 'Krach gab's nicht zuletzt deshalb und Irritation, weil ich einfach mal die Frage gestellt habe, und die war eigentlich nun ganz alt: ".. Und? Klappt's?"; my translation.

85 Tegtmeier 1996, 16. Tegtmeier, Otto 2019: 'In der Eismagie können wir uns nicht mit 99 % zufrieden geben'.

pursued an authoritarian type of leadership and frequently made his disciples witness his superior powers (in martial arts and beyond), and this may also be one of the reasons why, a few months later, Tegtmeier split up with Barthel for personal reasons ('aus persönlichen Gründen': *ibid.*).

According to Tegtmeier, the IOT lost 80% of its members in the schism (as opposed to 30% in Carroll's version).⁸⁶ His email statement from the year 2000 (see Anonymous undated (b)) is, however, more polemical. Tegtmeier argues here that Carroll had a severe 'personal crisis' and points to alleged 'symptoms of maniacal depression and of schizoid paranoia': 'The only "magical war" he ever waged with "this organisation" was the psychotic blitz in his own head' (*ibid.*). Tegtmeier strongly rejects Carroll's idea 'that we were some sort of neo-fascist white supremacist oddball outfit working towards world domination' (*ibid.*), and calls into question the legitimacy of Carroll's excommunications ('he was neither in any authority to excommunicate anyone [...], nor did he even have any majority within the council of the Pact's Magi for this preposterous act'). Ultimately, Tegtmeier ridicules the idea that there has been any kind of war at all, thus mocking Carroll's 'imagined victories'. A similar interpretation is provided in an interview between Tegtmeier and David Rietti, published in the journal *Oracle* in 2006 (Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006); Tegtmeier stresses that he never engaged in any malevolent magick towards Carroll, given that 'it wouldn't have been necessary anymore because all these irrational forays were so obviously over the top, they were inevitably bound to become wholly self-defeating anyway. [...] No point in wasting any resources of your own on ultimately inessential exertions' (*ibid.*, 12).

To sum up, from Tegtmeier's perspective, it was Carroll who undermined the liberal agenda of the IOT, due to his attempt to suppress a novel and promising theoretical-practical approach towards magick ('Eismagie'), his incapability to accept other people's opinions, his illegitimate excommunication of pact members – including Tegtmeier himself –, and his attempt to re-gain control over

⁸⁶ See Mayer 2004: 'Und äh ... gut, das führte aber auch dazu, dass ich dann äh einen Riesenkrach kriegte im I.O.T. und vor allem auch mit Pete Carroll, weil der da irgendwie .. so im Grund sich so in den Kopf gesetzt hatte äh, ich wollte den Orden übernehmen, was nun wirklich, nichts lag mir ferner.. ich hätte sogar schon, das hatte damit noch gar nicht zu tun: Ich war Leiter der der der Sektion Deutschland und der wie es damals hieß ein Satrapin [?], Schweiz und Österreich und ich hatte gesagt, ich will in einem Jahr von diesen Ämtern zurücktreten, was ich dann auch pünktlich gemacht habe und nichts lag mir ferner, als mir da so ne Organisation an ans Bein zu binden [*lacht*] ... aber gut, da gab's ne Menge äh .. an Missverständnisse auch an Paranoia und so weiter, wie dem auch sei, jedenfalls gab's da, kam's dann zu nem Bruch .. der I.O.T. hat dann darauf hin ungefähr achtzig Prozent seiner Mitglieder verloren'; compare also Tegtmeier, Rietti 2006, 12. According to Tegtmeier (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019), the German section had, at that time, around 80 registered members, whereas the global IOT had some 115 members.

the IOT by ‘bringing into line’ members against a fantasised right-wing infiltration of the order.⁸⁷

It is noteworthy that, after the events described here, both Carroll and Tegtmeier secluded themselves more or less simultaneously from the IOT.⁸⁸ As Carroll writes in his *Psybermagic* (1996, 124), the reason was that he had ‘captained the Magical Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros for a decade and derived immense satisfaction from the progress made in the theory and practise of magic(k) during this period, but grew to despise the slavish imitation and treachery with which many mortals seek to advance themselves’.⁸⁹ It was also in the aftermath of the Ice Magick War that Tegtmeier broke with Barthel, and also more or less disappeared from the magical scene (Mayer 2008, 75).⁹⁰ The breakaway group of ca. 75

87 An anonymous German IOT member claims to have internal documents on the matter, received from his own mentor – who was a direct witness of the events – which would falsify Tegtmeier’s attempts at downplaying the issue. According to these documents, Tegtmeier tried to take over the IOT and thereby abolish its grade system in favour of ‘hidden authority’. See anonymous undated (a): ‘[...] *never was there any intention to split let alone gain control over the IOT.* | Ausser, dass er den Paktnotstand ausgerufen hat, weil einige Fratres wegen Beschäftigung mit Eismagie exkommuniziert wurden (fragwürdig damals, indeed). Ausser, dass er das gradsystem abschaffen wollte, damit auch noch die IOT Anarchos auf Linie brachte. Natürlich war der Zweck eines [sic] gradlosen paktes die hidden authority – er wollte alle Schlüsselstellungen (section heads, etc.) mit seinen lemmingen besetzen. Ich habe einen ganzen Arsch voll Dokumente zu dem Thema, die ich von meiner mentorin geerbt habe. Besagte Frau lernte damals (80er) ber [sic] Tegtmeier, und war am Anfang der Eismagie Zeit dabei – blieb dann aber beim IOT und machte sich für VDs Exko stark – go figure!’. He explains Tegtmeier’s version as a mere attempt to ‘kill Carroll’s reputation’ and in fact blames Tegtmeier as being ‘responsible for the biggest schism of the chaos current, and Pete naturally feels like a father of it [...] In 1993 the IOT Germany was a big pile of rubble and one can be glad that the people who restored it aren’t cultists. Today’s [sic] German pact is extremely liberal’ (Anonymous undated (a)). Tegtmeier (in an email from May 15, 2019) strongly rejects the existence of these documents: ‘das ist reine Fiktion. Wer das Gegenteil beweisen kann, soll es auch tun. Würde mich durchaus interessieren. (Wie man im Englischen so schön sagt: *Not holding my breath, though.*) Geschieht dies nicht, bleibt es nichts anderes als ehrenrühriges Hörensagen vulgo Gerücht’.

88 Technically, Tegtmeier never actually ‘resigned’ from the order; however, after having found the ‘revolutionary IOT’, he had lost interest in the – from his perspective – ‘old’ pact.

89 For another argument, see Carroll’s internal letter in DeWitt 2000, 41: ‘Letzten Endes hing die Mitgliedschaft im Pakt davon ab, ob man den Leuten zum Gesicht stand und ob man gewillt war, sich nach den ungeschriebenen Gesetzen des Paktspiels zu richten, ähnlich wie in den sozialen Strukturen anderer kleiner Vereine und Banden’.

90 See DeWitt 2000, 40: ‘Nachdem Neonfausts [Tegtmeier] Versuch, eine Gegenveranstaltung auf die Beine zu stellen und gemeinsam mit einigen deutschen Fratres einen reformierten I.O.T. (R.I.O.T.) [‘Revolutionary IOT’] ins Leben zu rufen, gescheitert war, es weiters zum Bruch zwischen Neonfaust und dessen Lehrer, dem Eismagier H. [Barthel] gekommen war, und die kleine Gruppe von Eismagiern, die der Magus um sich geschart hatte, zerfallen war, zog sich Neonfaust alias

German members of the newly founded ‘Revolutionary IOT’ continued its workings for roughly one year, and gradually fell apart thereafter (Tegtmeier, Otto 2019).

4 Conclusions

If I am correct in my observation that the ‘textual-ritual tradition of “Western learned magic” triggers a wide range of notions ascribed to “religious individualisation” and might therefore be interpreted as a particularly noticeable example case of such dynamics’ (Otto 2017, 29), and if I am further correct with my claim (above) that ‘Chaos Magick represents one of the most individualistic currents within “Western learned magic”’, then the IOT was indeed a striking attempt at institutionalising religious individualisation. Even though the IOT created grade structures, stipulated pre-arranged teaching documents and ritual scripts, and engaged in group events and rituals, the founders were well aware of the implications – or dangers – of group formation and did their best to construe the IOT as an embodiment of what Chaos Magick stood for: ‘a current of eclecticism and a rejection of the principles of absolutism, guruship and totalitarianism’ (Carroll 1997).

The irony of the story is that the IOT’s theoretical and ritual liberality and its encouragement of individual sections to ‘experiment with whatever techniques, rituals and ideas they please’ (Carroll undated (a)) may have led to the very events described here. In other words, the IOT, through its liberality, suddenly found itself sharing a bed with its ideological enemy: ‘Ice Magic’s’ alleged dogmatism, sectarianism, authoritarianism, and abuse of power – at least as they appeared from the perspective of Peter Carroll. The latter’s attempt to suppress these perceived tendencies might be understandable (if his accusations had been true), but also points to an undesired flipside, nicely formulated by the anonymous German insider of the IOT: ‘Many good people left the scene back then – many because they themselves thought Pete’s fight against fascism was fascist (and there is something to that)’ (Anonymous undated (a)). In fact, from Tegtmeier’s perspective it was rather Carroll who undermined the ‘spirit of liberty’⁹¹ for which

Frater V.:D., dessen Karriere als Magieautor an die zehn Jahre davor so vielversprechend begonnen hatte, vollständig aus der Öffentlichkeit zurück, beendete bis auf unbedeutende Ausnahmen seine einstmals so rege Publikationstätigkeit und soll Gerüchten zufolge neben der Geburt eines Sohnes [Tegtmeier does not have a son: Tegtmeier, Otto 2019] auch einen gefährlichen Herzanfall [according to Tegtmeier, this is likewise incorrect] erlitten haben’.

⁹¹ Ibid., 30: ‘Als Antwort auf die obigen Fragen von Autonomesis veröffentlichte Neonfaust [Tegtmeier] am 21.6.1990 das von ihm verfasste Positionspapier 309 “Contra Inquisitionem”,

the IOT stood for, and Carroll's excommunication of pact members appeared to him as nothing more than a 'drumhead trial of Chaos'.⁹²

Where does this leave us concerning the idea of institutionalising religious individualisation? To be sure, any attempt at generalising from the case presented here would be too far-reaching. The Ice Magick War and the schism that arose from it was, in all likelihood, not an inevitable consequence of the IOT's foundation and its attempt to institutionalise a particular strand or type of religious individualisation that materialised in modern magick (namely, Chaos Magick). There may well be general tendencies in human behaviour that particularly apply in matters of group formation and group dynamics, not least in the realm of magick.⁹³ Yet history necessarily remains contingent in the sense that everything might still have happened differently. In other words, 'ice magick' did not enter the stage of history to demonstrate that the IOT's liberalist agenda was determined to fail. What the IOT's schism rather seems to attest is that both factions attempted to preserve and protect the liberal agenda of the grouping, albeit from very different perspectives, with different means, and different outcomes. This might suggest that attempts at institutionalising religious individualisation are by no means predestined to fail and that they may even yield powerful dynamics of resilience and self-defence. Nonetheless, the case presented here remains highly ambivalent, thus highlighting the tension, or contradiction, inherent in the idea of 'institutionalising religious individualisation'.

in dem er für den Fall einer versuchten oder ausgeübten Inquisition (die abwertenden Fragen Carolls stellten für ihn eine klare Verletzung seiner persönlichen Glaubensfreiheit dar) die Ausrufung des Paktnotstands durch einen *Defensor fidei* und die Einberufung eines Tribunals des Chaos vorschlug, das die streitenden Parteien anhören und schließlich einen Richtspruch fallen sollte, durch den der Geist der Freiheit innerhalb des Pakts wieder hergestellt werden könnte'.

92 See DeWitt 2000, 39: 'In seiner verbitterten Stellungnahme [...] betonte [Tegtmeier], dass ein solcher Schritt nicht im Mindesten den Regeln des Liber Pactionis entspreche, und bezeichnete dieses Vorgehen, bei dem ihm nicht einmal die Gelegenheit zu einer Stellungnahme gegeben wurde, schlichtweg als "Standgericht des Chaos". Gleichzeitig forderte er sämtliche Paktmitglieder auf, ihre Stimme gegen ein solches Unrecht zu erheben und fragte, wo denn jene Querulanten [subordinates] seien, die einst als lautstarke Verteidiger der Freiheit die Kritik der Basis in die oberen Ränge tragen wollten'.

93 See, for instance, Mayer 2008, 237–45, who discusses various failed attempts to unite magical individuals and groupings under German umbrella organizations in the early 2000s.

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Afterword: practices

How can practices generate, accelerate, or undermine the institutionalisation – or conventionalisation (see the Introduction to Part 2 of this publication) – of religious individualisation? This question, which we initially posed to our authors and which also underlies the first sub-section of this part of the publication, has three conceptual components – ‘practices’, ‘institutionalisation’, and ‘religious individualisation’ –, each of which are as ambiguous as they are multi-layered. It should therefore come as no surprise that the six papers assembled in this section will not present a conclusive answer. However, the insights gathered here, derived from different case studies and historical scenarios, are also far from arbitrary or trivial. They go to the core of the matter: how can processes of religious individualisation in all their ambivalence and intricacy (Otto 2017) acquire stability over time and become relevant not just for some select few but for a significant number of people? Are there cultural structures and strategies that help preserve for future generations those ideas, texts, practices, or sets of experiences that foster processes of religious individualisation, whether these processes are related to the enhancement of religious self-determination, the pluralisation of religious options, the development of elaborated notions of the self, the facilitation of deviance, or the realisation of intense ‘experiences deemed religious’ (Taves 2009), to name only a few potential facets? These questions have seldom been asked in a systematic manner, especially in relation to premodern contexts, as they seem to undermine the persistent stereotype of religious individualisation as an essentially modern Western phenomenon, a stereotype that often goes hand in hand with a sweeping ascription of a ‘public and collective character to premodern and non-Western religion’ (Rüpke 2016, 707). Pondering ‘religious individualisation in historical perspective’ thus forces us to re-read and re-think historical sources and the master narratives on cultural history alike and, ultimately, to change one’s thinking habits and perspectives.

In contrast to the authors of the second section of this part of the publication, who, in the realm of texts and narratives, rather think of ‘individualisation and institutionalisation as intertwined’ or even as ‘mutual, reciprocal and coeval’ processes, the focus on practices in the present section yields much more ambivalent results. Apparently, the notion of ‘practices’ opens a wide field of potential congruities, but also of discrepancies, between the notions of institutionalisation – or conventionalisation – and religious individualisation. We can think, for instance, of practices of social control or ‘power-knowledge’ (Foucault 1980) performed by religious elites

or even lay people in order to discipline or sanction dissenters, thus blighting their individualising tendencies (which may not even have been self-conscious). The more institutionalised such normative practices become, the more we might think of 'conventions' as basic cultural frameworks that foster de- or non-individualisation. On the other hand, we can also think of practices, such as ritual, that provide or enhance religious agency for individuals and groups alike. Such practices may also evoke intense, off-book 'experiences deemed religious', thus opening the floor for unusual and innovative interpretations of religious doctrines or ideas. Such novel interpretations may lead to the questioning of established religious traditions or institutions (on such dynamics, see also part 4 of this publication), and thus to individual or collective 'contentions', which may or may not result in religious reforms or even schisms. If there is a pre-theoretical 'logic of practices' or 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1990) that is not purely rational, instrumental, or purpose-oriented, then human practice also entails a chaotic element which may lead to undesired outcomes. In fact, much of the ambivalence that arises when pondering the seemingly counterintuitive composite 'institutionalisation of religious individualisation' results from the apparent un-controllability of the effects of (certain) practices: they may initially arise as attempts to heighten religious self-determination and agency but once they become ritualised and standardised they have the potential to undermine their initial impetus. The history of the Christian reformation, with its numerous schisms and sub-schisms, appears to be a splendid research field for studying such dynamics. The goal of this section is, therefore, to find those subtle in-between cases in which dynamics of religious individualisation become relevant for larger groups (i.e., not only for some outstanding individuals) and gather some stability over time, but in which dynamics of homogenisation, dogmatisation, and suppression have not (yet) led to backlashes into de- or non-individualisation.

Perhaps due to the complexity of such dynamics and the difficulty in observing them, none of the papers assembled here will present a clear-cut case of how it was historically – or could theoretically be – possible to institutionalise religious individualisation straight-forwardly by means of specific practices. The contributions rather highlight ambivalent cases, as they attest both the difficulty of (1) stabilising and conventionalising processes of religious individualisation in historical realities, as well as (2) detecting and analysing such processes from a scholarly viewpoint. Ioanna Patera, for instance, calls into question the recurrent claim that the Eleusinian Mysteries were one of the most individualistic facets of Ancient Greek religion. Apart from the individual decision to become an initiate (which was partly compulsory), we do not know whether there was even only one 'individual' element in the initiation procedure that was not shared by all other initiates – including the promised happiness in the afterlife, which may have been the same happiness for all practitioners. We do not know whether the

Mysteries arose as an attempt to provide individuals with enhanced control over their destinies. However, once the rites were established as an integral part of the cultic repertoire of ancient Athens (we might use the label ‘institution’ here), it seems difficult to detect even basic notions of religious individualisation in the surviving sources.

We encounter the same ambivalence in Ilaria Ramelli’s study of late ancient ascetics and discourses on slavery. To be sure, we can observe various facets of religious individualisation in her material, such as de-traditionalisation, an enhanced focus on the self and individual salvation, preliminary ideas of basic human rights and ‘dignity’, or the individual striving for intense ‘experiences deemed religious’ as a result of the ascetic’s focus on his or her own body, soul, passions, and intellect or ‘unified nous’ (Evagrius). Hence, the institutionalisation of monasticism in late antiquity might be considered an important landmark in the history of religious individualisation, and many later Christian figures and ‘mystics’ that have been said to embody high degrees of religious individualisation (such as Meister Eckhardt: see, exemplarily, Loser/Mieth 2014) indeed arose from monastic milieus. Yet, Ramelli also points to various de- or counter-individualising dynamics: consider, for instance, the stipulation of binding monastic rules, ritual standardisation, or the recurrent desire for tradition(alisation) in ascetic milieus. Does the monk or nun not strive for the stripping off of his or her individuality, becoming nothing other than similar with his or her humane brothers and sisters and, ultimately, God? This even pertains to slaves, for whom monasteries were among the few ancient refuges where they could be liberated from their owners without further ado. But did this liberation also liberate their religious selves? It seems that casting off the identity of a slave by becoming one of many ‘sisters and equals’ (to quote one of Ramelli’s sources) in a late ancient monastery is a rather de-individualising move, as one restrictive and compulsive cultural-religious framework is replaced by the other.

If we read Anneke Mulder-Bakker’s contribution with the same analytical lens, we again encounter social spaces – the *recluserium* or anchorhold in the case of Juliana of Cornillon and Eve of Saint Martin, and the House of Souls in the case of Gertrude Rickeldey of Ortenberg and Heilke of Staufenberg – which facilitated certain degrees of religious individualisation for lay religious women in late medieval Europe. They could live an unusually private piety, mostly detached from the routines of contemporaneous church rites, develop an individual and partly innovative stance on theological matters, regularly engage in intense ‘experiences deemed religious’ without ecclesiastic (that is, male) supervision and restrictions, and even influence important (again, male) theologians of the time. We might interpret their monetary and educational background, their handing-down of spiritual insights over generations, their functioning as ‘exempla’ in later bio-

or hagiographies, and particularly the social place of the anchorhold / House of Souls as indicators of a – yet, limited – form of institutionalisation of individualised female religiosity in the late Middle Ages. However, again, ambivalence prevails: it was Aquinas' clergy-centred version of the Corpus Christ liturgy, and not Juliana's individual-centred version, that was institutionalised already during her own lifetime and became the standard ritual script down to this day. In other words, Juliana's attempt to promote a ritual procedure that might have had a strong individualising impulse for lay Christian practitioners clearly failed. In a similar vein, Gertrude and Heilke *did* influence Meister Eckhardt and other important theologians of the time, not least due to their extraordinary spiritual experiences. Despite this, they remain barely known, their work hardly studied even today, in stark contrast to the lives and works of some of the male theologians that they influenced. In fact, by becoming 'exemplary' (*exempla*), and thus normative, figures in later hagiographies, they were themselves standardised, and we can be fairly sure that eventual theological deviations from orthodox positions were eradicated over the course of this literary process. Mulder-Bakker thus suggests a differentiation between 'institutionalisation' and 'conventionalisation' when analysing female religiosity in the European Middle Ages (on this differentiation, see also the notes in the introduction to part 3 of this publication): whereas the first, in her eyes, 'hardly exists' in medieval times, the latter – understood as the formation of 'stable, formalized and recognized conventions and practices, which regulate and stabilize individual initiatives in societal forms' – was 'booming'.

With Carsten Hermann-Pillath's contribution, we move from 'Western' cases to the 'East', namely to modern China. So far, the notion of 'practices' has mostly been aligned with *ritual* practices but Hermann-Pillath's contribution places *economic* practices centre stage. Note, however, that much of what our author subsumes under 'gift exchange' was and is realised through ritualised behaviour, which thus forms one of the underlying motifs of this entire section. Hermann-Pillath's strategy to develop a concise theory of religious individualisation based on the religious market model (RMM) is perhaps the strongest attempt to substantiate the notion of 'institutionalising religious individualisation' in this section. In fact, while reading his analysis, both the theoretical and the historical parts (the latter being focused on modern China), we get the impression that religious individualisation is nothing but an inevitable side-product of any economisation of society, and that it is hard to avoid processes of religious individualisation in societal frameworks within which religious rights are granted to everyone and different religious traditions compete with one another. Even though the historical prototype of this scenario may again be modern Europe and North America (or even only parts of these regions), Hermann-Pillath claims that similar dynamics have been in play in modern China for quite some time,

tentatively extending the timeframe back to Imperial China. While his idea of two modes of exchange is fascinating, including regular back-and-forth movements between market exchange (individualisation 1: here, individualisation refers to the granting of religious rights, freedom, and choice between competing religious options) and gift exchange (individualisation 2: here, individualisation is primarily embodied in practices that have an expressive function, also in the sense of reaffirming the individual of her/his self and the social groups he belongs to), one wonders about relapses into de- or non-individualisation in the model presented here. Do certain dynamics of market exchange not undermine religious individualisation, for instance through the setting up of organisational infrastructures with all their powers of standardisation and dogmatisation? Hermann-Pillath provides a few observations on the matter but remains focused on processes of religious individualisation rather than de- or non-individualisation. Yet his model is a most welcome attempt to put some (in this case, economic) theory behind the idea of ‘institutionalising religious individualisation’ – a theory that may indeed be relevant to other scenarios, both premodern as well as modern.

Michael Nijhawan’s piece on Sikhs seeking asylum in post-1984 Germany shifts our attention to legal – or bureaucratic – practices, namely those geared towards controlling the residence, activities, and eventual deportation of asylum seekers in a modern nation state, in this case Germany. Nijhawan’s qualitative interviews with some of these seekers show in great detail how Kafkaesque bureaucratic necessities and procedures – such as the asylee’s frequent dependence on court orders, doctor’s certificates, police warrants, official notifications, work permits, or monthly visa-renewals – lead to a variety of changes in their religious practices and self-perceptions that correlate to processes of religious individualisation. In fact, the ‘precarious diaspora’ of these asylum-seekers, and particularly their constant fear of being deported, affects all aspects of their everyday life and routines, thereby leading to individualised perspectives on their participation in local Sikh communities (*sangat*), their performance of traditional rites (such as *nitnem*, the daily prayer), or on core Sikh doctrines (such as *Dukkh*, an embodied state of suffering and pain, or *Charhdi Kala*, the aspiration to maintain a mental state of eternal optimism and joy). In other words, even though Sikhism remains an important resource to Nijhawan’s informants in their daily struggles to endure the hardships of diaspora and asylum-seeking, it is precisely these hardships that foster certain forms of de-traditionalisation, creative re-interpretations of Sikh terminologies, or enhanced reflections on their religious self or selfhood. The latter finding, in particular, reveals a fascinating ambivalence, namely the asylee’s inevitably enhanced inclination towards ego-centrism and self-centeredness – obviously a psychological reaction to their perceived loss of social, political, and religious agency –, even though Sikh doctrines

traditionally focus on egoless states, the achievement of a non-dualistic self, as well as ‘being for another’. In the light of this finding, Nijhawan rightly points to general ambivalences in his case with regard to religious individualisation: even though there is a powerful institutional framework, namely German asylum law, that fosters certain individualising dynamics, the very same framework puts ‘stark constraints on religious agency itself’ (to quote the author). Yet, having a sufficient degree of religious agency at one’s command is, so we might suppose, a precondition for processes of religious individualisation. Nijhawan’s article also shows that dynamics of ‘institutionalising’ religious individualisation may originate in very different – and often non-religious – social spheres, such as, in this case, citizenship law.

Finally, Bernd-Christian Otto’s piece analyses the schism of a contemporary grouping of ‘learned magic’ (or ‘magick’, as it is usually called in modern practitioner literature), the so-called Illuminates of Thanateros. This schism took place in the early 1990s and is usually referred to as the ‘Ice Magick War’. Otto considers the foundation of the Illuminates of Thanateros in 1976/7 (and its re-foundation in 1986) to be a fascinating attempt at ‘institutionalising religious individualisation’, as the theories and practices of its main doctrine – Chaos Magick – are individualist to the core, thus yielding major tensions and ambivalences when implemented in the context of an organised magickal fraternity. Yet, the question of whether the Ice Magick War was an inevitable consequence of these ambivalences is not easy to answer, as history remains contingent and things may have evolved differently or deteriorated due to purely coincidental reasons. Nevertheless, the Ice Magick War illustrates the tension between a strikingly individualist, anti-hierarchical, anti-dogmatic agenda, on the one hand, and competing (group) dynamics of dogmatisation, authoritarianism, secrecy, and power abuse on the other – all this within a relatively small new religious movement which comprised, in the early 1990s, less than 120 members.

In sum, assessing and analysing processes of institutionalising (or conventionalising) religious individualisation with a focus on practices – particularly ritual but also economic or bureaucratic – is a difficult task that calls for nuanced assessments and a cautious eye on historical ambivalences and discrepancies. In fact, adopting such a nuanced perspective is inevitable in the light of the multifactorial complexities of historical realities, which rarely adapt to those neatly contrived theoretical models that modern scholars and historians tend to apply in order to make sense of their own worlds, as well those of the past. In this regard, the notion of ‘institutionalising religious individualisation’ may be considered an interesting, thought-provoking ideal type (an ideal type, according to Weber, is a mental construct [Gedankenbild] that, ‘in its conceptual purity [...] cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*’; Weber 1949, 90), which,

however, turns out to be difficult to detect and analyse on a broader scale due to the ambivalences outlined above. However, it should be noted that this section only comprises a limited number of case studies and there are chapters in other parts of this publication – such as Martin Fuchs’ piece on ‘The Social Embedment of Individualisation in Bhakti’ (in section 1.2) or Jörg Rüpke’s article ‘Ritual objects and religious communication in lived ancient religion’ (in section 4.2) –, which seem to reveal dynamics of institutionalising religious individualisation in a more straight-forward manner. Yet it is, perhaps, best to embrace the placement of these chapters in different analytical sections in order to do justice to the multi-layered nature of this publication.

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Section 3.2: **Texts and narratives**

Ian H. Henderson

‘... quod nolo, illud facio’ (Romans 7:20): institutionalising the unstable self

No reading process has been more influential as a perceived warrant and catalyst of, at least, early modern (Elliott 2008; Holder 2008; Chester 2017) individualisation than the reception of Chapter 7 of Paul’s letter to the Romans. The reception-history of this tormented text dramatises the paradox, not only that individualisation and counter-individualisation may ebb and flow through the same channels, but also that texts themselves may institutionalise permanently ambiguous, dynamic whirlpools and eddies.

1 Early Christian individualisation and incipient institutionalisation

1.1 The Jewish-Stoic person in Paul (Troels Engberg-Pedersen)

Much of the following essay will lean upon the work of Troels Engberg-Pedersen. Engberg-Pedersen is closely associated with reasserting the relevance of Stoic notions of the cosmos and the self to understanding Pauline texts. Engberg-Pedersen is, however, not only the most recognisable proponent of foregrounding dialogue between Paul and Stoic thinkers, even beyond the ‘normal’ field of ethics; Engberg-Pedersen can also be perceived more suspiciously as an epistemologically overconfident historian of ideas across worldviews (Martyn 2002; Rowe 2016, 188–91; Engberg-Pedersen 2010, 8–10). That perception should be of concern to any project considering religious individualisation across historical cases. But I will start here from one 2006 essay in which Engberg-Pedersen evaluates Paul’s ‘concept of the person and self’ and his ‘actual use of various elements from his mixed cultural context’, with special reference to the ‘I’-passage in Philippians 3, and through the social-theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu. This study is especially suggestive of the possibility of considering Pauline selfhood as verging on social-symbolic typification and habituation – steps towards institutionalisation – within a complex social and cultural context.

Engberg-Pedersen doesn’t directly address the specific institutionalisation which would or did support social projection of a Pauline self, but the question is just below the surface (Engberg-Pedersen 2006, 71–4). The article appears in

a volume entitled ‘Beyond “Reception”’, so Engberg-Pedersen notes that categories of ‘reception’ and ‘influence’ are too retrospective to be ideal for describing the ‘Pauline project’ expressed in Paul’s core letters, to Jesus-devotees in Galatia, Philippi and Rome. Engberg-Pedersen argues that ‘the actual production of ideas takes place in an altogether different manner from “receiving” them and being “influenced” by them’ (ibid., 69). Paul’s letters project his highly self-conscious, sectarian Jewish identity, asymmetrically hybridised with a somewhat ambivalent Roman Greekness, all further subordinated to Paul’s gospel of Christ. Engberg-Pedersen is also keenly aware that ‘Paul’s own perception of his project’ was (and, I would add, textually remains) ironically different from the culturally more ambivalent historical explanation of Paul’s project to which Engberg-Pedersen might aspire. ‘Paul himself saw the Christ faith very distinctly as a form of Judaism, indeed, in the best sectarian manner as the proper form of that religion or way of life’ (ibid., 70). In this context Paul articulated a nascent ‘philosophy of the self’ without feeling the need to acknowledge affinities with ‘a similar set of ideas in the Stoic theory of *oikeiôsis*’ (ibid., 80). Engberg-Pedersen carefully recognises that Paul’s ‘personal relationship with the Greco-Roman side of his overall context was distinctly more distanced than that with the Jewish side’ (ibid., 81).

Following on Engberg-Pedersen, then, I understand Paul as processing his Jewishness and Roman-Greekness not just rhetorically, but prophetically for a social future which Paul himself can just barely imagine. Moreover, receptions of Paul’s own texts and discourse will tend to reproduce their designed effects of destabilising and reorienting individuals toward modified and intensified social imaginaries. This essay is meant as a thought-experiment in describing Paul’s rhetoric in Romans 7 (with related passages, Philippians 3; I Corinthians 9), as re-institutionalising in a temporarily stable medium an intrinsically, programmatically unstable individuality, like a dangerous explosive suspended for handling in a malleable form.

1.2 The discovery of the self and the ‘new perspective’ on Paul

What follows here will therefore be a rhetorical-critical argument that in his letter-writing, especially in the monumental letter to the Romans, and in the conspicuous difficulty of Romans 7, Paul was rhetorically institutionalising in Jesus-devotion a dramatically ambiguous relationship between a transformed and intensified ‘I’ and a profoundly recontextualised Torah from God. I will claim that the authorial voice in Romans, especially in Romans 7, is a communicative instrument designed, to some degree consciously, to institutionalise in what we now call Christianity an awareness of personhood, structured – ironically both stabilised and de-stabilised – by the permanent tension between Jesus and Torah.

The last generation of New Testament studies reopened, and as a topic of historical rather than just theological enquiry, the question where we 'should place Paul in an account of the discovery of the self' (Engberg-Pedersen 2006, 70). Paul and, in particular, readings of the 'I' of Romans 7 have been made to occupy conflicting places in the history of selfhood. The movement toward the 'new perspective' on Paul in the last forty years may be said to have begun, with specific reference to Romans 7, with Krister Stendahl's famous 1963 article, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West'. Stendahl's argument was that, whatever Paul was doing in Romans 7, he was not proposing justification of the individual by personal faith as the remedy for anguished selfhood, tormented with intensely individual awareness of sin. Stendahl's point is that attributing to the historic or implied author (and intended readers) of Romans a prototypically modern, Lutheran self-understanding, treats as central a misunderstanding of a relatively secondary feature and obscures Paul's deeper concern. Paul's essential concern in the classic 'I'-passages of Romans 7 is to defend the holiness and goodness of the God-given Torah even in the transformed context of Christ-faith. Such a defense was necessitated by Paul's insistence that Christian existence is conditioned by grace, not Torah (Romans 3:20, 4:15, 5:20, 6:14). In Stendahl's words: 'Paul here is involved in an argument about the Law; he is not primarily concerned about man's or his own cloven ego or predicament' (Stendahl 1963, 211). Or again,

What was a digression is elevated to the main factor. It should not be denied that Paul is deeply aware of the precarious situation of man in this world, where even the holy Law of God does not help – it actually leads to death. Hence his outburst. But there is no indication that this awareness is related to a subjective conscience struggle. (ibid., 213)

Stendahl focuses on denying that Paul was interested in 'the dilemma of the introspective conscience' (ibid., 203) attributed to him in Augustinian, Western, especially Lutheran and post-Lutheran reception. A perceived consequence was that 'Paul's theology cannot be centred on the individual' (Sanders 1977, 438); Paul's gospel was not about individualisation. Stendahl was perceived as allied to a protest against excessive individualism of existentialist hermeneutics (ibid., 434–8). It was not Stendahl's task to deny or affirm that the author of Romans 7 may nonetheless be interested in activating for his argument some unusually intense perception of individuality. Precisely because Romans 7 had become the *locus classicus* for reformational, modern individualisation and conflicted selfhood, a re-reading of Romans 7 was the fulcrum for leveraging a less individualistic, more covenantal and nomistic understanding of early Christianity. Inevitably, the resulting, rather fluid 'new perspective' on Paul has attracted some defensive nostalgia in those for whom the self-divided, faith-justified Lutheran persona – or, in my case, a Calvinist, evangelical variant – remains a powerful identity marker.

Among proponents of the ‘new perspective’, James Dunn has insisted most emphatically that displacing Law-free justification from the centre of Paul’s theology historically reconstructed does not necessarily falsify reformation soteriology and anthropology. But Dunn would not need to reassure, if no one had felt threatened (Schröter 2013, 195–7, esp. 196 n. 8; Dunn 2008). Certainly the ‘new perspective’ was intended to falsify historic misrepresentation of the function of Torah in Judaism and, therefore in Paul’s Christ-devotion. Adolf Harnack famously distilled at least the Liberal Protestant verdict on early receptions of Paul: ‘Marcion was the only Gentile Christian who understood Paul, and even he misunderstood him’ (Harnack 1897, 89). The ‘new perspective’ has shown that reformational and liberal understandings of Paul have also been creative misunderstandings.

Here, however, I hope to illustrate the possibility that, after all, a certain deliberately de-stabilising individualisation was indeed part of Paul’s argumentative strategy and therefore consequently at least latent in any Pauline-influenced Christianity. Although readings of Romans 7 are only quite ironically sources for reformational, enlightenment and romantic notions of the self, Paul the Greco-Roman, Jewish Christ-apostle and epistolographer may nevertheless still have imagined a mode of covenantal individualisation which could make intuitive sense to at least some proto-Christian readers. Although modernity constructed its types of individualisation on anachronistically decontextualised re-readings of Paul, we may still ask how far key Pauline texts were designed to institutionalise a historically possible kind of individualisation within at least one segment of an emerging Christian ‘social imaginary’ (Taylor 2002).

1.3 Modes of institutionalisation

In addition to reconsidering Pauline individualisation fifty years after the beginnings of the new perspective, I also want to attend to this publication’s theme, to think particularly about textual modes of institutionalisation of a particular religiously imagined/constructed selfhood. Imagining early Christian institutionalisation in a historically disciplined way remains a problem: on the one hand, Jesus-devotion was relatively marked by ambitious institution building. On the other hand, our sources, including Paul’s letters, allow a rich description of the varied social imaginary of some proto-Christians, but do not document the social mechanics of Christ-groups nearly so well. Standing as we are in societies which are not only hyper-individualised, but also hyper-institutionalised and hyper-organised, we are hermeneutically challenged not to misunderstand the impact of what look to us as rudimentary, almost subliminal institutions.

This is no place to sketch in any detail the initial institutional life of Christ communities, or to trace the institutional development of the Pauline groups. I want to emphasise, however, the strikingly unobtrusive, yet effective local and translocal institutional patterns that sufficed for the first generations of the Christ *ekklēsia*, as a basis for discussing the somewhat distinctive institutionalisation implicit in Pauline textuality itself. Thirty years ago Margaret MacDonald published her 'Socio-historical Study of Institutionalisation in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings' which views the Pauline texts as documents of the changing institutionalisation of Christ-groups as their focus shifted: from initial community-building, through stabilisation, toward protection from internal and external threats and competition (MacDonald 1988; compare Back, Koskeniemi 2016). MacDonald studied the extra-textual social institutions attested by the texts. In the case of Paul's baffling language in Romans 7, I think it is the text itself or, somewhere between the text and social groups, Pauline epistolography as a quite specific social institutional field within Pauline proto-Christianity, which is activated within 'a special type of institutions' (Engberg-Pedersen 2006, 71) of reading, writing, transmitting, and interpreting. MacDonald adopted her definition of 'institutionalisation' from the seminal work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman for whom,

[i]nstitutionalization occurs whenever there is reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution. What must be stressed is the reciprocity of institutional typifications and the typicality of not only the actions but also the actors in institutions.

(MacDonald 1988, 11 n. 21 citing, Berger, Luckman 1967, 54)

The whole social-rhetorical process of generating and using early Christian, especially Pauline epistolary literature participates in Greco-Roman cultural types and institutions. Epistolography was an important institution in Greco-Roman culture, despite the absence of a modern postal system. But early Christian epistolography was also a distinctively Pauline and para-Pauline (eventually post-Pauline) institution, designed to support particular imaginaries of Christ's *ekklēsia* in the world.

In recent German and Canadian scholarship, the actual organisation of early Christ-groups has been understood largely along the very wide spectrum of specific membership associations (literature: Last 2012, 175 n. 8; Ascough 2016, 87–9). Broadly speaking, it would have been hard in antiquity to produce a better generalisation about basic early Christian organisation than Pliny's famous dismissal of Christ-groups as *hetaeriae*, which might, even in their own adherents' eyes, come under prohibition more because of the frequency of their meetings than because of the content of their rather homespun mysteries and interestingly differentiated

leadership patterns. Paul assumes for his addressees in Corinth that an uninitiated person might conceivably enter where ‘the whole *ekklēsia*’ is gathered in the same place (I Corinthians 14:23–5). Paul expects that the intruder or visitor so imagined would remark on intense charismatic arousal, would experience the revelation of their own heart’s secrets and would be conscious of divine presence. Paul does not suggest that the outsider would experience any great shock of religious-institutional novelty. The Corinthian Christ cult-group as imagined by Paul seems institutionally less marked than, say, a synagogue of Judaeans might have been.

One aspect of early Christian institutionalisation that seems relatively marked over a fairly long time span is the habit of translocal and transregional networking. Paul was an important agent of this process and his surviving letters are its most important documentation. Moreover, the Pauline evidence indicates plenty of (often rival) non-Pauline activity. It is thus impossible to make a balanced assessment of which habits were Pauline distinctives or innovations. Even before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD, and even with the accession of many non-Jews, Jesus groups seem not only to have participated in Judean geographical dispersion. They also mimicked the institutions of communication between diaspora communities and the Temple, sending and receiving *apostoloi* and transmitting sacred money to Jerusalem. This is the long-distance habit of ritualised communication within which the Pauline habits of writing, exchanging, sharing and preserving letters became an important institution, with ramifications for imagining individuals’ roles within community.

1.4 Pre-Canonical textual institutionalisation

Some years ago I argued that earliest Christianity was more an ‘agglomeration of rituals’ (Ando 2003, 143) than an incipient ‘religion of the book’ (Henderson 2006). My point then was that it is interesting that early Jesus-adepts, including Paul, but not just dependent on his genius, institutionalised a certain distinctive bookishness, but with a noticeably lighter style of institutionalisation than in the bookishness of a more normal philosophical school or of more normal Jewish *hairesis*. Eventually, Patristic Christianity would institutionalise Scripture over against Rabbinic Judaism (Stroumsa 2015, 30–4, 53f.). The epistolary habit of Paul and his correspondents; the preservation and collection of some of his letters; the collections’ pseudepigraphic extension; accretion of letters by other figures; fairly remote, generic imitation by Ignatius; perhaps even Marcion’s project, all evidence a process of literary institutionalisation which is generically modest yet ideologically ambitious (Pervo 2010). My primary point here, which I will want to

turn back into discussion of individualisation, is that the Christian institutions of Scripture-reading and epistolography are well-attested analogues for thinking of other aspects of the Christian social imaginary as, paradoxically, very lightly, yet very powerfully institutionalised.

My earlier discussion was not intended to understate either the influence of prior Jewish scriptural institutions or the important marking of local Christ-groups and of the larger Christian network as, in Guy Stroumsa’s words, “reading communities”, whose cultural and religious capital was, to a great extent, represented by its books’ (Stroumsa 2012, 186). My concern was more to think about the paradox that early Christ-groups could be to a significant degree ‘a “textual community”’ (Gamble 2004, 29), “reading communities”’ (Stroumsa 2012, 186) or even a ‘re-reading community’ constituted by reading Jewish books in deliberately un-Jewish ways, while only very gradually institutionalising a distinctive Christian sense of apostolic and evangelic literature. In his analysis of ‘exaggerated exclusionary mechanisms’ in elite reading communities, William Johnson notes that, ‘there clearly were those in the high empire who were able to use their intellectual gifts to find a way around the exclusionary circles that the elite drew around themselves’ (Johnson 2010, 205).

Motivated by the communicative necessities of the gospel, Paul became the model of such a possibility (Henderson 2011, 29–31). Brian Stock and others have described the institutionalisation of ‘scriptural communities’ in later Christianity in ways that go beyond questions of canonicity and definition of Scripture (Stock 1996; Grafton, Williams 2008; Klingshirn, Safran 2007; Clark 1999; Stroumsa 2015; Haines-Eitzen 2012; Krueger 2004). For the earliest generations of Jesus-devotees, both with regard to the rituals of textuality and with regard to the non-textual mysteries of baptism, commensality, exorcism, a very little institutionalisation went a very long way toward establishing and stabilising Christian identity.

Thus I continue to accept Harry Gamble’s judgement that early Christian literacy and attitudes to textuality were continuous with those of Greek-language society generally – much more different from at least some Jewish attitudes towards sacred texts. I therefore still find exaggerated Stroumsa’s emphasis on the ‘revolutionary form of literacy’ (Stroumsa 2003, 168) and ‘characteristic status’ of books (Stroumsa 2012, 186) in early Christianity, although, as Larry Hurtado reminds us, early adoption of the codex and scribal features such as *nomina sacra* do suggest some specifically Christian consciousness of textual institutionality (Hurtado 2006; 2012). I admire Stroumsa’s earlier formulation, that ‘Christianity was from the beginning, rather than a religion of the book, one of the “paper-back” (if one is allowed an anachronistic metaphor)’ (Stroumsa 2003, 173). The early Christian institutionalisation of textuality seems physically marked by an almost shabby pragmatism. In Gamble’s words,

when Christians began using the codex not merely for notes but as a vehicle of texts, they did so not because those books had a special status as aesthetic or cult objects, but because they meant them to be practical books for everyday use, the handbooks, as it were, of Christian communities. (Gamble 2004, 34)

The paradox in the institutionalisation of Christian textuality is, for the earliest period, even more marked and much better attested in the especially, though not exclusively, Pauline habit of letter-writing, than it is in the emergent habit of codex-use. The earliest specifically Christian literature was in the letter genre, indeed, not only in the epistolary genre, but actually within the social institutions of letter-writing, sending, receiving and preservation. Proto-Christian institutional use of texts is usually assumed to be continuous with Jewish synagogic Torah-reading, about which we also really know remarkably little. Dan Nässelqvist argues well that continuity with synagogue practice does not account for the little we know of initial Christian collective reading practices (Nässelqvist 2016, 96–118). Notably, the earliest Christian admonition toward collective, institutionalised reading is the repeated command to read out apostolic (or pseudo-apostolic) letters (I Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16; I Timothy 4:13; Acts 15:22–35) or prophetic oracles including angelic letters (Revelation 1:3). Paul's letters often cite the Septuagint (Gamble 2004, 29 n. 1), especially when he needs to display his expertise, but he does not presuppose systematically that his addressees are constituted as communities by institutionalised liturgical Bible-reading. Famously, II Peter 3:16 implies a rather advanced institutionalisation of reading Paul's letters, as authoritative along with other, unspecified scriptures, precisely despite the interpretative difficulties and attendant dangers of misinterpreting Paul.

As far as I know, Melito of Sardis is the first attested Christ-preacher to assume explicitly that a pre-Christian Scripture (Exodus) has actually been read as part of a Christ-centred (paschal) liturgy (*Peri Pascha* 1), but the liturgical situation is not presented as typical. The earliest description of collective reading within Christian weekly worship is strikingly vague (Rouwhorst 2002, 326), surely deliberately minimalist and synthetic: by mid-second century, Justin Martyr can claim that weekly Eucharistic assemblies might typically include readings of flexible length from 'the memoirs (*apomnemoneumata*) of the apostles', which Justin earlier says were 'called *euaggelia*', 'or [*sic*] the writings (*suggrammata*) of the prophets' (Justin, *First Apology* 67). Justin claims that reading is a marked part of regular Christ-ritual; he does not really inform his audience about the rather discretionary selection of texts to be read.

Harry Gamble expresses clearly the position I seek to qualify and the under-warranted assumption on which it is based: 'We must assume [*sic*] that originally and continuously Jewish scriptures were read in Christian assemblies,

but it is clear that from a very early time Christian writings began to be read alongside them [...] (Gamble 2004, 33; compare Gamble 1995, 211–8).

An interesting alternative imagination, based on identical evidence, is expressed equally dogmatically by Valeriy Alikin:

The reading of authoritative writings took place in the social session connected with the supper. That was the context in which apostolic and other important letters, Prophets and Gospels were read aloud to the community gathered for its weekly supper and conviviality. There is a close analogy between the reading of texts during non-Christian banquets and that during the Christians' gatherings connected with their weekly supper.

(Alikin 2010, 157f., cited in Nässelqvist 2016, 101)

My intuitions are closer here to Alikin's, but clearly Christ-groups very early began the habit of producing, exchanging, and re-reading texts, which supported their ecclesial identity and incipient institutionalisation. This textual habit began with letters, mostly Paul's letters, informed by general consciousness of a special Christian way of re-reading Jewish texts.

2 Romans 7

2.1 Romans 7:1 'I am speaking to people who are aware of Torah'

Paul's great letter to Christ-groups in Rome exhibits most of the institutionalising paradoxes of early Christian textuality. In terms of length and elaboration, Paul's treatise-letter to Jesus devotees in Rome explodes norms for epistolary genre, yet it was, socially speaking, a real letter, engaged not only in developing Paul's apostolic philosophy, but also in the pragmatics of travel arrangements and inter-group diplomacy. Notably Paul displays his erudition and ingenuity in scriptural argumentation, but rarely in ways that presuppose or require much actual textual knowledge from his correspondents. Nonetheless auditors of Paul's letter to the Romans cannot ignore that he is engaged in a monumental struggle to make sense of himself between the Gospel and the Torah.

Some of the interplay between the emerging institutionality of a particular attitude to texts and the projection of a strong habit of individuality appears already in the first words of Romans 7. These mark with a rhetorical question a quite strong transition from the topic of Sin to the topic of Torah-Law. Romans 6 begins with the formula, 'What shall we say then?' followed by an absurd question, 'Shall we continue in Sin, that Grace might abound? *Mē genoito!*'

followed in verse 3 by the further formulaic question, ‘Or are you unaware that [...]?’ Chapter 7 reverses and extends the pattern. So Chapter 7 begins with the formula, ‘Or are you unaware [...] that [...]’ (7:1), followed a paragraph later by the formula, ‘What shall we say then?’ followed by its absurd question, ‘Is the Law Sin? *Mē genoito!*’ (7:7). The reader/hearer of Chapter 6 on Sin recognises that Chapter 7 is a new section and that it will be about Law. Because Romans 7:1 introduces the chapter as a whole it is clear that Paul has, as is usual, the Torah in mind when he speaks about Law/*Nomos* (sixteen times in Romans 7). Paul does not operate with a generic sense of ‘law’ of which ‘Mosaic Law’ is even a very special case; Paul works with the God-Revealed Torah, which when represented by the word *nomos* might acquire some ironic connections with merely human legal institutions (Hellholm 1997).

Romans 7:1 beautifully crystallises Paul’s first-person self-projection and his interest in institutionalising his hearers’ relationship with the Torah in Christ – in the sense of epistolary and discursive institutionalisation that I am trying to capture. Almost everything that I want to say about Romans 7 as a whole can be said about Romans 7:1; at any rate I agree with David Hellholm’s observation that Paul’s assertive language here is ‘sehr viel beachtenswerter als oftmals erkannt’ (Hellholm 1997, 401). Paul begins this new section, ‘Or are you unaware, kindred, – for I am speaking to people who recognise Torah/Law (*ginōskousin gar nomon lalō*) – that the Law rules a person only as long as s/he lives?’

The aside, ‘for I am talking to people who recognise Torah’, is especially important, though almost casually passed over by commentators, precisely because it so directly invokes the epistolary communicative situation, both in its institutional character and in its intensely typified personal character. This is the first time since the vividly personal comments in Romans 3:5–7 that the putative authorial voice has appeared in the first person singular; the strong presence of the first person that is so strongly marked later in Romans 7 by the repeated *egō* begins in 7:1 already with *lalō*, ‘I’m talking’. In a complex ‘jeu des pronoms’ (Gignac 2014, 241 and *passim*), Paul is deliberately (re-)activating the epistolary convention of fictional orality and personal presence here, after several chapters, and especially chapter 6, in which the ‘I’ has been absorbed into ‘we’.

Now the ‘I’ which is here invoked is not the introspective self of modernity, nor is it some objectively real Paul: it is emphatically the rhetorical self, perhaps the prophetic self, consciously institutionalised as authoritative speaker addressing fictive kin. All through Romans there is a character ‘Paul’ who habitually addresses some people in Rome whom the real Paul has never met. In Romans 7, however, even in the opening words ‘Paul’ typifies himself – using the institutional frames of epistolary rhetoric – as a certain kind of self, able to speak to a

certain kind of audience about the Torah, which is a little different than the way the same ‘Paul’ has just spoken to essentially the same audience about Sin. In any letter and all through Romans, the authorial voice and the auditors are typified rhetorically: that is a key part of the institution of epistolography. In Romans 7, however, Paul typifies himself and his auditors differently by slipping so noticeably into the first personal address, eventually emphasised as we shall see by the repeated *egō* of 7:7–25.

It is no coincidence, then, that Paul also here suddenly resumes addressing his auditors typically as fictive ‘kindred’, *adelphoi*, for the first time since Romans 1:13 where it also complements the first person singular and the wish to overcome possible lack of awareness: ‘I do not wish you to be unaware, kindred, that I have often intended to come to you and have so far been prevented.’ We may regard ‘kindred’, *adelphoi*, as simply the typical reciprocal Christian address within the institution of the *ekklēsia*, but this typification of Paul’s epistolary audience is not randomly distributed in Romans. In Romans 1:13 and in Romans 7:1 Paul invokes several of the same epistolary conventions/institutions. In Romans 1 the epistolary ‘Paul’ works hard to establish himself with listeners who do not know the real Paul; in Romans 7 Paul reinitialises or reinstitutes both his epistolary/prophetic self and his relationship with his audience as their senior cognate in order to speak to them about the Law. After Romans 7:1, Paul will address his audience as ‘kindred’ seventeen more times, distributed throughout the remainder of the letter. Thus Romans 7:1 is a marked turning point in the long letter. For our purposes, however, what matters is that the turning point turns not only on Paul’s use of convenient rhetorical-epistolary possibilities, but also specifically on Paul’s typification of an epistolary self in relation to epistolary as well as cultic kindred. At this particular moment in Romans we are witnessing a sudden stress on rhetorical typification of actors and individualisation of an epistolary self in close kinship with the imagined auditors.

The ‘I’ of Romans 7:1 is, however, not only reminding his auditors that they are his next of kin: he also suddenly refers to them as ‘people who are aware of Torah’, *ginōskousin gar nomon lalō*. Unless it becomes impossible, we should understand Paul’s *nomos* to refer to God-given Torah. In 7:1 and in the illustration from marriage-law in 7:2–4 I doubt that Paul, as Dierk Starnitzke puts it, ‘meint einfach die allgemeine menschliche Kenntnis bestehender Ehegesetze’. A page later Starnitzke does a little better to suppose that *nomos* ‘hier nicht nur die jüdische Tora meint, sondern allgemeiner die bestehenden Ehegesetze’ (Starnitzke 2004, 232f.). I think Paul would find the phrase ‘jüdische Tora’ reductive and misleading: Paul knows that Torah does or should define Jewishness (Gal 1:13f.), but I do not see that he could think that Torah is Jewish in anything like the ways that Roman law is ‘Roman’. The Torah defines Jewishness, but for Paul Torah certainly

has ‘application to non-Israelite humanity’ (*pace* Esler 2003, 236). In Romans 7, ‘it is not only Jews who are concerned with the Law’ (Gaventa 2013, 88).

Thus Romans 7:2–4, like I Corinthians 7:10f., 39, apparently regards all married women, at least Christ-devotees, Jewish or not, as bound by a version of marriage law which is restrictive and idealised, even by the standards of Second Temple Judaism. As we shall see again, in Romans 7:7, Paul does not randomly select an aspect of Torah to illustrate his argument: Paul assumes that both Jewish and non-Jewish Christ-devotees can marry and that their relationships are structured by Torah – and therefore also in a certain sense by death.

At the same time I do not think that with *ginōskousin gar nomon lalō* Paul means to flatter his correspondents for their knowledgeable ability, still less actually to suggest that they were anything like his equals in Torah expertise or authority, or that they have Numbers 5:11–29 (LXX) actively in mind, as I guess Paul himself does (Witherington 2004, 175). I think Paul understands his audience throughout Romans to be a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish Jesus-devotees with no uniform level of biblical or ritual knowledge; it seems incredible within the pragmatics of a letter actually sent to be read outside the sender’s total control, that Paul is signaling with 7:1 a change from a mixed, but largely non-Jewish audience to an essentially Jewish or Torah-observant audience (still less is Paul focusing on an exclusively Gentile audience sunken in extreme, entrenched immorality).¹

Paul does not expect his correspondents to know much about the content of Torah as a legal system, but he does expect them to be aware of two, for Paul basic, principles: that Torah is binding during the life of the covenant subject and that a woman once married (*hypandros* [compare Numbers 5:20, 29 LXX]) may not marry again while her first husband lives. Paul constructs – typifies – his hearers as junior siblings who as such are supposed to have at least some minimal awareness and interest in how Torah works when its centre has been displaced, or replaced toward Christ. This re-institutionalisation of self and of the auditors as kindred is for the author of Romans significantly more urgent in relation to the topic of Torah/Law than it was to the topic of Sin, because it will be necessary to institutionalise some on-going positive role for Torah within the Christ-covenant.

¹ *Contra* Wischmeyer 2005, 101 n. 50, ‘Kap. 7 passt nur auf Juden’; Esler 2003, 222, 225, Romans 7:1 is ‘an aural cue’ that Paul is now focusing more on Judaeans than on non-Judaeans among his recipients; Wasserman 2008, 148, Romans 1–8 is ‘addressing a particularly Gentile plight’, compare 6f., 114f., 125f.

2.2 Romans 7:7–25

2.2.1 Egodocument

We turn at last to consider the heart of Romans 7. My concern here is only to argue that this chapter of Romans did rhetorically institutionalise within Pauline Christianity a kind of Pauline self – not inevitably a modern, introspective self, not inevitably *simul justus et peccator*, but still remarkably individualised in relation to Sin, Death, God's Law, and, eventually life in the Spirit of Christ. Here I want to return to Engberg-Pedersen's description of Pauline individualisation as the emotional-cognitive individuality of an acratia self, radicalised in the painful awareness of moral and cognitive self-contradiction (*akrasia*) by encounter with divine Law. I agree with Engberg-Pedersen that 'there are plenty of reasons for finding a full-blown concept of a "person" in Rom 7:14–25' (Engberg-Pedersen 2011, 103), but I want to take a further step and note that Paul specifically in Romans 7 institutes an intensified and at least temporarily divided self as part of his correspondents' new Christian social imaginary. This section will describe the exegetically controversial individualisation I am finding in Romans 7. In a concluding section I will then reflect on the kind of institutionalisation I am attributing to Paul's action in including Romans 7 in his monumental letter.

From the moment Paul composed it, Romans 7 has been seen to be simultaneously one of the most important and one of the most difficult passages in Early Christian discourse (Schröter 2013, 198). Throughout its reception history it has been both unavoidable and problematic. Even apart from such high reception-historical and theological stakes, there is therefore not the slightest chance of 'solving' the passage's many exegetical puzzles. Nor is it conceivable that any exegetical 'solutions' I might endorse would become a consensus. I propose to claim this impasse as an opportunity to confine myself to sketching an answer to the questions whether/how the passage individualises and institutionalises a 'self'. The bibliography cited will only serve to document my own process, though Jens Schröter gives a good general orientation (Schröter 2013, 195–207).

From a rhetorical-critical point of view, it is inescapable that the historic composer of Romans consciously and successfully intended Romans 7 to be especially impressive and dramatic, at some expense to argumentative and propositional clarity. By Chapter 7, the author to the Romans has shown himself to be communicatively highly competent, so the oddity of Romans 7 must be taken as purposeful. That communicative decision is the basis for all the exegetical problems and all the hermeneutical attention the text has generated. Because Romans announces itself as a strongly representative text, that is, as a text

introducing ‘Paul’ the slave and apostle of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1), it is particularly important to recognise that, throughout, the implied author ‘Paul’ and, more subtly and variably, the authorial voice in the text, are constructs, never simply related to the historic person to which they refer (Starnitzke 2004, 239f.). In some sense the whole of Romans is about the initial institutional representation of one particular ‘self’ as the authoritative representative of another, Jesus, who is much less personally realised. Within that constructive project, however, and to some extent interrupting it, is the construction of the deeply conflicted ‘I’ of Romans 7. What is going on in Romans 7 with regard to selfhood is not straightforwardly related to what is going on with ‘Paul’ in the rest of the text. Although all Paul’s authentic letters are ‘egodocuments’, ‘[D]ocuments in which an ego deliberately or accidentally discloses or hides itself’ (J. Presser cited and translated in Mascuch, Dekker, Baggerman 2016, 11), they contain relatively little autodiegetic, autobiographical narrative. Paul writes enough about himself, however, for Romans 7 to stand out as an argument about *egō* and Torah, not a memoir (Wischmeyer 2005, 101f.).

2.2.2 Torah and *akrasia*

The most original aspect of Romans 7 is the fact that it is the encounter with the Torah which radicalises the tension of *akrasia* into an inescapable crisis, however we analyse that crisis in relation to the ‘self’. Niko Huttenen has shown just how far in content and diatribic style Paul resembles Epictetus on law; for Huttenen, however, ‘Paul identifies Torah with more general moral principles’ (Huttenen 2009, 117f.). The intensity of Romans 7 only makes sense, however, in Paul’s apocalyptic discovery that general moral principles are implications of divine Torah, locked in implacable struggle with Sin and Death.

Paul could have imagined an acratia crisis emerging retrospectively, and therefore with much less emotional force, triggered by the experience of radical transformation and resolution in Christ. Thus in Galatians 2:15–21 in a moment of autobiographical candour Paul refers to himself and Peter/Cephas as ‘we Jews by nature, not Gentile sinners’, but then asks rhetorically, ‘if we, in the process of seeking to be rightwised in Christ, were found ourselves to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not’. Paul to the Galatians can imagine himself and Peter as a non-acratia, Jewish Torah-observant ‘we’, retroactively discovering themselves to have been sinners all along, scarcely better than Gentiles. In Galatians 2, the discovery comes not because of the Torah, but because of the experience of a new righteousness in Christ. By contrast, the Paul of Romans 7 chooses to give Torah the role of inducing or intensifying an *akrasia* which will

only be relieved in the next chapter, Romans 8, by the new life in the Spirit of Christ. As Stefan Krauter puts it, in Romans 7, 'either the "I" wants to say "sin used the law to deceive me and therefore I have become akratic," or the sense of the passage is "since I am akratic sin was able to use the law to deceive me and make my situation even worse." [...] the former is far more plausible' (Krauter 2011, 115).

We noted above Paul's deliberate choice of marriage-law in 7:1–3 to introduce his discussion of the ambiguous, but indispensable role of the Torah. In Romans 7:7 there is an equally non-random choice of *ouk epithumēseis*, 'You shall not desire', as Torah's only direct speech in the passage. The point is not that Paul is quoting from Exodus 20:17 or Deuteronomy 5:21, where *ouk epithumēseis* has direct objects in personal law. Instead the prohibition of *epithumia* understood absolutely, apart from a particular prohibited object, universalises Torah beyond exclusively Jewish concerns (see Schröter 2013, 212 n. 97 for Jewish texts citing *epithumia* as paradigmatic, attitudinal sin). Understanding *epithumia* as 'desire' not 'coveting' internalises and clarifies the possibility of Sin using Torah in individuals, 'to lead humans into the miserable state of akrasia' (Krauter 2011, 122). Epitomising Torah by the prohibition of *epithumia* institutionalises and internalises Torah as the universal possibility of individual moral failure.

Among the things that make Romans 7 text-linguistically so distinctive within Romans and the wider Pauline corpus, it is salient that 'this relatively brief passage is marked by eight verbs of perception/recognition' (Martyn 2002, 93), in addition to many verbs of intention and action; there is both a tension internal to cognition and a tension between cognition and action. Even very different readings of this passage as about the experience of acute *akrasia* share the virtue of identifying the drama of the passage as a cognitive process imaginable essentially within human personalities (compare Wasserman 2008; Krauter 2011; Engberg-Pedersen 2011).

We have also already noted the sudden, dense reintroduction of the first person singular, twenty-seven times in 7:7–25. This is heightened by association with 'the emphatic pronoun ἐγώ, which has previously appeared in the letter only at 3:7' (Gaventa 2013, 78). One of the eight occurrences of *egō* in Romans 7:7–25 is textually insecure; moreover, it has long been conjectured, without manuscript support, that Romans 7:25b with its even more emphatic *autos egō* may be a very early, intrusive gloss (possibly misplaced after v. 25a rather than with v. 24: Schröter 2013, 207f.). I distrust such conjectures, but if I knew that 7:25b with its *autos egō* was indeed such an early gloss, it would be astonishingly early evidence that Romans was understood as positing an emphatically self-divided self, incorporating a Torah divided by the self who internalises it. If

Romans 7:25b did not originate as an intrusive gloss, it is a remarkable rephrasing of the argument of the section in language which recalls that the character ‘Paul’ in Romans first introduced himself as ‘slave of Christ Jesus’ (Romans 1:1). So Engberg-Pedersen notes, ‘it is not at all surprising that Paul should end up summarising his description in 7:25b as follows: “Consequently, *I myself* (αὐτὸς ἐγὼ = *autos egō*) am enslaved to God’s law with my mind (νοῦς), and to the law of sin within my flesh.”’ (Engberg-Pedersen 2011, 103).

Despite contrasting overall approaches, Engberg-Pedersen and, in a famous article to which I shall return, Paul Meyer agree that the dichotomy of the Law which appears not only in 7:25b, but also in vv. 21–23, ‘the Law of God related to my inner person’ and the ‘other counterattacking Law in my members’ refers throughout to the one Torah, differentially experienced by the divided, paralysed self. Whatever else the Torah does, it radicalises or even causes the situation of a divided self, who fully intends to do what is good and then actually and knowingly does what is wrong.

‘[W]hat [Paul] does in Rom. 7.7–25 is precisely to develop, spell out and almost “celebrate” that crux for thought in its most emphatic and impressive form: in the recognition of a schizophrenic split in the mind of a person who basically sees the Mosaic Law as God’s own law, a split that has such proportions that it even generates a kind of split in the Law itself’ (Engberg-Pedersen 2002b, 54).

‘[...] the “two” laws are whatever they are – *as seen by*, or from the *perspective of*, those other two anthropological parts of the I-person. [...] Paul Meyer is right on target when he concludes that “not only the ‘law of God’ (v. 22) but also this ‘different law’ (v. 23) is the Mosaic law!” [...] The point is precisely that these two things – Law and self – go together’ (Engberg-Pedersen 2002b, 50 and n. 24 quoting Meyer 1990, 79).

2.2.3 ‘Apocalyptic’ and ‘acritic’ readings

In a 1995 article published in a volume edited by Engberg-Pedersen, Stanley Stowers argued that Romans 7:7–25 is an exercise in ‘speech-in-character’ (*prosōpopoiia*); that is, at the very least, the Ego-voice in 7:7–25 is not supposed to be heard as representing the implied authorial voice of ‘Paul’. Certainly it is valuable to see that the heavy marking of the Ego-voice is likely rhetorically to differentiate it and generalise or universalise it over against the usual discursive voice of the letter (compare Schröter 2013, 210). In fact, Stowers goes further, approvingly quoting Origen as saying ‘that the discourse has different characterisations (προσωποποιίαι) and the sections conform to various qualities of characters (πρόσωπα)’ (Stowers 1995, 194). That is, the passage is not only not

to be heard as in the voice of the main speaker of Romans as a whole; it should be internally distributed among a plurality of characters in fierce dramatic dialogue (Dodson 2008). Origen also understood the passage as broadly about *akrasia*, but apparently across a range of moral types (Stowers 1995, 196f.). Readings of Romans 7 through a plurality of voices, none easily identified with the authorial voice of the letter as a whole, cohere well with readings which emphasise the agency of the superhuman powers of Death, Law, and, especially Sin – perhaps especially where the 'I' character is identified with some sort of transpersonal 'Adam' (Schröter 2013, 209–11) or 'Eve' (Krauter 2011, 116–9). As Beverly Gaventa summarises Paul Meyer's influential reading, 'Sin continues to be the major "character" in the argument. [...] the primary concern in Romans 7 is neither the Law nor the "I" but the way in which Sin's power can reach into and use even the holy and right and good Law of God' (Gaventa 2013, 77 referring to Meyer 1990).

From the standpoint of such broadly 'apocalyptic' readings of Romans 7, Susan Eastman accuses Engberg-Pedersen of omitting 'any serious reckoning with the role of sin as an agent acting on and through persons' (Eastman 2013, 104 n. 23). J. Louis Martyn went further, contrasting Engberg-Pedersen's 'de-apocalypticising' reading of Romans 7 with Meyer's reading to emphasise the dramatic struggle between Sin and God:

'What the self comes to know is rather a *drama* marked – as in apocalyptic dramas generally – by the presence and doings of actors other than human beings. Far from being a merely anthropological "element of sin in oneself", *hamartia* is an actor who, being the subject of verbs, plays an essential part in the drama as nothing less than the opponent of God' (Martyn 2002, 94; compare Rowe 2016, 98).

Engberg-Pedersen has tried to incorporate the strengths of 'apocalyptic', mythopoetic readings of Romans 7 into a reading which also sees Paul as arguing for a strongly individualised 'person (cognitive and bodily)' defined pathologically – murdered (7:11) – by the encounter with Sin and Torah – to be redefined in Romans 8 by the encounter with the Spirit (*pneuma*) also understood quite concretely (compare Engberg-Pedersen 2002a with Engberg-Pedersen 2011, quoting 111 n. 56; on the materiality of *pneuma*, 106 and n. 50). With regard to "'apocalyptic" powers' Engberg-Pedersen argues,

'for seeing them [in Paul] as *physical* entities that are present both in the world at large and also within human beings. They are also to be seen (from a Pauline perspective) as *personal* powers. Finally – and most importantly [...] – they are to be understood as *cognitive* powers. [...] This point is of huge importance. It is precisely by *accepting* the "apocalyptic" reading of Paul that one may also come to see the importance of the "philosophical" one' (Engberg-Pedersen 2011, 94 and n. 25).

3 Paul's 'I' as 'spectral institution' within a Christ-centred social imaginary

We return now, belatedly, to the issue of institutionalisation. The reception-history of Paul and Romans 7 has been characterised by productive misunderstanding, from Marcion (Schmid 1995, 333) to Harnack, to the 'new perspective', and the debate in English-language exegesis between 'apocalyptic' and 'acratic' readings. Even if the (here preferred) acratic reading is not fully embraced, it justifies the strong presumption, that Romans was composed and transmitted – including Romans 7 – with an expectation of predictable communicative effectiveness. The letter credibly claims to represent the voice of 'Paul' on a monumental scale and with a rhetorical intensity transcending normal epistolography, to a network of Jesus devotees in Rome who on the whole do not independently know Paul. Romans both used and exceeded existing social institutions of letter exchange. On any account, Romans 7 was from its conception unusually difficult to ignore or to understand. No doubt Romans became easier to misunderstand as it became distanced from its originally designed occasion and setting, but it seems exegetically inescapable that at least Romans 7 was designed to have a generalisable literary function within which it was worthwhile to be conceptually provocative as well as impressively dramatic.

Romans presented itself as a monumental, representative letter transmitted within a pioneering religious network, from a controversial authority figure, to unfamiliar recipients prior to a possible visit. As such Romans should have reflected and contributed to 'community-building institutionalisation', in terms of MacDonald's typology of community-building, stabilising, and defending institutionalisation. Few would deny that 'Paul' goes well beyond what was likely useful or even prudent for those kinds of social function. Few indeed would now claim that the Ego-voice in Romans 7 is in any sense autobiographical for the extra-textual Paul. Still, the text-internal figure, 'Paul', clearly has work in hand to stabilise the heavily-qualified institutionality of the Torah within the emerging new institutions of the *euaggelion* and *ekklēsia*. I cannot tell how influential Torah-reading and Torah-observance were among Christ-devotees in Rome. I doubt that Paul knew. But the Torah is still massively important as well as problematic within the social imaginary which Paul is trying to institutionalise between himself and his correspondents.

At some later stabilising and defensive stages in the institutionalisation of Christianity a reading of Romans 7 like Peter Meyer's may have become stronger, in which Romans 7 became more about the tyranny of Sin than about the power of God-given Torah. In the institutional moment within which Romans was

imagined, however, Torah is still a live voice in the epistolary network, saying, *ouk epithumēseis* (Romans 7:7), more clearly and with greater authority than any other possible voice. Paul therefore resorted to *prosopopoeia* in order to imagine an intensely individualising human voice not immediately identifiable with 'Paul' or 'Adam' or 'Eve', but available to attract the provisional imaginative identification of auditors from different backgrounds in a still fluid sectarian network. The apocalyptic drama of Sin, Torah and the 'I' is essentially narrated by the murdered 'I' (7:11); it is the same somehow ghostly 'I' who reflects on the acratia situation which is radicalised when the same divine Torah is internalised as simultaneously revelatory and fatal. Engberg-Pedersen's work has been decisive for me in helping me to imagine historically an actual Paul who might more-or-less consciously have elaborated such a confrontation of Sin, Torah, and an internalising Self.

The author to the Romans believed that the proto-Christian self was and should somehow remain normatively unstable specifically in relation to God's Torah. Paul therefore needed to invent an internalising, surprisingly alienated 'I' in order to teach his auditors how to engage Torah as the normative preparation for transferring into 'the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:2). In this way 'Paul' in Romans 7 retained Torah and invented an 'I' to be permanent ghostly presences within the Christ-centred social imaginary he was elaborating. As a parting intuition, then, I would suggest that both the Torah and the acratia 'I' of Romans 7 are designed to work within the Pauline social imaginary as instances of something like Derrida's notion of 'spectral institution' (Derrida 1993), as permanently institutionalised, but always destabilising, momentary and haunting presences.

Appendix

Romans 7

This rough translation is only intended to bring out the general character of the text. 'I*' glosses *egō*.

I

¹ Or are you unaware, kindred – for I am talking to people who recognise Torah (*nomos*) – that the Torah governs a person only as long as s/he lives?² For a married woman is bound by Torah to her husband while he lives, but if the husband dies

she is released from the Torah concerning her husband.³ Accordingly, she will be deemed an adulteress if she belongs to another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from the Torah, so that if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴ Likewise, my kindred, you also have died to the Torah through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to the one who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the passions of our sins, aroused by the Torah, were at work in our members to bear fruit for Death.⁶ But now we are released from the Torah, having died to that which held us captive, so that we slave in newness of Spirit and not in antiquity of text.

II

⁷ What then shall we say? That the Torah is Sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the Torah, I would not have been aware of Sin. For I would not have known what desire is, if the Torah were not saying, 'You shall not desire'.⁸ But Sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of desire. For apart from the Torah, Sin is dead.⁹ I* was once alive apart from the Torah, but when the commandment came, Sin came to life¹⁰ but I* died and the very commandment that promised life is found to be death for me.¹¹ For Sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.¹² So the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, cause death for me? By no means! Rather it was Sin, in order that it might be shown to be Sin, which was enacting death in me through what is good, in order that Sin through the commandment might become utterly wicked.

III

¹⁴ For we know that the Torah is spiritual, but I* am fleshly, sold under Sin.¹⁵ For I do not recognise my own action. For I do what I do not want, but I do the very thing I hate.¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I am agreeing with the Torah, that it is good.¹⁷ So now it is no longer I* who act, but Sin dwelling in me.¹⁸ For I know

that nothing dwells in me, that is, in my flesh, that is good. For the will is present in me to do what is right, but not the ability to enact it.¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.²⁰ Now if I do what [I*] do not want, it is no longer I* who enact it, but Sin dwelling in me.

IV

²¹ So I find with regard to the Torah, that when I want to do right, evil is present for me. ²² For I delight in God's Torah, in my inward person, ²³ but I see in my members another Torah subverting the Torah of my mind and taking me prisoner in the Torah of Sin in my members. ²⁴ Wretch that I* am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I* myself serve God's Torah with my mind, but with my flesh I slave to the Torah of Sin.

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Anne Feldhaus

Individualisation, deindividualisation, and institutionalisation among the early Mahānubhāvs

The Old Marathi literature of the Mahānubhāvs provides a classic example of individualisation and its mitigation. Beginning in the second half of the 13th century, the Mahānubhāvs are a bhakti group (*sampradāy*) that places a high value on asceticism and recognises five principal incarnations of one supreme God, called Parameśvar. This chapter will examine the characterisation of two of the divine incarnations, Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāūḷ, in their Mahānubhāv hagiographies, and the account of the early years the incarnations' disciples spent without the benefit of the incarnations' presence. The three principal texts I will discuss are:

- 1) the *Līlācaritra*, the biography of Cakradhar (composed after 1274 and before 1287 CE);¹
- 2) *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur (Ṛddhipurcaritra)*, the biography of Cakradhar's guru, Guṇḍam Rāūḷ (composed 1287 CE);² and
- 3) *In the Absence of God (Smṛtistha)*, the account of the early Mahānubhāv disciples in the period after Cakradhar's departure and Guṇḍam Rāūḷ's death (composed 14th-15th century CE?).³

The *Līlācaritra* is the text I began translating under the auspices of the 'Religious Individualisation in Historical Perspective' project at the Max-Weber-Kolleg in Erfurt. I have already published translations of the other two texts (Feldhaus 1984 and Feldhaus, Tulpule 1992, respectively), under the English titles given above.

1 The most thorough edition of this text is Kolte 1982. I primarily follow the text of Nene 1936–1950, but the numbering I use follows that in my own edition and translation of this text forthcoming in the Murty Classical Library of India series. In Nene's edition and my own, the text has three sections: 'Ekāṅka', 'Pūrvārdha', and 'Uttarārdha'. In references in this chapter, these are abbreviated as E, P, and U (or LC, E; LC, P; and LC, U), respectively.

2 Kolte 1972. Translated in Feldhaus 1984. Abbreviated here as DGR.

3 Deśpāṇḍe 1968. Translated in Feldhaus, Tulpule 1992. Abbreviated here as SS.

1 Violations of social norms

Extraordinary in their behaviour and powers, the divine incarnations can be seen as individual humans who are relatively free from the constraints of societal norms.

Guṇḍam Rāūḷ in particular is portrayed as having been weird and erratic in his behaviour; townspeople in Ṛddhipur are often quoted (favorably) saying things like, ‘The Rāūḷ is mad; the Rāūḷ is possessed!’ He is demanding and petulant, particularly about food, and his disciples work hard to indulge his every whim. His biographer delights in recounting the kinds of crazy, eccentric things that Guṇḍam Rāūḷ used to do. Here are two typical chapters of *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur* (Feldhaus 1984, 150, 81):

DGR 288. He plays with his reflection.

The Gosāvī used to go up to a small well. He would stand at the edge and look at his holy face in the well. He would talk to himself. He would say things to himself. He would comb his beard with his fingernails. He would laugh. He would put his holy hand into the well. Sometimes he would sit at the edge of the well, dangling his holy feet.

He would play this way, and then he would leave.

DGR 101. He abuses his buttocks when he farts.

The Gosāvī went out by the eastern gate. When he was near the Paraśūrāma temple, to the northeast of it, he farted.

And the Gosāvī said, “Die, buttocks! Die! Why are you shouting?” and he slapped his buttocks and laughed.

Then he left.

The *Līlācaritra* also has several descriptions of Guṇḍam Rāūḷ’s appearance and behaviour (E7, E21, P46–52, P72, P274, P440, and P444). In the following passage, for instance, a disciple who has just returned from Ṛddhipur describes Guṇḍam Rāūḷ’s ‘play’ to Cakradhar (LC, P444):

Lord, Lord, the Gosāvī would get up early in the morning. He would walk back and forth. Then he would go to [the village of] Āpviḥir. Along the way he would play with a boundary stone. He would play at the Five Pipal Trees. Then he would go into the town. He would go into house after house. He would take down the stack of storage pots with his holy hand. He would taste the vegetables. He would stack up the pile again. He would look this way, and then he would say, “Hey, now this is the way I like it.”

The Gosāvī would be going along the road. And he would burst out laughing.

Compared to Guṇḍam Rāūḷ’s portrayal in *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur*, Cakradhar’s biography depicts *him* as relatively sane. It does nonetheless show

him to have been to a great extent free from the bonds of normal social expectations. The first part of the *Līlācaritra*, 'Ekānka' ('The Solitary Period'), describes Cakradhar in his earlier years as leaving behind home and family to become a wandering, homeless, emotionally detached ascetic – the archetype of the 'individual' in classical India, according to Louis Dumont (1960). One of the principal clusters of characteristics that 'Ekānka' emphasises in its portrayal of Cakradhar (whom it calls 'the Gosāvī') is his dispassion and asceticism. Asceticism is a high ideal for Mahānubhāvs, and a life of constant, solitary wandering, renunciation, and detachment (the way of the *sannyāsī*, a wandering ascetic or renouncer) is the central ethical teaching of the *Sūtrapāṭh*, the Mahānubhāvs' anthology of Cakradhar's teachings (Feldhaus 1983). In his early period as a wandering ascetic, Cakradhar certainly illustrates this ideal:

LC, E8. He accepts a state of extreme detachment.

The Gosāvī accepted a state of dispassion. He was not inclined to walk along the road. His matted hair got caught in thorns. The wind would blow it loose, or someone would come along and unravel it, and then the Gosāvī would move on. Thorns would pierce his body and scratch it. Drops of blood would appear. They would naturally look beautiful, like rubies on pure gold.

Repeatedly in the text, the Gosāvī remains silent when addressed by other people. He just stands or sits where he is, on these occasions as impassive toward other people as this *līla* portrays him being with respect to thorn bushes. Another point the text wants to make is that the Gosāvī does not care about money. Although he plays at gambling and even boasts about his winnings, he gives away all but the amount he really needs:

LC, E13. He gambles,

He told this episode in connection with Āplo:⁴ "My woman, I used to play dice. I would win, but I would never lose."

In a certain village, he went to a gambling den. He said to the gamblers, "Is there room for a winner?"

"Come on in, Sir," they said, and moved aside. They made room for him. Then the Gosāvī began to play. He won many cowrie shells. He spent the small, brown cowries. He gave them away to people.

He separated out some cowries, took them in his holy hand, and held them against his stomach. He went to the food market. There he said, "Can I get a meal for a cowrie shell?" One man invited him in [to his stall], saying, "Come on in, Sir."

⁴ Āplo is a man who appears later in the *Līlācaritra*, first in P325 and then in a few early chapters of 'Uttarārḍha'.

He gave the man the cowries. The man gave him a massage. He gave him a hot-water bath. He offered him his clothes. He gave him a meal that was appropriate for his greatness. Then, as the Gosāvī ate the meal, he praised the food. That made the man happy. Then the man set up a cot with a mattress, and [the Gosāvī] accepted sleep.

Early the next morning he was [still] there. Then he left the man's clothes behind and went to the gambling den. When the people in the market saw the Gosāvī, they dropped what they were doing and looked at him. [At the gambling den,] bards and singers were waiting for him: "The generous man from yesterday hasn't come yet," [they said.] Then he arrived.

That day too he won. He kept enough for his meal and gave away the rest. That day he went to a different house. The restaurateurs from the day before got double the normal profit. They were waiting for the Gosāvī.

In this way, he was there for some days. Then he left.

Just as he is about money and his body's welfare, the Gosāvī as portrayed in the 'Ekāṅka' section of the *Liḷācaritra* is also dispassionate about food. He will accept a lavish meal when it is offered, but most often he begs 'with his bare hands' (that is, not even using a begging bowl or bag) and eats off a flat surface, such as a smooth rock in a riverbed. Nor is the Gosāvī interested in sex, though he receives a number of propositions and get himself involved in some tricky situations – including a marriage or two. In the following episode, for example, Cakradhar marries a merchant's daughter:

LC, E16. He accepts marriage.

He was sitting under a tree in a certain village. Horse traders had stopped there. They approached the Gosāvī. They saw the Gosāvī as a prince. Then they asked about the types of horses. The Gosāvī explained the types of horses. [...]

Then the horse traders spoke. They invited him. They brought him to their tent. Then he had a massage. He had a hot-water bath. They offered the Gosāvī clothes. They gave him a horse. They began to act as if the Gosāvī was the principal one, the leader, and all the others were his servants.

Then he went to Oraṅgaḷ. Hearing that the horse traders had come, all the people came up to them. As they sold horses, he described them: "This horse is of such-and-such a type. It has such-and-such good qualities, such-and-such characteristics. This horse should get such-and-such an amount." The horse traders said, "Because of the Gosāvī, this horse fetched a high price." The people [buying the horses] said, "Because of the Gosāvī we got this horse for cheap."

A merchant came there. He saw [this]. He said, "Sir, I have a jewel of a daughter. Nowhere is there a husband who is suitable for her beauty. If the Gosāvī makes her his maidservant, I will be gratified. What I have done will have borne fruit."

The Omniscient one said, "I have no caste or lineage, no wife or family."⁵

5 Literally, no stake and tether. In other words, there is nothing to tie me down.

The man said, “The Gosāvi himself is caste and lineage. The Gosāvi himself is wife and family.”

The Omniscient one said, “I don’t have the means to do it.”

The man said, “Sir, I already have everything that is needed.”

The horse traders said, “This all does not belong to the Gosāvi alone.”

Then the merchant took the Gosāvi to show him to his extended family. A wedding took place, with a Gondhaḷ.⁶ The marriage ceremony went on for four days. Then the horse traders asked leave to go. The horse traders set out.

Then he lived there for some days. One day they were playing parcheesi upstairs [...] when a wandering ascetic entered the town to beg for alms. The man had turned his back on worldly life. [The Gosāvi] saw this. Seeing the man, he said, “I will do the same thing.” At that, the woman fell down in a dead faint. The Gosāvi lifted her up by her arms. He wiped her eyes with his holy hand. He put water on her eyes. He brought her to consciousness. Then he said, “I was teasing you, I was playing with you.”

At that, Mahadāiseṃ asked, “Lord, the Gosāvi left. What happened to her?”

“She was looking at me. She went into a trance. Then I left.”

Extremely passive in his acceptance of this marriage, Cakradhar leaves it with apparent ease. It is only a later woman disciple, Mahadāiseṃ, who thinks to ask what became of Cakradhar’s abandoned bride.

Besides his ascetic detachment, another way in which ‘Ekānka’ portrays Cakradhar as violating social norms is his apparent indifference to purity rules, including the kinds of avoidance normally required between people of different castes.⁷ Not only does Cakradhar move around freely among Untouchables, Adivasis, and other people of low or uncertain position in the caste hierarchy, he sometimes puts low-caste people into a trance state in which they cause what others see as pollution. A good example of this is found early in the text, in the story of Cakradhar’s encounter with an Untouchable Leatherworker:

LC, E12. He meets a Leatherworker.

As he was going to a certain village, there was a drinking-water stand along the road. The Gosāvi sat down at the water stand. A Leatherworker and his wife had gone to the market. They came there. The Leatherworker prostrated himself. He touched the holy feet. Seeing the Gosāvi’s beauty, he began to stare at him. And he opened his partitioned pouch. He offered him pieces of betel nut. He made betel rolls and gave them to him. With that, the Leatherworker’s wife came up from behind. “Get up, you! Let’s go home to our village.”

“Wait a minute. Wait a minute.”

⁶ A Gondhaḷ is a performance in honor of goddesses that involves story-telling and singing. Gondhaḷs are frequently performed in connection with weddings.

⁷ The *Līlācaritra* also provides evidence of Cakradhar’s violations of the rules about separation between the genders. For the most part, I will avoid that topic here, saving it for a separate study.

Again she said that. Three times he gave the same reply.

“All right. You are not coming. If you aren’t coming, give up your rights over me.”

“I give them up.”

“Who is the witness?”

He gestured toward the Gosāvī. “This God.” The Gosāvī agreed to it. Then she set out. Then he received a trance state from the Gosāvī. Because of it, he lost all consciousness of his body, all sense of who he was. He became a Gosāvī and moved around in the world as one.

In the course of his wanderings, he came to Kholnāyak’s Āmbā. There, thinking him a god-man, they took him from house to house to feed him meals. One man took him to his home. He did *pūjā*.⁸ He served him a meal.

A Leatherworker from that man’s village had come there to the market. He said, “Hey! Isn’t he a Leatherworker from our village? Here he has become a god. He has polluted the village.” One after another, people asked this. Everyone heard it. Then Jagaḍdev and Viñjhdev, the officials, summoned Brāhmaṇs knowledgeable in traditional law. They had them take out law books. Those men said, “He should be seated in lime. Then water should be poured over him from leather water bags.”

That is exactly what they did to the man. Seeing the crowd, a man arriving at the scene asked someone what was going on. He replied, “We have done such-and-such to that man.”

Then the first man said, “What can you do to him? He is over there in the market, playing, with a garland around his neck and pan in his mouth. The garland around his neck hasn’t wilted a bit.”

In the later, longer sections of the *Līlācaritra*, ‘Pūrvārdha’ (‘The First Half’) and ‘Uttarārdha’ (‘The Second Half’), Cakradhar gathers a shifting but more-or-less permanent group of disciples around him. In these parts of the text, he becomes something like a typical guru, extraordinarily perceptive about his disciples’ actions and intentions and strict in his demands for loyalty and obedience. On many occasions, what he teaches his disciples involves ignoring or minimising of caste distinctions and purity norms. For example, on several occasions Cakradhar opposes men’s wearing the ‘sacred thread’, the topknot,⁹ and the forehead mark that indicate their Brāhmaṇ status. In P89 he tells his disciple Nāthobā, ‘Go and bury your forehead mark and your sacred thread’, and in U53 he commands another disciple, Indrabhaṭ, ‘Indra, you must give up the topknot and thread’. In U161 Cakradhar tells Dādos, a rival guru several of whose followers transfer their loyalty to Cakradhar, ‘O Māhātmā, get rid of your topknot and sacred thread. Follow me’. And in U202, he praises yet another disciple, one who ‘gave up everything Brāhmaṇical and got rid of his topknot and sacred thread’.

Shaving one’s head entirely, giving up the topknot, and removing one’s sacred thread are part of the ritual requirements for leaving the householder state

⁸ *Pūjā* is ritual worship, involving offerings and gestures of hospitality.

⁹ A tuft of hair left on the crown of the head when the rest of the head is shaved.

and becoming an ascetic renouncer. Hence, in these passages Cakradhar is urging his high-caste male disciples to renounce the householder life and become ascetics, rather than wholeheartedly condemning Brāhmaṇism or caste hierarchy. In the case of Indrabhaṭ (U53), his father-in-law pleads with Cakradhar, 'Shave my head, Lord, instead of his. But don't shave his, Lord'. When Cakradhar asks why, the father-in-law replies that Indrabhaṭ's wife (the father-in-law's daughter) 'is young' and should not be deprived of her husband's presence so early in her life.

While Cakradhar's disparagement of the marks of Brāhmaṇical status may thus be better seen as a preference for ascetic withdrawal from the world, there are many other episodes that indicate his disregard for the rules of purity and pollution. Cakradhar is especially lax about the rules about ingesting food or drink that Brāhmaṇs would normally considered polluting, whether because of being served by someone in a permanent or temporary state of pollution or because of having been touched by someone's saliva. In P332, Cakradhar makes fun of Lukhdevobā for undergoing an elaborate purification ritual after having drunk water that was served to him by an Untouchable. When Dādos' father has died, Cakradhar accepts food from Dādos, even though Dādos points out that he is affected by death pollution. 'I don't observe anything like that', Cakradhar says (LC, E61), and he eats the curds and rice that Dādos brings him. In P222, Cakradhar eats jujubes that one of his disciples has tasted, and in P223 he eats chickpeas that the same disciple has tasted.¹⁰ On many occasions reported in the *Līlācaritra*, Cakradhar gives people food that he has tasted or pan that he has chewed (P11, P245, P256, P260, P433, etc.). In U61, his spittle cures a Gardener-caste woman's tongue disease, and in E36 pan that he has chewed heals an eye that has been put out. In P94 and P99 disciples intentionally drink water that he has spat out, and in many more episodes, devotees drink water that has washed his feet.

Guṇḍam Rāüḷ too is frequently portrayed in his Mahānubhāv biography as violating not just the norms of sanity and politeness but also those of purity. For example, he drinks water from a large water storage jar reserved for Untouchables' use, then washes his feet directly in the jar (DGR 23). He plays with meat in the butchers' shops, then washes his hands in the water storage jar at a Brāhmaṇ's house (DGR 49). He takes a cloth that the Brāhmaṇ's daughter sits on while menstruating (DGR 16), and puts it into her family's water storage jar. The following episode from *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur* illustrates the problems he

¹⁰ Even more shockingly, in P221, when the same disciple (who appears to have been physically if not also mentally disabled) needs someone to accompany him when he goes to urinate, Cakradhar is the one to take on this task. The urine splashes onto the Gosāvi's feet. Afterwards a female disciple washes them.

causes for the authorities in Ṛddhipur, by passing freely between the homes of Untouchables and Brāhmaṇs:

DGR 47. The village headmen make an ordinance.

The village headmen said, “The Rāūḷ goes around among the houses of Māṅgs and Mahārs, and right afterwards he goes into the houses of consecrated Brāhmaṇs. In this way, the Rāūḷ has caused general pollution. Put their houses outside the village. Then the Rāūḷ won’t go to them.”

Thus they had houses built outside the town. The original Mahār quarter was razed. But the Gosāvī would go to the new one too, [saying], “Oh, I shouldn’t go, I say [...] I should go, I say [...] No, I must not go, I tell you.” In this way, he would amuse himself, going from house to house.

Thus, both Guṇḍam Rāūḷ and Cakradhar violate purity rules, and both transgress on occasion the boundaries of caste. Moreover, each of them is quoted in his biography as having spoken a verse that expresses his transcendence of the principal categories of classical Hindu social theory, the *varṇas* (‘castes’ or ‘classes’) and *āśramas* (‘stages of life’ for an upper-caste man), as well as the even broader distinction between human and divine beings (*Sūtrapāṭh*, ‘Vicār Mālikā’ a61 [Feldhaus 1983, 199, with changes]; DGR 281; LC, P328):

I am not a man, nor a god or Yakṣa,
Nor a Brāhmaṇ, a Kṣatriya, a Vaiśya, or a Śūdra.
I am not a celibate student; I am not a householder or a forest hermit.
Neither am I a mendicant, I who am innate knowledge.

Cakradhar says something similar to this twice during his ‘Ekāṅka’ period. We have already seen him, in E16, say to his future father-in-law, ‘I have no caste or lineage, no wife or family’. And in E48, when Cakradhar attends a wedding without being invited by either the bride’s side or the groom’s, he says: ‘I am not yours. I am not theirs. I do not belong to anyone.’

2 De-individualisation

However, despite such bold pronouncements, and despite the biographies’ portrayal of Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāūḷ as not conforming to the rules, there are some ways in which the two divine incarnations seem not to be understood as individuals.

Most fundamentally, as incarnations of the same divine being, generally referred to as Parameśvar (the ‘supreme Lord’), they are not two separate individuals but essentially identical with each other and with at least three other such

incarnations. A couple of episodes in the *Līlācaritra* point out Cakradhar's identity with Cāṅgdev Rāūḷ, another incarnation of Parameśvar, who abandoned his body and took on the body of the young man who became Cakradhar (E4; cf. P330). There are many more episodes that express or refer to Cakradhar's identity with the god Kṛṣṇa (Śrīkṛṣṇa Cakravartī): for example, P63, P88, P246, P376, P380, P437, P392, U88, U275. In one of the most striking such passages, fish in the Godāvārī river swim to the surface to look at the Gosāvī, just as fish swam to the surface of the Yamunā river to look at Kṛṣṇa in the distant past:

LC, P376. Śrīkṛṣṇa on the [river]bank.

Then the Gosāvī sent all the devotees straight along the path. Placing his holy hand on Upādhye's shoulder, the Gosāvī went along the bank of the river. [...] The shadow of the Gosāvī's holy body fell on the water. That made all the fish from the bottom come up. All the fish were looking at the Gosāvī's holy form. Then the Gosāvī said to Upādhye, "Śrīkṛṣṇa Cakravartī was going along the bank of the Yamunā. The fish who had gone to the underworld had gone to the bottom [of the river]. They came up to look at the holy form. [...] That is what an attractive teacher he was."

"Yes, Lord."

Finally, *Līlācaritra* passages that express the identity of Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāūḷ include the following episode in which Guṇḍam Rāūḷ (Śrīprabhu) reveals that Cakradhar too is divine. Cakradhar is staying in the Bhairav temple in Ṛddhipur when Guṇḍam Rāūḷ comes along:

LC, P51. Śrīprabhu plays in the Bhairav temple.

One day Śrīprabhu came playing from the step-well¹¹ to the Bhairav temple. As he played with Keśav's image, he would place his finger on its nose, he would place it on the ear, he would place it on the eyes. At the same time he would say, "This is an ear. This is the nose. This is an eye. This is the forehead." And he would say, "Are you a god? Drop dead! You aren't. This is not a god." As he went along doing this, he reached the Bhairav temple.

Bhairav was in the back. The Omniscient one said, "Go away for a moment, my woman. Śrīprabhu is coming." Bāiseṃ went outside. She covered her eyes and kept silent, in order not to break his play.

Śrīprabhu entered [the temple]. He played with Bhairav in the same way. Then he approached the Gosāvī. The Gosāvī was sitting still. "This is an ear. This is the nose. This is an eye. This is the forehead." Saying this, he put his finger on [the Gosāvī's] forehead. "Yes. You are a god." (Hīrāisā version: "Oh, you are a god, I say. You aren't, I say. This is a god, I tell you."¹²)

In this way, God revealed God.

11 A well with stairs leading down to the level of the water.

12 This is a normal way of speaking for Śrīprabhu.

As two of the five principal incarnations of Parameśvar, then, Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāiḷ are fundamentally identical with one another and with the other divine incarnations. They are thus, in this sense, not portrayed as individuals.

Besides this fundamentally theological identity, there are several more ways in which the Mahānubhāv biographies portray these two divine incarnations as not being completely individualistic, but in fact conforming to a great extent to the rules that governed the society of their times. As human beings, both Cāngdev Rāiḷ and Cakradhar are Brāhmaṇs,¹³ and both of them are men. Besides the occasions on which each of them breaks the rules for proper Brāhmaṇ behaviour, or on which they or their disciples violate the norms for gender roles, there are other times when they conform to those rules and norms, often without even questioning them. The most prominent of these occasions have to do with food and eating.

To begin with, Brāhmaṇs are not supposed to eat food prepared by a member of a lower caste. Cakradhar and his mendicant followers, most of whom were originally Brāhmaṇs, often adhere to this most basic caste rule. When they are in a village where there is no Brāhmaṇ home that can provide them with cooked food, the *Līlācaritra* portrays them accepting only uncooked food as alms (U184, U216, U241–2). At one point in the text (P284–5), Cakradhar stays for more than a week in the home of a certain Sāidev, whose shield, sword, and horse mark him as most probably a member of a warrior caste. During this visit, the food that Cakradhar and his disciples eat comes not from Sāidev’s kitchen but from a neighboring Brāhmaṇ home. On another occasion, when one of Cakradhar’s female disciples, Sādheṃ, finds that it has gotten too late, and she too hungry, to beg for her food, she asks for and eats a plate of food at an unfamiliar house that she takes to be the home of Brāhmaṇs.¹⁴ The way Cakradhar teases her upon her return reflects at least her assumption, if not also Cakradhar’s and the text’s authors’, that it would be horrifying for her to eat food cooked by anyone but a Brāhmaṇ. The passage also illustrates the kind of clues that people in the late thirteenth century, as now, used to guess a person’s caste (LC, U124):

13 Guṇḍam Rāiḷ’s Mahānubhāv biography states directly and at the beginning that he was born into a Kāṇva Brāhmaṇ family (DGR 1), that is, a family belonging to the Kāṇva branch of the Yajur Veda. The *Līlācaritra* is much more cagey about Cakradhar’s caste identity. In U122, however, one of Cakradhar’s female disciples refers to his caste as ‘Lāḍ’, a Brāhmaṇ group from Gujarat (Novetzke 2016, 109). In Kolte’s version of LC, E16 (numbered P32 in Kolte’s edition), Cakradhar calls himself a ‘Lāḍ Sāmak’ – that is, a person belonging to the Lāḍ *jāti* (‘sub-caste’) and the Sāma Veda.

14 On another occasion (U235), Sādheṃ goes to a Brāhmaṇ house to drink water when she becomes thirsty.

“[...] By then I got hungry, Lord. It was early afternoon. So I asked a Brāhmaṇ for a plate of food. [His wife] had made a leaf vegetable cooked in buttermilk. So I ate my meal there, Lord. I brought back the rest of the food. [...] I placed it over there.”

The Omniscient one said, “O Sādheṃ, that house was a Grocer’s.”

“No, Lord. There is a Tuḷsi Vṛndāvan at their house.”¹⁵

The Omniscient one said, “There are Tuḷsi Vṛndāvans at Grocers’ houses. [...] Isn’t that so, Vānareya?”

“That’s right, Lord,” [replied Vānareya]. “Those are the Grocers at the Capital. Let’s go to the Capital, and then we can get some groceries there.”¹⁶

“No, Lord, his bull’s ears are this big.”

The Omniscient one said, “Grocers’ bulls’ ears are big like that too.”

“No, Lord. His womenfolk are light-skinned. His children are light-skinned.”

The Omniscient one said, “Grocers’ womenfolk are light-skinned too. Grocers’ children are light-skinned. Isn’t that so, Vānareyā?”

“That’s right, Lord.”

And Sādheṃ remained silent.

Then the Omniscient one said, “O Sādheṃ, if it turns out that even so that house was a Grocer’s, what will you do?”

“Then I will drink water that has washed the Gosāvī’s feet. Then I will purify my stomach.”

The Omniscient one said, “Oh, Sādheṃ, that house is not a Grocer’s. That house was a Brāhmaṇ’s. I was teasing you.”

“Is that so, Lord?”

Was the Gosāvī teasing Sādheṃ because he thought that she was silly to worry about whose food she ate, or because he agreed with the premise of her horror and was simply being playful? The text leaves the answer deliciously ambiguous.

Except for some episodes recounted in ‘Ekāṅka’, Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāūḷ rarely eat food obtained by begging. Rather, disciples cook for them, and the disciples who do the cooking are almost invariably women, not men. This is but the most striking way in which the divine incarnations and their disciples adhere, apparently unquestioningly, to the gender roles of their times. Having women cook, however, raises questions about purity and pollution. In this respect too, Cakradhar, though gentle, nonetheless conformed to the conventions. Here is the most explicit treatment I’ve found in the *Līlācaritra* of his policy with respect to menstrual pollution:

¹⁵ A Tuḷsi Vṛndāvan is a flower pot, often decorated, that is generally set in a central location in front of the doorway to a house, in which a holy basil (*tuḷsi*) bush is planted, to be worshiped every morning by a woman of the household.

¹⁶ It appears that Vānareya (another name for Bhaṭobās or Nāgdev) is playing along with Cakradhar’s joke.

326. He accepts Umāī's snack.

Umāiseṃ was preparing to fast for a month. The Omniscient one said, "When one commences a month-long fast, one should serve a meal to Brāhmaṇs."

So Umāiseṃ invited the Gosāvī for some food. On the evening of the tenth day of the fortnight, she became polluted. Early the next morning she came for darśan of the Gosāvī. She prostrated herself to the Gosāvī without touching him. She began to express her sadness to Ābāiseṃ.

The Gosāvī called for Ābāiseṃ. "My woman, what is the woman who is fasting for a month saying?"

Then Umāiseṃ began to say to the Gosāvī, "Lord, Lord, I do not have the good fortune of preparing food for you myself, Lord, and then doing pūjā to the Gosāvī." Having said this, she began to cry.

The Omniscient one said, "O woman who is fasting for a month! Is it good to be far away [in the kitchen], not to know where I am, to fill your eyes with smoke? [...] Vṛdhābāiseṃ will prepare the refreshments. Nāgdev will do the pūjā on your behalf at the door of the house. Do not cry."

"All right, Lord."

The Gosāvī is sympathetic to Umāiseṃ, but he does not encourage her to violate the prevalent pollution rules. Rather, he attempts to reconcile her to them. Here, as in other cases, the divine incarnations, along with those who composed and preserved the texts describing their lives, appear to have been untroubled by – indeed, unconscious of – the caste-based and gendered structures within which they lived as humans. In these respects, the biographies' subjects were far from becoming, and the texts' authors were far from portraying them as, revolutionary individuals.

3 Institutionalisation

Besides allowing us to question the degree of individualisation that Cakradhar and Guṇḍam Rāūḷ may have achieved, early Mahānubhāv literature provides a good deal of evidence about the process of institutionalisation experienced by their followers. As the 'founder' of the Mahānubhāvs, Cakradhar is remembered to have taught a large number of doctrines and rules of behaviour. The constraints that these teachings and instructions place on the thoughts and actions of his followers provide further examples of 'de-individualisation' that can be traced in the early Mahānubhāv literature. To take just one example, many of the rules that Cakradhar taught have to do with asceticism. Asceticism as a way of life involves cutting oneself off not only from luxury and comforts, but also from social bonds. The institutionalisation of the life of a wandering ascetic is one of the principal developments of the Mahānubhāvs' early years. The text that

reports in the most detail on that institutionalisation is *Smṛtisthaḷ*, the account of the developments among Cakradhar's disciples in the years after his departure in early 1283 CE and, approximately fourteen years later, the death of Guṇḍam Rāūḷ (in 1286 or 1287 CE), up until the death of Nāgdev or Bhaṭobās, who led the group during this period. For example, *Smṛtisthaḷ* contains some poignant episodes about disciples, both male and female, being tested in their renunciation of home, family, and sex.¹⁷ One particularly dramatic episode tells of the efforts by the family of Kesobās, who would later compile Cakradhar's remembered sayings in the *Sūtrapāṭh*, to get Kesobās to abandon the ascetic live (*Smṛtisthaḷ* 12–3):

It is not known what village Kesobās was from. [...] He was a learned preacher. One day he came to Bhaṭobās and was initiated as an ascetic by him. Bhaṭobās loved him very much. He stayed in Bhaṭobās's presence. [...]

Then one day Kesobās's relatives heard about [his initiation as an ascetic] and came to take him away. His brother, Gopāḷdev, and his father-in-law came to take him away because they were opposed to what he had done.

They took Kesobās away. They tried to make him give up his initiation; but no matter what they did, he would not give it up.

Then they summoned all the learned men and had them argue with him. But he silenced them in argument. And the learned men washed their hands of him. They said, "We cannot win him over. If he is to be won over now, it is his wife who will do it. Now lock up the two of them in the same room."

So they locked them in. If she lay on the cot, he would sleep on the ground. If she lay on the ground, he would sleep on the cot. In this way, the night would pass.

During the daytime, he would go to the river. They would put someone there to watch him. Kesobās would stay alone at the river. [...] Then they would bring him into the village.

Several days passed this way. Then his wife said, "Let him go now. He has become a *yogī* now. It is a sin for me to interfere."

So they all gave Kesobās permission to leave. He left. He met Bhaṭobās. He told him what had happened. Bhaṭobās listened, and then praised him lavishly. [...]

Besides showing us the heroic efforts of the first two generations of Cakradhar's disciples to live the way of life he taught, early Mahānubhāv literature also allows us to trace the development of the Mahānubhāvs from a single individual to a loosely knit group to a highly structured institution. In the *Līlācaritra*, the description of Cakradhar as a solitary wandering ascetic in the first part of the text ('Ekāṅka') is followed, in the second and third parts ('Pūrvārdha' and 'Uttarārdha'), by almost a thousand episodes in which he is accompanied in his wanderings by one or a few disciples. Toward the end of 'Pūrvārdha' (P444), Cakradhar meets Bhaṭobās, and Bhaṭobās comes to realise that Cakradhar is

¹⁷ See *Smṛtisthaḷ* 13, 53, 54, 56, 58, 75, 83, 97, 105-6, 134, and 206, and the discussion in Feldhaus 1994.

God; at the beginning of the third and final part of the *Liḷācaritra* ('Uttarārdha'), Bhaṭobās becomes a full-fledged follower of Cakradhar (U1), renouncing home and family, as well as his previous guru.¹⁸ Gradually, in the course of the 500-or-so episodes of 'Uttarārdha', Bhaṭobās becomes Cakradhar's most important disciple. At the end of 'Uttarārdha' (U489, U495, and U496),¹⁹ Cakradhar entrusts him with the leadership of the community of disciples. Fourteen years later, Guṇḍam Rāūḷ confirms the appointment, when he is on his deathbed. At the end of the *The Deeds of God in Ṛddhipur* (DGR 322), Bhaṭobās asks him, 'Lord, Śrī Cakradhar Rāyā²⁰ entrusted us to you. Now you're leaving, Gosāvī. So to whom do you entrust us?' Guṇḍam Rāūḷ replies, in his typical speech pattern, 'Oh, drop dead! I entrust all these others to you, and I entrust you to Śrī Dattātreyā Prabhu'.²¹

Finally, *Smṛtisthaḷ* portrays Bhaṭobās and the other disciples working out, under his leadership, the rules and structures of a full-blown *sampradāy* ('sect'). We learn of the categories of discipleship that come to be utilised, of the body of literature that begins to be composed, of the traditions of pilgrimage and relic veneration that develop, of the theology that grows ever more elaborate, and of the rules and regulations that become ever more precise.²² For example, Bhaṭobās modifies Cakradhar's command that his followers should practice constant, solitary, aimless wandering (*nityāṭan*) by directing the disciples to wear distinctive clothing when they wander (SS 30), by instituting the suspension of wandering during the rainy season (SS 29), and by introducing the innovation that male mendicants should wander in pairs and the women in groups of four. Bhaṭobās institutes the last of these modifications in response to an incident narrated in *Smṛtisthaḷ* 105–6:

18 In LC, U29–31, Bhaṭobās's wife, Gāṅgāiseṃ, comes and curses him ('Burn up! Burn up! Such a man's [life] was saved. Why is that man still alive? The man whose wife has no food, no clothes – that man has no shame'). Cakradhar convinces Gāṅgāiseṃ that she is better off with Bhaṭobās alive, then he sends Bhaṭobās and Gāṅgāiseṃ to spend the night together in the nearest village. When they fail to reconcile, Cakradhar finally sends Bhaṭobās home to make arrangements for Gāṅgāiseṃ's support.

19 These chapter numbers follow Nene's edition. The corresponding numbers in my forthcoming edition are U494, U500, and U501. For similar chapters in Kolte's edition, see his LC, U606, U620, U623, and U625. See also *Sūtrapāṭh*, 'Vicār' 153, 155, 156, 158–62, and 240, and 'Ācār' 137.

20 Rāyā means 'King'.

21 Dattātreyā Prabhu is another of the five principal divine incarnations recognised by the Mahānubhāvs.

22 For a detailed discussion of these and other aspects of the institutionalisation of the Mahānubhāvs, see the introduction to Feldhaus, Tulpule 1992, especially pages 3–53.

Once when Kesobās had gone out alone to wander, rain fell out of season. He went to a village to beg. At one house a moneylender's daughter saw him. Kesobās was handsome. He was strong. She felt attracted to him. She gave him alms herself, and asked, "Where do you live?"

He just shook his head and moved on indifferently.

She watched for him until evening. That evening it rained. He went to spend the night in a *līṅga* temple²³ near the village gate. He had a small piece of shawl with him. He placed it in front of him and sat in a corner.

At night the temple priest went home. He had seen [Kesobās], but left without saying anything.

After a while, the woman wrapped herself in a thick blanket and came to the temple. She looked around and saw Kesobās. And she sat down on his lap.

Kesobās said, "Get up. I'll do whatever you say," and he made her sit on the ground.

And he said to the woman, "I'm going out to urinate. You sit right here." And he left behind the shawl and some belongings that he had. She believed him.

In this way, he got out of the temple, and immediately he left, saying, "Śrī Cakradhar!"

The woman waited for a while. When she realised that he was not going to return, she got frightened. She went home.

That night Kesobās slept out in the open, and the very next day he set out to meet Bhaṭobās. [...]

Then Bhaṭobās said to Kesobās, "Now you go back there."

Kesobās agreed. Kesobās said to himself, "My body is the cause of this." So he returned to his wandering. His body became emaciated. He practiced stringent fasting. Then he went to that same village and went to beg at that woman's house. Just then, she was standing there. She saw Kesobās and spat contemptuously, naturally taking him to be a wretched beggar. And she went into the house.

With that, Kesobās patted himself on the arms.²⁴ "Am I not Śrī Cakradhar's Keśavyā?" he said. [...]

So [Bhaṭobās] arranged that the men should [go wandering] in pairs and the women in groups of four.

Thus, even in *Smṛtisthaḷ*, we are presented with a very organic, non-bureaucratic process. We observe Bhaṭobās and others of the first generation of Cakradhar's disciples as they figure out how to practice, over the long term and as a growing group, the highly ascetic, individualistic way of life taught by a man they understood to have been God. Through *Smṛtisthaḷ*, we are thus able to capture the very beginnings of the institutionalisation of a way of life based on the teachings of a highly individual religious leader and his extremely unconventional guru.

²³ A temple of the god Śiva in his aniconic/phallic form.

²⁴ This is a gesture of self-congratulation in Old Marathi.

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Ishita Banerjee-Dube

Religious individualisation and collective bhakti: Sarala Dasa and Bhima Bhoi

‘The author remains a mettlesome subject in late modernism’, writes Christian Novetzke, ‘confounding a simple definition of what it is to be an author’ (Novetzke 2003, 214).¹ Novetzke skilfully unravels the distinct layers of authorship that went into the conferral of ‘authority’ on one particular figure, Namdev, in traditions ‘not born of modernity yet fully present in the modern world’. In doing so, he argues against the modern notion of the author as a solitary, creative figure. In this chapter, I seek to extend his insights about ‘corporate authorship’ to an examination of the interface and mutual imbrication of individuality, individualisation, and institutionalisation of authors and texts in Odisha, eastern India in ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’ times.

The confounding and conflation of the individual and the collective, and the medieval and the modern, also underlies *bhakti* (devotion). Bhakti or the spirit of bhakti, widely accepted as the hallmark of medieval India, particularly the north, is simultaneously personal and communitarian. Often represented as a female being and usually translated as devotion, bhakti is ‘heart religion’; it emanates from divine encounter of individuals with the divine, an encounter that engulfs them with love, passion and joy, and inspires them to break out in poems and songs. Their exhilaration infects others with effervescent enthusiasm, resulting in a ‘glorious disease of the collective heart’ (Hawley 2015, 2). Bhakti’s effervescence makes the individual and the collective, and autonomy and heteronomy, mingle in intriguing ways. Bhakti is intensely personal but hinges on sharing and communion. It is also liberating – from societal hierarchies, sectarian rivalries, and Sanskritic supremacy.

How then should we classify bhakti? As medieval or as modern? Is it medieval because the sensibility is entirely religious, inflected by the miraculous? Or is it modern because it is individual, autonomous, and emancipatory? What is the sense of the ‘individual’ and the ‘person’ we assume when we call bhakti individual and personal? Does bhakti encompass and supersede the modern? Or do we need to find different ways to think about the ancient, the medieval, the early modern, and the modern? Is it possible to think of the inextricable blends

¹ My sincere thanks to Anne Feldhaus for referring me to this essay. And also to all the other members of our discussion group – Rahul Parson, Ian Henderson, Max Deeg and Saurabh Dube – for suggestive observations.

in which the individual and the collective, the personal and the social, the author and the reader merge and mutually constitute each other? And if we do, how would we think of individualisation and institutionalisation? These questions will become pertinent as I address, and try to gain entry to, the world of a 15th century sudra (lowercaste/varna) Odia poet who composed a vernacular *Mahabharata* upon the command/blessing of the goddess Sarala.²

Needless to say, the miraculous is not unique to India or bhakti or the medieval. It is current in several other traditions, starting from the ancient Greek. Homer, I was reminded during my talk at the Max Weber Kolleg in June 2017, was traditionally said to be blind and his compositions the result of a miracle. Even though scholars have tried to discard such beliefs as legends or fables, the debates on when, how, and under what circumstances the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed, and whether one or several authors composed them, are far from settled.

Bhima Bhoi, a mid-19th century poet-philosopher of Mahima Dharma, a radical religious faith of Odisha, is also believed to have been born blind and bestowed with the 'eyesight' of knowledge by his preceptor Mahima Swami, the founder of the Dharma. Mahima Swami in turn, is taken to be an incarnation of the Absolute whose *mahima* (radiance/glory) he preached. Although the authorship of Bhima Bhoi's compositions has not been questioned by scholars, the fact of his blindness has been interrogated. In addition, texts composed decades after his death have been ascribed to him, a fact that testifies to Bhima Bhoi's appeal to the popular imagination, as well as to the enduring legacy of his 'authorial agency in a way similar to the tradition of Namdev' (Novetzke 2003, 215). In my earlier work, I have explored the notion of corporate authorship by paying attention to the process of composition and transmission of texts and have argued in favour of shared composition through collective reading and recitation. My purpose has been to interrogate the binaries of orality and writing, literacy and illiteracy, and text and performance, in order to raise important issues with regard to the author and authorial voice (Banerjee-Dube 2003, 1–17; 2007).

In this essay, I will examine the *Mahabharata* in Odia ascribed to Sarala Dasa, an *adi* or early poet of vernacular Odia, and will briefly touch upon Bhima Bhoi's own compositions and those other texts that have been attributed to him in order to trace the constitution and mobility of texts and authors in the very process of their actualisation in interpretive reading. This will, perhaps, enable a different understanding of institutionalisation and individualisation. I will draw upon and extend Michel de Certeau's suggestive idea of reading as 'poaching', an interpretive exercise that questions 'the assimilation of reading to passivity' and

² Odia is used now both to refer to the people of Odisha (earlier Orissa) and the language they speak.

asserts that ‘every reading modifies the object’ – the text – (De Certeau 1984, 169). At the same time, I will not follow de Certeau’s formulation of the written text and the reader as two separate and well-defined entities. I will further track the implications of Roger Chartier’s arguments about how written texts get their meanings through the forms in which they are received, understood, and appropriated by readers/listeners, resulting in their ‘actualization’ by means of ‘concrete practices and interpretive procedures’ (Chartier 1992, 50). By asserting that in medieval Europe and in later times, written texts were routinely recited in collective gatherings of readers/listeners who were not ‘literate’, and that such collective reading conferred differential meanings on the texts on account of the diverse expectations of readers, Chartier forcefully brings home the ‘instability’ of meaning in apparently fixed, written texts (see Chartier 1992; 1989, for instance).

Such insights acquire a distinct significance in India, where reading and recitation have had an equal, if not greater, importance and texts have been composed (and actualised) through their performance and circulation. With this in mind, we will look into the elaboration of Sarala Dasa’s rendering of the epic in the vernacular as *the Mahabharata* in Odisha and of Sarala Dasa as the *adi kabi* (early poet) of Odia. This supreme importance of the *Mahabharata* moreover, can be attributed to the fact that it is an imaginative re-telling, or ‘reconceptualization’, rather than a translation of the ‘original’ version (Satpathi, Nayak forthcoming; Patnaik 2012, viii).

1 Sarala’s Dasa?

Sarala Dasa, like so many other (ancient and) medieval saints, bhaktas, and composers, comes to us through a series of mediations. First, his *Mahabharata*, composed in the 15th century, spread and circulated through recitations and collective readings and that were copied and re-copied on palm-leaf manuscripts (believed to have an average life of 35–40 years) for over three centuries before it was printed in the late 19th century. The first ‘definitive’ version of the Odia epic, collected, compiled, and edited by Artaballav Mohanty and his large team of scholars, was published by the Department of Culture of the Government of Odisha in 1966. Until the late 19th century, innumerable copies of palm-leaf manuscripts of the Sarala *Mahabharata* could be found in ordinary and royal households as well as in the village *bhagabata ghara* (a shed/hut where the Odia *Bhagabata* and other devotional texts were read out). It is redundant to point out that the ‘original’ *Mahabharata* also underwent a similar process of circulation before being written down.

The legends about Sarala Dasa's life comprise the second mediation. Arguably, such legends are an offshoot of his great composition. At the same time, the inextricable blend of a goddess, her will, command, and blessing, with the poet's devotion to her make it difficult to state with certainty whether the legends spread after the composition, or the legends and the composition together went into the making of Sarala Dasa, the servant/servitor of goddess Sarala as the composer of the Odia *Mahabharata*. We can turn to two such legends, taken from an early scholarly exposition on Sarala Dasa, to sample a taste of the genre.

An ordinary peasant is ploughing his field. In order to get rid of tiredness and boredom and to energise himself and his bullocks, he starts singing *chautishas*, short verses of 34 letters, taken to be the earliest literary expression in vernacular Odia. But fatigue overcomes him and he keeps forgetting the words. A little forlorn, he starts praying to *istadev* (personal god). A woman figure appears and demands to know why he has stopped singing. She says that she greatly enjoys hearing him sing and commands him to compose the *Mahabharata* in Odia. After the figure disappears, an amazed and bewildered peasant, Sarala Dasa, starts singing again, successfully this time. These *chautishas* do not exist any longer. But the *Mahabharata*, composed through the *icchhashakti*, the force of will, wish, or desire of the woman/goddess, has endured, together with three other compositions by the same peasant.

Consider a second scenario. While Sarala Dasa is ploughing his field one day, messengers from the royal palace come in search of a suitable match for the king's daughter. They talk to Sarala Dasa, are thoroughly impressed by his intelligence, and take him to the palace as a possible partner for the princess. A simple, unlettered peasant, Sarala Dasa is alarmed and overwhelmed when the princess comes to him with her offerings on a plate to welcome him as her life partner. Awe-struck, he hides under a cot. Irrked, the princess expresses disdain for a stupid, ignorant farmer, throws away the plate and offerings, and leaves the place. Chastised and humiliated, Sarala Dasa decides to dedicate himself to the acquisition of knowledge. He reaches the temple of Sarala Devi (goddess Sarala), only to find her missing. He closes the temple door and sits in meditation. The goddess is pleased and commands him to compose the *Mahabharata* in order to please her. A perplexed Sarala Dasa responds in despair that it was impossible for him to undertake such a difficult task. The goddess asks him not to panic and instructs him to pick up the quill from the road the next day and go sit under the *Kalpabat* (wish fulfilling tree). The scenes of the *Mahabharata* will, she tells him, become visible to him there. All he needs to do is write them down.

It is significant that the *Mahabharata*, or the version in print at least, mentions a *lekhana*, something to write with. The typical image of bhakti poetry

involves spontaneity, with the blessed one, touched and engulfed by the divine, instinctively breaking out into songs that affect and overwhelm other hearts to create a storm or a wave that makes selves move and flow into one another. At other places in the text, the poet recounts how he only needed to recite the *Mahabharata* the Devi was to speak in his ears.

Through legends and stories, Sarala Dasa, the son and servant of the goddess Sarala, appears at once as a symbolic subject and an embodied person who probably does not carry the meanings and significance attached to the concept of the modern individual as a bounded intentional subject. And yet there are nuances and ambiguities that we need to address. Who is Sarala Dasa? A person who consciously calls himself the servant (*dasa*) and *putra* (son) of the goddess Sarala, or a symbolic name ascribed to the ‘author’ of a composition that is constituted in the very act of its corporate recitation, reading, and narration? In other words, what I am trying to get at are not the real facts about a person who assumes ‘Sarala Dasa’ as a title to emphasise the miraculous powers bestowed on him by the goddess but, rather, the possibility of a constitutive instability of the author and his text(s).

Scholars have not, it might be argued, yet questioned the existence of Sarala Dasa as a person. On the contrary, his compositions have been combed through to find historical facts about his life, his place of residence, and of happenings in Odra *rashtra* or Odra *desha*, as current Odisha, with its different and changing frontiers, was referred to at the time (Panigrahi 1976). Indeed, there was a debate in the 1950s between a well-known historian and an acclaimed writer over the location of Sarala Dasa’s village and the time of the composition of the *Mahabharata*, with each claiming to have meticulously studied the details provided by the poet himself and the language used in his composition to come to very different conclusions (Panigrahi 1956; Mohanty 1956). Subsequent authors have sustained or questioned the arguments advanced by either the historian or the writer without probing whether such a Sarala Dasa existed.

This ready acceptance of Sarala Dasa as the author of the Odia *Mahabharata* has been due to the inscription of an authorial voice in the text. At the beginning or end of each canto, Sarala Dasa comes in as the narrator: ‘so says Sarala Dasa kabi’ or ‘Sudra muni’ Sarala Dasa. The question is whether, given the several mediations I have indicated above, we can simply assume the existence of Sarala Dasa on the basis of these pronouncements or whether we need to consider the possibility of an unstable author and a collective authorship through which a ‘narrational self’ is constructed in the transmission and circulation of the text? If we follow this latter course, how should we understand the individual, the self, the collective, the personal, the social, and their interface?

2 Sarala's *Mahabharata*

In the edition compiled by Mohanty that I have consulted, Sarala Dasa begins with an invocation of Sarala Devi (goddess Sarala), the *mangalacharan*, and then moves on to describe in detail the location of the village in which the great goddess Saralachandi resides. This is followed by a declaration of the identity of the author/composer. Significantly, Sarala Dasa calls himself Sarala Dasa *kabi* (poet Sarala Dasa), the son of Saralachandi, upon whose command he is composing the *Mahabharata*. There is an interesting twist here. Goddess Sarala, a manifestation of goddess Chandi, sometimes linked to the tantric devi Bimala who is still the *adhishthatri devi* (presiding deity) of the Jagannath temple in Puri, is addressed as *pankajbasini* and *parama-vaishnavi* in the *Mahabharata*. Pankajbasini means one who dwells on the lotus and the term is normally associated with Lakshmi, the spouse of Vishnu and goddess of bounty and wellbeing. Supreme *vaishnavi*, in turn, might represent Lakshmi or a supreme worshipper of Vishnu. Some, however, have identified the goddess Sarala with Saraswati, the goddess of learning who also had links to tantra. We will not be able to parse this intriguing mix-up here. Suffice it to say that there are clear indications of a degree of turmoil within the divine hierarchy, beginning in the 13th century, with Shiva and Shakti being gradually displaced by the rise and increasing prominence of Vishnu worship and the conferral of the status of state deity to Jagannath by the Ganga kings, a theme I have examined elsewhere and which Heinrich von Stietencron discussed decades ago.

Let us return to the *Mahabharata*. Immediately after the invocation of the goddess and the declaration that Sarala Dasa is composing the *Mahabharata* to carry out the devi's command, the poet implores wise men not to find faults with his work. He is ignorant from birth and is not a pandit, a learned man. Again, in the second chapter of *adi parva* (the first book), he declares that he is sudra by *jati* (caste/calling) and ignorant, that he lives by the manual work of cultivation along with his three brothers. He has had no 'education' but is a great devotee of Sarala Devi, who he hopes will forgive him for embarking upon this daring venture. A few couplets later, Sarala Dasa mentions his journey to the abode of Govinda (Vishnu), where he came into the company of saints and wise men and gained knowledge. He also refers to himself as 'sudra muni', a sudra saint or a saint among the sudras, probably to emphasise the knowledge he acquired through Sarala devi's blessings and by coming into contact with saints and wise men.

Hence, even if we accept the person/individual Sarala Dasa as the author, his words tell us that his self is simultaneously individual (personal) and collective, and that his prodigious composition is the result of a collectivised self, a self that is constituted both by an unlearned person who is moved by the command/wish/blessing of a goddess and by the knowledge acquired from wise and learned men.

On the other hand, according to Jatin Nayak, a retired professor of English literature at Utkal University currently engaged in translating the Sarala *Mahabharata* into English, the Sarala *Mahabharata* is a very 'self-reflexive' text. 'The *Mangalacharana* and invocation in his *Mahabharata*', he comments, 'leave the reader in no doubt as to the ambivalence of the author and the text, even when he was defending the enterprise by taking recourse to divine intervention and inspiration' (Satpathi, Nayak forthcoming).

Is Sarala Dasa consciously taking 'recourse' to divine intervention as a 'trope' or is he moved by the 'divine command' which is, for him, intuitively real? We cannot be certain. From his own statements and their subsequent readings it appears that Sarala Dasa's individual selfhood, marked by low-birth and ignorance, is elevated through its intimate relationship with the divine. There seems to be an assertive affirmation, upheld by the use of the first-person-singular in the text: Sarala Dasa, an ignorant sudra is blessed with the power to compose an exceptionally elaborate and unique text. A text that is mediated by his own vision/hearing/apprehension of the *Mahabharata* narrative and is constituted, in turn, through continual actualisation and interpretation in collective readings poised on a common stock of knowledge and the expectations of communities of readers/listeners (Chartier 1989, for instance). The enmeshment of hearing, seeing, and composing and/or writing is found in the text itself: while at one place the poet states that he was to sit under the Kalpabat with a quill to write the *Mahabharata*, at others he alludes to seeing the scenes of the epic or hearing it through the voice of Sarala Devi.

The Odia *Mahabharata* can, therefore, be seen both as a collective composition of the goddess and her command/blessing, the poet, and the knowledge acquired from wise and learned men on the one hand, and, on the other, as a composite construct of the 'author' and the readers/listeners. Its authorship is inspired by the wish-command-vision-blessing of the divine, articulated through the vision-hearing-imagination of the poet, and moulded by the perceptions and aspirations of the readers.

Let us dwell a little longer on the singularity of the Odia *Mahabharata*. Apart from a facile correspondence with the Sanskrit epic in the number of *parvas* (books), 18 to be precise, and in the main protagonists, the Odia version differs in the sequence and extension of the *parvas*, in the storyline, and in the portrayal of the main characters. It introduces new events and characters, including a significant story about the indestructibility of Krishna and his transformation into Nilamadhaba and later Vishnu/Jagannatha, the central deity of Hinduism in Odisha. It also leaves out very important episodes, such as the Vishawarup darshan, i.e. the *Bhagavat Gita* part of the Sanskrit epic. Indeed, a recent scholar has argued that Sarala's story is 'purer', since it excises 'deliberations of a philosophical

nature' and proffers a picture of Krishna's intervention in human affairs based on a different understanding of the nature of divine intervention (Patnaik 2012, viii). An intertwined relation between the human and the divine, and an absence of 'philosophical deliberations', accounts for a 'pure' version of an epic that is closer to the heart of the simple folk of Odisha. Sarala Dasa, we need to remember, calls his text the *Mahabharata*, leaving it unclear whether he is composing a new one or rendering a vernacular version of the Sanskrit epic. This contrasts with Tulsidas's *Ramacaritmanas*, for instance, an extremely popular 16th century vernacular rendering of the *Ramayana*, where the reference to an original is continually present.³

To cite Jatin Nayak again, an 'illusion of sameness and an illusion of difference are being created at the same time' (Satpathi, Nayak forthcoming). The poet follows certain textual strategies to conserve the idea of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata* but never refers to it directly. And even though the main protagonists remain, their names are rendered in colloquial, 'rustic' Odia – Yujheshthi for Yudhishthir and Mahodar (one with a huge belly) for Bhima – with their depictions differing widely from those in the Sanskrit version of the story. Sakuni, the violent villain, is given a very empathetic portrayal, even when his violence is emphasised and exaggerated. The Pandavas, by contrast, receive a somewhat dismissive treatment. Gandhari and Kunti are made 'hilariously realistic' through the 'natural and petty jealousies which are inseparable from feminine nature', and (river/mother) Ganga is portrayed as 'an impetuous, imperious and tyrannical shrew'. Draupadi, the forceful heroine of the Sanskrit epic, is made to 'sigh deeply over her fate' when she is married to five brothers (Mansinha 1962, 52–7).

Significantly, the entire drama of the epic, it is stated recurrently by my colleagues and acquaintances in Odisha, is set in the milieu and topography of what was then Odra desha or Odra rashtra (current Odisha), a fact that made the text intimate and accessible. Moreover, its claim to be a 'history' from creation onwards, with realistic references to contemporary place names, rivers, and mountains, brought it even closer to the hearts of its readers/listeners, as they could easily identify and relate to the text.

It is perhaps in order here to invoke Roger Chartier's argument once again and pose the question of whether this 'materiality' of the text, the concrete topographic references, for instance, were inherent in the text or whether they resulted from the intervention and interpretation of readers who con-

³ I draw upon Luis Gamaliel Quiñones Martínez's unpublished MA dissertation, 'Vernacularización e identidad en el reino de Varanasi', CEAA, El Colegio de México 2017.

stantly participated in the composition and evolution of the text. Readers, Chartier affirms, ‘never confront abstract, idealized texts detached from any materiality’ (Chartier 1992, 50); the form of the text governs the modalities through which it is read or heard and that modality produces meaning. In other words, in a scenario in which the *Mahabharata* is being recited or performed by one or many, the content of the text is shaped by the dispositions of the community of readers: their active perception, expectation, and interpretation. In such a context, it is eminently possible that the names of places and personalities, as well as the events of the *Mahabharata*, were moulded by the dispositions and perceptions of the readers/audience. Instead of the readers easily identifying with a text that is accessible on account of its concrete references, the text may have taken shape and been transformed through traditions of reading and the expectations of interactive readers and audiences. This accounts for the numerous versions Artaballav Mohanty and his team of scholars collected, compared, selected from, and edited, beginning yet another process of ‘corporate composition’, albeit one that we will not be able to discuss in detail here.

All accounts indicate that Sarala’s *Mahabharata* found an immediate and overwhelmingly popular response. In a world of collective reading and performance, and at a time when vernaculars as languages of literary expression were becoming increasingly important, characters, figures, episodes, and narrations of the Odia *Mahabharata* acquired real and symbolic significance. Certain phrases became metaphoric and almost axiomatic, while certain characters became representative of real lives and figures. Even today, these phrases and characters are common knowledge in Odisha, as I have been told repeatedly by my friends and colleagues in Bhubaneswar. Hence, for people with very little knowledge of the Sanskrit text, Sarala’s *Mahabharata* could and did become *the Mahabharata*.

What would be the ‘original’ or the ‘putative’ original in this context and for whom? And how do we understand the relation between the putative original and its vernacular rendering? Sarala Dasa’s *Mahabharata*, it has been emphasised by the several scholars and students I have spoken to in Bhubaneswar, is not a ‘translation’; it is a re-telling of the Sanskrit narrative with its own anecdotes, emphases, and interpretations, which are sufficiently extensive that they come together to form a *new* telling. It is a telling, re- or new, in which the events of the *Mahabharata* are concurrent with important events of Odra desha and in which they occur in regions and places within Odisha. Is it history? What kind of history is it? Imaginative, intuitive, or interpretive? Can it be called history at all? Leaving readers to ponder these issues, I turn to the later, modern apprehensions of Sarala Dasa and his compositions.

3 Kabi and canonisation

‘The emergence of Sarala Dasa in the mid-15th century was phenomenal. The track-record of Oriya literature before him was not such that it could have thrown up a writer as substantial as he was [...] His is the first case where an *individual talent* not only changes a tradition, but sets up a new one for subsequent generations to follow’ (Mohanty 2006, xxi).

In this recent *History of Oriya Literature*, Sarala Dasa is not only an individual but also an exceptional one: a genius who breaks with an earlier tradition and starts a new one. And yet the break with an earlier tradition and the beginning of a new one does not constitute a ‘modern’ rupture, since the tradition begun by Sarala Dasa is suffused with *bhakti*, devotion, and pertains to both the ‘ancient and the medieval’. According to Mohanty, modern Odia literature began roughly in the mid-19th century and supplemented the spirit of devotion and love with that of nationalism and a concern with the ‘human predicament’ in a hostile world. Clearly, there is an understanding of the ‘modern’ here as being rooted in the ‘human’, as distinct from the religious and the divine, and in the real conditions of the social world. But it accords to Sarala Dasa the status of an extraordinary individual in the modern sense of the term.

It is worth stressing that it was precisely in the second half of the 19th century, i.e. with the beginning of the ‘modern’ period in Odia literature, that Sarala Dasa and his compositions drew increased scholarly attention and his status as *adi kabi*, the early poet of vernacular Odia, acquired greater significance. The renewed interest in the language and culture of Odisha was tied both to the growth of incipient nationalism against colonial rule and to a fight for the survival of Odia against the encroachment of Bangla (Bengali) in the coastal districts. This struggle inspired a new sense of pride in Odianess and instilled with urgency the search for a genealogy of Odia that precedes, and is distinct from, Bangla. Towards the end of the century, this struggle was taken up with greater vigour by Odia speakers of the western region against the encroachment of Hindi. This sustained *bhasha andolan* (language movement) eventually led to the creation of current Odisha as a unified, separate province of Odia speakers in 1934 (Banerjee-Dube 2015, Chap. 5 for a brief overview).

The search for a linear history of Odia language and literature was stimulated further by an important project launched by the University of Calcutta in the first decades of the 20th century, aiming to compile histories of vernacular literature. This, together with the need to uphold and emphasise the uniqueness of Odia against more dominant languages, resulted in the ‘discovery’ and retrieval of the early poets of the language who were credited with laying the foundation of the ‘national literature of Orissa’ (Mazumdar 1921: xiv).

Interestingly, this process of compiling a linear history of vernacular Odia was fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity, reflected in the diverse assessments of

Sarala Dasa and his *Mahabharata* over the late 19th and early 20th century. Even while the pronounced hesitation of the late 19th century in openly acclaiming the achievement of a ‘rustic’ poet narrating an epic becomes less in the early 20th, it does not disappear completely. If there is pride in the fact that the Odia *Mahabharata* was composed prior to many other vernacular renderings, there is also discomfort, not just with its wide variations and deviations from the ‘original’ story but also with its uncultured, even ‘vulgar’, language, its incorporation of many folk tales, and its lack of metrical sophistication. Sarala Dasa’s categorisation as *adi* poet often comes very close to the characterisation of his works as *aadim* (primitive) or ancient, in a slightly pejorative sense of the term.

Both Mrutyunjaya Ratha’s ‘Sarat-charit’, published in 1911 and subsequently included in his collected works published in 1971, and B. C. Mazumdar’s *Typical Selections from Oriya Literature* volume 1, published in 1921, assert that the variation in the number of letters in the 14-letter metre of *dandibruta* can be accounted for by the fact that the text was meant for recitation. What appears to be an imperfection was corrected when the *Mahabharata* was read aloud. Ratha adds that this *dandibruta* of the *Mahabharata* sounded more like prose than poetry and was easier for non-literate people to understand (Ratha 1971, 197). His forceful affirmation that Sarala Dasa was born in the early 15th century and was the *adi kabi* of Odia, goes hand in hand with the statement that this *Mahabharata* is *aadim*, primitive, and contains all the features of primitive literature: an ungrammatical language full of *prakrut* words, descriptions expressive of superstition, un-truth and the vulgarity of rural, rustic folk (ibid., 198).

Early appraisals of Sarala Dasa emphasise his low birth and his lack of formal education and knowledge in order to explain his simplicity and rustic style and metre. These features also serve to establish a distance between the world of the cultured, ‘modern’ subject and that of a rustic medieval peasant who nevertheless composed an epic that caught the popular imagination for centuries. A simultaneous acceptance and distancing is carried out in the double move of valorising Sarala Dasa as the *adi kabi* and placing him squarely among the simple, the rural, the unlettered folk of Odisha, diffusing thereby his significant influence in the configuration of Odia cultural identity.

Indeed, the numerous ‘deviations’ in the Sarala *Mahabharata*, and the several liberties he took in retelling the story, prompted Fakirmohan Senapati, regarded as the father of Odia prose literature – and now also called ‘Vyasakabi’ a *kabi* who like Vyasa, produced the *Mahabharata* – to translate the original Sanskrit *Mahabharata* into Odia. He took eight years, from 1898 to 1905, to translate 4 of the 18 *parvas*. This partial Odia translation, however, did not gain the favourable reception that Fakirmohan was hoping for, even among the cultured circle of the Odia literati of Bhubaneswar and the coastal region. In his autobiography he

mentions how the Sarala *Mahabharata* and other devotional texts still continued to be read out in important households (Senapati 1977).

The spread of print culture and the printing of the Odia *Mahabharata* went hand in hand with attempts to standardise and homogenise the several versions of Sarala's *Mahabharata* and to edit its uncomfortable anecdotes. Some printed versions even sought to correct the 'irregularities' in the famous *dandibruta*.

Such attempts to bring the Sarala *Mahabharata* into line with elite expectations of what the epic should be gradually changed over the 20th century as Sarala Dasa's low birth and status came to acquire prominence and began to be touted as a sign of Odia 'genius'. The period of his emergence and the flowering of Odia literature became tied to the founding by Kapilendra Deva of a local Hindu Odia dynasty, the Suryavamsa (the solar dynasty). It is interesting that Kapilendra is recorded as an usurper in historical accounts while also being praised for his patronage of the local language. There is no direct indication of any court patronage of Sarala Dasa by Kapilendra, a point that goes against Sheldon Pollock's observation that the 'break with the Sanskrit tradition' and the flowering of vernaculars as languages of literary practice happened under the patronage of local courts and rulers (Pollock 2006). However, Kapilendra and the short-lived solar dynasty are still coupled with the *adi kabis* of Odia in scholarly representations of a time during which Odia literature attained its 'highest glory' (Mazumdar 1921: xviii).

Sarala Dasa's gradual elevation in status is reflected in the *History of Oriya Literature*, written by the poet and scholar Mayadhar Mansinha:

'Sarala Dasa, the poet of the Oriya Mahabharata, flourished in the reign of the founder and the greatest ruler of the Solar dynasty, Sri Kapilendra Deva [...]. This commoner-king carried the Oriya arms down to the banks of the Kaveri down to Warrangal and beyond, into the very heart of the South Indian Moslem powers of those days. [...] Sarala Dasa was born in such political conditions and such propitious times. True national poet that he is, we find all these happy contemporary conditions, clearly reflected in the vigorous narrative of his great *Mahabharata*' (Mansinha 1962, 51).

Another important history of Oriya literature, written in Odia and first published in 1963, placed Sarala Dasa's compositions confidently in the *adi parva* (first stage) of Odia literature, which began with the Buddhist *caryapadas*. This *History*, however, did not show any unease with the lack of sophistication in Sarala Dasa's compositions. The compositions of Sarala Dasa are, according to this work, replete with the 'cultural characteristics' of this first stage, in which sagas of heroes predominated, sagas that underscored bravery and courage as well as sacrifice and spirituality, rather than the desire and pleasure that would mark out the second stage of Odia literature (Mohanty 1977, pp. 1–2).

By the 1960s therefore, Sarala Dasa had been both individualised and institutionalised: two processes that complemented and sustained each other. At the same time, Mansinha's essay also bears witness to the uncertainty that besets an intellectual in his attempt to valorise a poet and a composition that lack 'sophistication'. At one point in the essay, Mansinha admits that despite many 'unique and excellent qualities', Sarala Dasa's epic, 'owing to his lack of any formal education and systematic training and comprehensive erudition', has the appearance of 'a wild growth' (Mansinha 1962, 64). We are tempted to compare this with Mrutyunjaya Ratha's description of the *Mahabharata* as 'primitive literature'. The Sarala *Mahabharata*, Mansinha hastens to add, is popular with the people for the very reasons that make it a 'wild growth'.

Such reservations notwithstanding, an increasing association with religious devotion, simplicity, and earthiness as the hallmarks of Odia language and literature that articulate the voice of the people of the soil, has substituted ambivalence with pride in the poor, unlettered poets as true representatives of the 'genius' of Odisha. With linear histories of Odia literature establishing Sarala Dasa as both an *adi kabi* and a 'national poet', the instability of both Sarala Dasa as an individual author and also his collective and itinerant compositions have become institutionalised through a new set of mediations and appropriations. The collection and compilation of the several palm-leaf manuscripts of the *Mahabharata* that accepted Sarala Dasa as the individual author, the attempts to edit and standardise the language and metre, and the careful selection of the 'correct' version from among numerous variations of the Odia epic, have simultaneously established Sarala Dasa as an individual and also institutionalised him as the sole author of the *Mahabharata*.

It is time now to look at another rural poet of late 19th century Odisha who belongs to a radical faith before tying together the strands of poets and their compositions, individual and collective authorship, and individualisation and institutionalisation.

4 Bhima Bhoi and bhakti

Bhima Bhoi, the poet-philosopher of Mahima Dharma, a radical religious faith preached in the 1860s in Odisha by an itinerant ascetic named Mahima Swami, was initiated into Mahima Dharma by the preceptor. The Swami also endowed the blind, poor Khond (*adivasi*) Bhima Bhoi with the 'eyesight of knowledge' and the gift of poetry to spread the message of the faith. Like Sarala Dasa, Bhima Bhoi grew up with no formal education. However, prior to Mahima Swami's bestowal of

knowledge and the gift of poetry, Bhima Bhoi is believed to have heard and assimilated the message of popular devotional texts and epics collectively read out in village gatherings. He combined such knowledge with the precepts of Mahima Swami to elaborate a philosophy/theosophy of Mahima Dharma. His rich compositions reflect the varied trends of religious thought current in Odisha and underscore Bhima Bhoi's ingenuity in imbuing prevalent ideas with new meanings.

Bhima Bhoi emerged as a preacher after his Guru's death, then took up the life of a householder, severing ties with the ascetics of the faith, and set up his own ashram in Khaliapali in western Odisha in the last decades of the 19th century, where he slowly replaced the Guru as the founder of the faith. His colourful life and rich compositions generated a host of legends while his emotive chants of devotion and spoken/written compositions produced a surfeit of meanings at collective readings/recitations in gatherings of non-literate followers. In western Odisha, Bhima Bhoi merged with and/or displaced Mahima Swami as the founder of Mahima Dharma.

At a different level, Bhima Bhoi's invocation of the evil Kali Yuga, the last and worst of the four classical *yugas* (epochs) in Hindu time reckoning, and his appeal to all to take shelter in the true preceptor without further delay, took on a particular resonance amongst his followers at times of crisis in their lives and within the faith. The collective compositions that conferred great credibility and significance on Bhima Bhoi also meant that apocryphal texts were ascribed to him after his death.

The deification of the poet by lay disciples was complemented by a process of canonisation begun by intellectuals in the early twentieth century. Once again, the ambivalence about an unlettered poet of low birth, which characterised the late nineteenth-century reports of officials of the princely and colonial states, changed into admiration at the turn of the century. An essay on 'Bhima Bhoi's acquisition of knowledge' appeared in the literary magazine *Mukur* in 1908; this was soon followed by two influential texts of N. N. Vasu, a scholar-official – *Modern Buddhism and its Followers in Orissa* (1911) and *The Archeological Survey of Mayurbhanja* (1912). In these texts, Vasu categorically identified Bhima Bhoi as the leader of the sect and paid him glowing tributes:

'Ere long the fame of Bhima Bhoi spread far and wide. Hearing his immortal instruction helping in the attainment of real knowledge and illumining the head and the heart, the mighty pillars of the caste system stooped at his feet, though the blood of the low kanda ran in his veins. They considered him a spark from the Eternal Flame of truth and knowledge. Before several years had elapsed the Mahima Dharma could count its followers by thousands' (Vasu 1911, 164).

Vasu's adulation of Bhima Bhoi's low birth, which was seen to only heighten his achievements, was felt by others as well. B. C. Mazumdar, an official of the

Sonepur court and the editor of *Typical Selections*, credited Bhima Bhoi with ‘a charming and commanding personality’ that enabled him to lead an attack on the temple of Jagannatha in Puri in 1881 (Mazumdar 1911, 126). Colonial records confirm that Bhima Bhoi did not lead the attack. At the same time, it is highly probable that Bhima Bhoi’s compositions, which mentioned that Lord Jagannatha had left Puri to become Mahima Swami’s first disciple, inspired the group of very ordinary men and women who marched to Puri from western Odisha to take out and burn the lifeless image of Lord Jagannatha (Banerjee-Dube 2007, 110).

Mayadhar Mansinha, whom we have cited above, also wrote in glowing terms about Bhima Bhoi, who called himself a ‘kandha’ (khond) in his compositions. Bhima Bhoi was described as ‘the greatest adivasi poet’ and a ‘revolutionary’, a symbol of the genius of *adivasi* (aborigine) Odisha. (Mansinha 1976, 206). In histories of Odia literature written in the vernacular, Bhima Bhoi was raised to the status of a ‘national poet’, alongside Sarala Dasa and other early poets, and given the credit for occasioning an awakening of the Odia people (Misra 1928, 278). Interestingly, the fact that Bhima Bhoi used ‘impure’ words in his compositions, ‘words used very commonly by the illiterate’, was commended as proof of his experiments with language and literature and upheld as poetry close to the heart of the common people.

In other words, simplicity, lack of formal education, earthiness, and the rustic style of the early poets, as well as that of Bhima Bhoi, came to be increasingly valorised as ‘devotional poetry’ underwent the process of being constructed as the hallmark of Odia literature, a true expression of the voice of the people. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Sarala Das’ sudra status, his spirited personality, the striking changes he made to the ‘original’, the new episodes he introduced, and the deviant interpretations of the epic he provided, have been seized upon as the conscious innovations of a creative genius that resulted in a break with an earlier tradition and the creation of a new one. An early poet with a ‘medieval’ sensibility inaugurates the ‘early modern’ in Odia literature by reconceptualising a Sanskrit epic through devotion and the blessing of a goddess and by providing a lower caste interpretation of a ‘Brahminical’ text.

Bhima Bhoi, for his part, is hailed simultaneously as a social revolutionary and an outstanding composer whose works bear a close resemblance to those of the early poets (and medieval mystics) in terms of language, thought, and content. He is a late 19th century devotional poet who pertains to the medieval in the thrust of his compositions. He is also modern because he caused a social revolution by speaking out against the caste system and boldly using ‘impure’ words in his creations.

Bhima Bhoi’s commanding personality, radicalism, and affinity with the medieval mystics that caught the imagination of his followers, found expression

in the circulation of *malikas*, apocryphal texts ascribed to him in the early decades of the twentieth century. Such *malikas* rolled Gandhi and Mahima Swami together into the figure of Kalki, the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, whose appearance was to bring the evil Kali Yuga to an end and re-establish *satya dharma* (true faith). The *avatar*, human incarnation of the divine, proclaimed by such texts had appeared once – in the figure of Mahima Swami. But the devotees had failed to recognise him. He was to appear again and this time the true devotees were not to falter. They were to take shelter at his feet and also fight along with him against the evil forces of Kali Yuga (represented by the British among others) to wipe away evil and clear the path for a bright future. Bhima Bhoi's distress at the evils of Kali Yuga and his call to all to take refuge in the Absolute to cope with these evils became pertinent in the disturbed times of colonial rule and during the grassroots surge in nationalist agitation under the leadership of Gandhi in 1920–21. Bhima Bhoi's emotive *bhajans*, which acquired new meaning and content in the collective singing of devotees during his lifetime, became a source of solace at a later stage through the creation and circulation of texts ascribed to him. If in the process of canonisation by the literati and of diverse apprehensions by the adherents of Mahima Dharma, Bhima Bhoi became individualised and institutionalised, the inherent fluidity of his compositions enabled the production of new ones in his name, reinforcing the mobility and lack of fixity of Bhima Bhoi and his compositions.

5 By way of a conclusion

In order to sum up a very preliminary foray into this subject matter, let me raise a few questions that do not have ready answers. How do we gain access to a text and its composer? How do we understand both through the multi-layered mediations and mutations they have undergone? What do Sarala Dasa and Bhima Bhoi, and their texts, tell us? That both authorship and texts/compositions are corporate and collective? That even if texts are taken to be the creation of an individual author, they speak different languages, are understood in diverse ways and acquire lives of their own? In such a scenario, it is perhaps fruitful to track the journey(s) of the text and the author to gain a better understanding of texts without closure and of authors who are simultaneously individual and composite. Such a reading could make the author a less 'mettlesome subject' and enable us to reflect on authorship and subjectivity in new ways.

Sarala Dasa and Bhima Bhoi, as well as their compositions, offer instances of collective authorship and of personal and communal selves. While Sarala Dasa's relationship with Sarala Devi and that of Bhima Bhoi with his preceptor is acutely

intimate, both exemplify social and composite selves that enmesh the divine, the human, and the community of readers and listeners in distinct ways. Such entwined articulations account for the mobility of their compositions, as they were circulated and reconstructed in a process of evolutions that spanned centuries. If this mobility made the Odia *Mahabharata's* relation with the putative Sanskrit 'original' almost negligible and conferred on Sarala Dasa an authority of great proportions, Bhima Bhoi's authorship and authority was reinforced in the composition of newer texts that were ascribed to him after his death. In both cases, the authors, corporate to start with, became individualised and institutionalised through the work of a collective.

The mutual imbrication of a subjective self and a social subject, and fused practices of creation and reading, author and audience, enable us to move beyond modern understandings of the author as a creative individual and his creation – the 'text' – as two separate well-defined entities. Further, it allows entry into a world in which the author and audience, reading and composition, get rolled together into one, displacing the well-defined boundaries of the self and the individual, the personal and the collective. It is time to start looking afresh at notions of the individual and individualisation, keeping in mind these fascinating combinations of the ancient and the medieval, and the early-modern and the modern, the religious and the rational, and the individual and its 'other'. Keeping these in view, we can begin to rethink the notion of institutionalisation.

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Rahul Bjørn Parson

Individualisation and democratisation of knowledge in Banārasīdās' *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*

The ways in which religious pluralism produces and regulates processes of individualisation (Malinar 2016, 150) is one of the most productive questions to ask about religion in South Asia, and one that comes to the heart of how Jains, a numerically small community, explained and reconciled religious difference, thus creating an imaginary that affords and accommodates diversity of belief, but also necessarily diversity of personality and identity. The Jain *adhyātma* group championed neutrality and equanimity with regard to otherness and difference, rejecting hostility and partisanship. For these poets, partisanship meant the betrayal of the Self and a lost chance to know the Self, because taking any side is necessarily taking sides against yourself (joining someone else). Early modern Jain spiritual/mystical poets re-calibrated Jain philosophical concepts to the requirements of the laity, and particularly, the individual seeker.

One of the most interesting individuals in 17th-century North India, of whom we have a good record, is the Jain poet Banārasīdās (1586–1643). Perhaps the most telling and fascinating aspect of his writing that speaks to a process of individualisation is Banārasīdās' fascination with himself, as evidenced in his celebrated autobiography, *Ardhakathanaka*. Banārasīdās is so interesting precisely because he intentionally left this ego-document containing a detailed account of his own life, which was the first of its kind in South Asian literature. In the case of Banārasīdās, writing may have helped develop notions of individuality (Rüpke 2013, 8). His desires, anxieties, intense sorrow and exuberance feature prominently in most of his work, wrought with a subtle poetic genius. The micro-social aspects and anecdotal moments in Banārasīdās' writing allows modern readers to view the tender friendships that shape his life and embolden him to take pioneering risks in 17th-century India. He was a pioneer in at least two ways: first, his ego-document was unprecedented and introduced a new genre in Indian literature, and second, he had the audacity, as a layperson, to produce a modern, vernacular version of a religio-philosophical text from the Jain tradition, the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*. Banārasīdās' legacy resulted in a type of conventionalisation of individualisation via other poets and members of the laity. These concepts can be traced through the work of several Jain poets, starting with Banārasīdās. Poets of the *adhyātma* (spiritual) school placed a high premium on *anubhava* (experience of the self through yogic insight), *samatā* (equanimity), and anti-dogmatism

(Bangha 2013).¹ In order to trace the implications of Banārasīdās' work, I will also briefly discuss Cidānanda (early 19th cent.), and Rājacandra (1867–1901), to demonstrate that two centuries later we still find vibrant strands of this line of Jain thinking and poetics.

Banārasīdās' major works are the following: *Banārasī Nāmamāla* (lexography, 1613), *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* (religio-philosophical treatise, 1636), *Ardhakathanaka* (autobiography, 1641), *Banārasīvilāsa* (a posthumously-compiled poetry collection, 1644). The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, while not as famous, studied, or celebrated as the *Ardhakathanaka*, is the text in which we see Banārasīdās developing a strong literary personality. Running through the work is a determination and agenda geared toward a bold religious individualisation based on the pluralistic, multifaceted ontology and epistemology of the Jains.

This study will concentrate mostly on Banārasīdās' *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, since the *Ardhakathanaka* has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere (Banarasidasa and Premi 1943, Lath 2005, Vanina 1995). While the Urtext of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* was by Kundakunda and commentaries by Amritcandra, on which Banārasīdās based his work, were indeed focused on the Self and Jain soteriology, they had less to contribute to a concept of individualisation. Rather it is what Banārasīdās draws out of the Urtext and commentaries that suggests a new way of being in the world that shifts emphasis to the unconditioned-individual's access to salvation. What is so amazing about Banārasīdās is that he and his small group of laymen appropriated a tradition of learning that was hitherto overwhelmingly dominated by the monastic tradition. Banārasīdās and his group of friends reject ideas long held dear by ascetics, specifically that salvation is only available from the status of monkhood and that the laity would need to be reborn and aspire to that higher station.²

1 Banārasīdās the merchant-poet

Banārasīdās³ was born in Jaunpur (65 km northwest of Banaras) in 1586 into a Śwetambar Jain⁴ merchant family. His life spanned the reigns of three great

¹ For an excellent discussion of these aspects of Jain poetry and thought, see John Cort's 'Foreword' in Imre Bangha, *It's a City-showman's Show!: Transcendental Songs of Anandghan*, New York: Penguin, 2013.

² I am grateful to Monika Horstmann for discussing this text with me, sharing her insights, and confirming the novelty of what Banārasīdās and his group of friends were doing.

³ This biographical information comes from an article by (Tomar 1985).

⁴ Jainism is one of the oldest religions in the world and yet it has often been mistakenly ascribed to offshoots of Vedic religion or Buddhism; it is neither. It is based on the teachings

Mughal emperors: Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan. Banārasidās is known as a central figure in the reform movement of Jain spirituality called *Adhyātma*.⁵ This is indeed one of the most significant reasons for interest in Banārasidās since he influenced serious changes in the fabric of Jain socio-religious life, and yet he was not a monk or renunciant, rather he was a merchant. We can see from his work that he struggled against the expectations and strictures of his community. He lived in an epoch in which the pressure of social approval demanded a high degree of conformity and militated against divergence from age-old traditions. Yet despite himself, Banārasidās remained divergent throughout his life within this social hegemony. The stakes were incredibly high for merchants since their clans enforced stern internal regulation of their members in order to maintain communal integrity, commercial solidarity, and credibility (*sākh*). Going it alone, without alliances and partners, was not an option for merchants, and therefore religious deviance or heterodoxy necessitated subtlety and accomplices.

Banārasidās critically engages with the religious institutions of his community. The scope of his intervention, as a member of the laity, must have been nearly unprecedented. Banārasidās' ego-document traces his lifelong reflection on his experiences and the trial-and-error approach to spiritual seeking. He shows his reader the details of a journey that has brought him to a new religious direction, almost like a mathematical proof. His insights and interventions were not particularly welcomed by many religious authorities. Yet, Banārasidās, as he says in his work, could overcome discouragement with the support of his friends and trust in his intuitions.

of 24 great teachers who attained omniscience and nirvana. They are known as the *tirthankaras*, or ford-makers, since they can help humanity ford the ocean of transmigration and rebirth. The 24th *tirthankara*, Mahavīra, was a slightly older contemporary of the Buddha. The two main branches of Jainism are Śwetāmbar and Digambar, in the former the monks are clad in white (*śweta*) cloth and in the latter, they are naked, literally wearing only the sky (*dig*). While the two traditions share the central Jain principles of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *anekāntavāda* (non-absolutism) and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness, greedlessness), they differ on many doctrinal aspects of the religion and maintain separate literary and scriptural canons. Banarasi's spiritual movement, *Adhyātma*, was unique in that it had members of both major sects.

⁵ *Adhyātma* means belonging to self or person; concerning an individual, concerning self. It is supreme spirit (manifested as the individual self) or the relation between the supreme and the individual soul. *Adhyātma* is usually associated with the spiritual.

2 The historical context of Jain Hindi literature and bhakti

The two centuries immediately prior to the 17th century saw the emergence of several divisions within the Jain *sangha* (community) and therefore many reform movements emerged. This was also in response to a perceived laxity in the behaviour of Jain monks. As a result, this period was followed by a great emergence of writers, scholars, monks, and reformers all trying to assert some influence on Jainism. Much of this new energy in the community is credited (in the Hindi language literature) to Emperor Akbar's syncretism, during the 'pax Mughalica'.⁶ The growing disillusionment with religious authority in the 15th and 16th century provoked, in part, a self-reliance imperative. In his texts, Banārasīdās champions the empowering concept of *anubhava* (≈ experience of the Self), as the guiding knowledge that leads to liberation, thereby rendering prevailing religious authorities somewhat redundant. Yet, as mentioned above, he was emboldened by the support of his small group of well-wishers, who were already beginning to organise a type of spiritual and literary community with stabilising conventions.

In his introduction to *Hindī jaina sāhitya kā bhāṣa itihāsa* volume II (of 7!), Śitikanth Mīśra insists that it is not possible to adequately categorise or indeed encapsulate even with seven volumes the variety of trends, flavours, and ideologies of early modern Jain literature! (Mīśra 1994, 6–7). With varying degrees of subtlety, this literature deals with numerous entanglements, such as the blending of Jain themes (nonviolence, nonpossession, correct life-style, charity, austerity, liberation, all in the Jain mode) with the themes emerging from trends in bhakti literature, which had a substantial influence on Jain literature of the period.⁷ Many Jain poets and thinkers display an inward turn in this period, one that privileges the personal and insists on a self-reliance based on a special type of (inner) experience (*anubhava*). In this article, I attempt to locate this *experience* in the poetry and find some of the

⁶ I borrow this expression from Jack Hawley, via Martin Fuchs. See Hawley 2015. The idea is that Mughal era allowed for a high degree of plurality and co-existence.

⁷ The famous, and pioneering, Hindi literary critic, Ramchandra Shukla, characterised Hindi-language Jain literature, as well as Nath Panth and Siddha literature, as exclusively sectarian instructional (*sāmpradāyika śikṣā mātra*). It was not given a place in 'pure' or real literature. Usha Jain says that this has to do with his puritan perspective, but she generously also suggests that many texts were not yet available, and therefore Shukla did not have a fair chance to amend his assessment. Both Rahul Sankrityayana and Hazari Prasad Dwivedi have written about Jain literature, but few others have shown interest until recently. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi wrote that if we expunge literature with religious sentiments from the category of real literature, than we can wash our hands of more than half of the Indian tradition (Jain 2006).

implications of this shift, particularly socio-historically. *Anubhava* has a special, and occasionally, competitive relationship with bhakti.⁸ Bhakti was a prominent feature in early-modern, North Indian popular culture with which Jain poets had to engage. Banārasidās shares or possibly borrows numerous tropes and conceits from his Bhakti colleagues, ranging from Kabir to Tulsidas, to name just two. Yet Banārasidās, naturally, employs Jain concepts and values at these moments.

Jain poets, like their Bhakti, Sufi, and Sant contemporaries, found accommodation for strands of religious individualisation within the cultural confluence that was Mughal North India. It was a dynamic time in Indian history in which many cultures and art forms were able to mix relatively freely. This developed into something Hindi scholars have called *sājhī sanskṛti*, or shareholder/partner culture. Jain poets began to apprehend an introspective, personal religious turn and calibrate it with their canonical, philosophical tenets, e.g. *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* (non-absolutism and may-be-ism). Befitting the historical moment, this new literature appeared in a vernacular poetic idiom, thereby democratising access to spiritual knowledge and emboldening further spiritual and literary innovation. This may account for why we see in Jain discourse an increasing use of the concept of manifold perspectives, known as *anekāntavāda*. Furthermore, in the privileging of *anubhava* and *adhyātma*, Jainism is managing and mitigating the cultural purchase of bhakti. In this way, hegemonic Jainism adapts and produces its own counter-culture, but one that puritanically returns to itself, the hegemonic. What seems at first like a radical departure, a rebelliousness, and even meets with reactionary opposition, is perhaps the unconscious efforts of mainstream Jainism to modify itself in the bhakti milieu. Here Raymond Williams may help elucidate this phenomenon: ‘It can be persuasively argued that all or nearly all initiatives and contributions, even when they take on manifestly alternative or oppositional forms, are in practice tied to the hegemonic: that the dominant culture, so to say, at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture’ (Williams 1977, 114).

Following Williams, the *Samayasāra* is addressing itself to more than one cultural force. Banārasidās’ appropriation and subordination of bhakti is the neutralisation of its potential challenge to the Jain path, and the re-assertion that knowledge is the path to liberation is also a Jain gesture. The modification is in advancing personal experience as the wellspring of liberating knowledge, thereby profoundly individualising the resource. While the poetry and characters

⁸ Jain devotion or bhakti appeared in many forms, as did objects of devotion. Some popular examples would be guru-bhakti, *thūrtankara*-bhakti, *śalākā*-purush (great man) bhakti, frequently executed with elegance and refinement. Bhakti did not exist in the oldest texts, as Paul Dundas has indicated, but from the earliest period bhakti was ‘a necessary part of the Jain path and was credited with the ability to destroy karma’ (Dundas 2002, 171).

who emerge from the *adhyātma* movement are highly individualised, as a larger historical process it also appears to be a way in which Jainism avoids becoming irrelevant. Below I will discuss the passages in which Banārasidās discusses and subordinates Bhakti in favour of knowledge through experience. For a thorough engagement with Bhakti and its implications regarding religious individualisation, see Martin Fuchs' contribution in this publication, *The Social Embedment of Individualisation in Bhakti* (in Section 1.2).

3 Implications for individualisation

In some ways, Jain soteriology as a whole contains within its very logic an extreme form of individual isolation: that is the radical separation of each and every *ātmā* or *jīva* from everything else and every other *ātmā* or *jīva*. Indeed, the *summum bonum* of Jain life is to attain omniscience and then liberation, culminating in blissful, absolute isolation, known as *kevala-jñāna*. Although this sounds stark it should be thought of as independent perfection. The liberated soul is called a *kevalin*, it obtains *mokṣa* (liberation) and rises to the *siddha-loka* and 'remains there in a disembodied state (*siddha*), *experiencing* its own inherent nature of infinite consciousness and bliss' (Wiley 2009, 123). I have emphasised the word choice 'experience' from Wiley's handbook on Jainism because experience is central to the Adhyātmis. Experience of the self through yogic insight, *anubhava*, is also how we can trace the power of this idea outward from Banārasidās' text, across space and time, into the voices of other Jain poets and philosophers.

Banārasidās belonged to and led a school of Jain spiritualism based in Agra called *adhyātma*, mystical exploration of the inner self. It was similar to other reformist sects in terms of social ideas. It has been suggested that before Banārasidās, *adhyātma* was an intellectual movement, but with him it became a confident religious reform program. The *adhyātmis* harkened back to older teachings in order to bypass what they saw as accretions onto to their religion over time. The *adhyātma* reformists eschewed ritual and image worship, which had become orthopraxy in many Jain sects, preferring spiritual (*adhyātma*) self-exploration as the path to liberation (*mokṣa-nīrvaṇa*). Banārasidās was able to bring some of the loftier concepts down to earth and simultaneously provide something that a movement of a lay community sorely lacked – scriptural authority. This allowed the group to proceed without the blessing of the professionals, monks, and priests, which is a crucial aspect of religious individualisation. Moreover, he wrote in the popular poetic idiom, *Braj*, and this gave Jains some relevance in the marketplace of religio-literary production.

By democratising forms of knowledge and making available vocabularies of liberation to a wider Jain public, Banārasidās believed that he side-lined a declining religious authority and made audible the ‘voice of the Jina’.⁹ Additionally, he confronts and gains from bhakti as well as Sufi romances, entanglements that provide him with a new sensibility and approach to both his own religion and his concept of self (Bangha 2015). In this sense, he was instrumental, as were the other *adhyātmik* poets, in adapting popular Jainism to new cultural forms.¹⁰ These adaptations, in turn, made room for highly individualised poetic composition, which can be traced to numerous poets. At the conclusion of this article I will trace these poetic conventions to 19th-century Jain poets Cidananda and Rajacandra to demonstrate the spatial and temporal reach of these ideas. The very act of writing also seemed to contribute, over time, to Banārasidās’ sense of himself and his place in historical time, culminating ultimately in a proper ego-document, the *Ardhakathanaka*. Banārasidās seems to share Ricoeur’s view that ‘life cannot be understood other than through stories we tell about it, [and so] we are led to say that a life *examined*, in the sense borrowed from Socrates, is a life *narrated*’ (Ricoeur 1991, 435).

Jain *adhyātmik* literature promotes what one might call Indic idioms of religious individualisation: oneself as the premier spiritual resource, broader acceptance of difference, explanations for variation, increased opportunity for guru-ship (less strict criteria), anti-sectarianism, anti-intolerance, anti-bigotry, non-absolutism, equanimity, and finally, increased interest in personhood (evidenced by ego-documents and personal anecdotes). Additionally, Jain philosophical concepts suggest avenues for individualisation, such as *anekāntavāda*, manypointedness, which allows for a diversity of perspectives since it maintains that each view makes a proper but partial contribution to a higher truth. In Jain philosophy, *anekāntavāda* acknowledges the internal logic and intelligence of competing philosophical systems (Cort 2000). Scholars have referred to this as a type of relativism of knowledge (*syādvāda*) and a dialogical search for truth. *Anekāntavāda* is a willingness to benefit from truthful insights of other philosophical traditions, for to deny another (person or tradition) at least a partial claim to truth is to harbour pretensions towards omniscience. This is the logic by which bigotry and partisanship become chief heresies (Qvarnström 1999, Chapple, Haribhadrasūri, and Casey 2003). While Jain thinkers drew from a

⁹ A *Jina*, meaning conquerer, is a liberated and perfected teacher or *tīrthankara*, whence the word Jaina is also derived as a follower of the *Jinas*.

¹⁰ As the Bhagavadgita endeavored to define Hinduism in interaction with Buddhism, Jainism, and Ajivikas, Banārasidās attempts a similar task with the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* for a destabilized Jain Dharma in the face of bhakti and other attractive alternatives.

shared and common religio-philosophical Indic pool of concepts, they implemented many familiar ideas in accordance with their own ontology, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics (Soni 2000, 367). This is one reason that simply surveying what *anubhava* has meant elsewhere will not suffice regarding what these poets were mobilising.

In his introduction to *Open Boundaries*, John Cort wrote of a concept of self that is key to our understanding of individualisation: ‘a sense of self-identity, whether in terms of the individual person or a social group, is never constructed in isolation, but rather is always a contextualised process in which the sense of “self” is in dialogue, opposition, or dialectical relationship to a sense of what is “not-self” or “other”’ (Cort 1998, 1–2).¹¹ This approach is inspired by Saussure’s structural linguistics, which posits that the meaning of any word depends on its difference from other words or signs, and thence this enters into critical and cultural studies (Saussure et al. 2011). Thus the ‘self’ conceived in this manner, can only be understood when juxtaposed to an ‘other’ (Cort 1998, 14). However, this is not the only way to understand what Jain thinkers themselves are saying about the Self. Jain *adhyātmik* poets were fiercely committed to the idea of the individual identity in a state of neutrality, unconditioned by external forces. I suggest supplementing the structuralist approach mentioned above with the concept of the Neutral, a close analogue of the problem on which these Jain poets meditate – the radically Neutral as a polemic against all dogmatism, against all ideological appropriations, and against meaning created by oppositional binaries or oppositional relations among signs. The *adhyātmik* poets consistently reject binaries, oppositions, and conflict to determine meaning, opting instead for *samatā* (Neutral, amongst other synonyms). In a way, they explicitly reject the Self that is formulated in a contextualised process, against an other, and rather prefer a pre-contextualised Self, the one not determined by opposition but by equanimity. Roland Barthes writes of the Neutral as ‘everything that baffles the paradigm [...] The paradigm [is] the opposition of two virtual terms from which, in speaking, I actualise one to produce meaning [...] meaning rests on conflict (the choice of one term against another), and all conflict is generative of meaning: to choose one and refuse the other is always a sacrifice made to meaning [...]’ (Barthes 2005, 6–7). The poems discussed below corroborate that the poets undertake the very difficult task of understanding the Self without the assistance of meaning creating oppositions, binaries, and others against whom to define oneself. Another critical insight from Barthes is that the Neutral doesn’t refer to ‘impressions’ of greyness, of ‘neutrality,’ of indifference. Rather, the concept is both active and

¹¹ See Part 2 of this publication, particularly Linkenbach.

personal: ‘The Neutral [...] can refer to intense, strong, unprecedented states. To outplay the paradigm is an ardent, burning activity’ (Barthes 2005, 7). It should be noted that Jain thought and post-structuralism have significantly different projects. For one thing, much of Jain thought is soteriological, but that does not mean that it is not also epistemological. There is an affinity between the Neutral and the Jain *samatā*, which refers to an ardent resistance to meaning-determining enclosures or binaries, as the poetry below will corroborate. The idea of the Neutral, in Barthes’ terms, offers at the very least a useful reference point or analogue to the ‘non-conditionment’ implied by *adhyātmik samatā*. It is also important to recall that this is in conversation with the structuralist approach mentioned above.

The concepts of ‘self’ and ‘other,’ or ‘non-self’ is profoundly important in Jain ontology. Jain worship and ritual also have a significant effect on the worshipper’s sense of self. Whereas the many two-way interactions of religions of which Jains would have been aware, such as those involving Kṛṣṇa or Śiva, the object of worship and bhakti in Jainism is completely isolated and non-transactional (Babb 1998, 150). Whereas Kṛṣṇa is a profoundly transactional being, as in the Puṣṭimārg, Jain worship is transactionally null (Babb 1998, 152). Cort sums up this idea as ‘pure reflectivity, a mirror that absorbs and transforms nothing but rather shows the worshiper the truth of who he or she is’ (Cort 1998, 10). This is another way to think about the dissolving of the binary of bhakti for Jain purposes. Josephine Reynell writes that, ‘doctrinally it is the āyā (ātman) which is the carrier of passions, cognitions and intentions initiating actions. These passions and actions in turn shape specific personalities, thereby constituting the self within each human being and making each human being a unique individual in the Jain view [...] providing a clear counter-example to the views of Dumont and Marriot [...]’ (Reynell 2006, 212–213) see Linkenbach in this publication, Section 2.1). Reynell makes two important conclusions regarding Jain individualisation: first, the embodied soul is perceived to lie at the heart of the self and second, karma attached to the soul is believed to be responsible for the particular constitution and individuality of each person (Reynell 2006, 213).

While most Jain teachers have followed the tri-ratnam, the three jewels of right faith (*samyak darśana*), right knowledge (*samyak jñāna*) and right conduct (*samyak cāritra*), Kundakunda (c. 750 CE) expressed a minority position that deemphasised behaviour/conduct (*cāritra*) and privileged knowledge (*jñāna*). The emphasis is on knowledge of the difference between what is self and what is other (Sanskrit *anya*). Kundakunda explains in the *Niyamasāra* (141–50), that the autonomous self is the true self, while the dependent self is the external one, the social persona. Therefore, as John Cort eloquently puts it, the duality between self and other is not only a matter of external relations, it is even internalised in terms of correct and incorrect self-understandings, what we might call ‘true and false

consciousness' of the self (Cort 1998, 10–11). This otherness can extend to the apparatus of the body and mind (*manas*), which shapes (or distorts) the nature of the experience that the soul has. The attachment to this experience that is shaped by exterior otherness, *anya*, is a singular perspective *ekānta*, and therefore leads to a condition of *matārthi*, often translated as bigotry. While this duality looks like a meaning-producing binary, I suggest that meaning of the self is not in every case generated relationally to the other, but often in spite of the other, in neutrality.

4 Experience (present)/neutrality/ the anti-dogmatic

These three categories and tropes, which recur across centuries of Jain poetry (17th – 19th cent.) and philosophical writings, are connected intimately with individualisation through an uncompromising and sustained effort to resist de-individualising trends such as partisanship, dogmatism, and ideological conflict.¹² These terms become a convention and poetic conceit for forms of individualisation. While this is not a standard institutionalisation such as laws or a church, it is rather a poetic conventionalisation of a set of individualising resources. These concepts are dynamically and causally connected, they enable one another. That is, they are not completely autonomous and tend to invoke ancillary associations. For example, one way to think about them is that *anubhava* (experience) is the resource, which enables *samatā* (neutrality/equanimity) as a view, and *matārthi-virodha* (anti-dogmatism) is the outcome or the (in)action. One could also say by way of *samatā* as a view, stemming from *matārthi-virodha* openness, one may access *anubhava*. The poets play endlessly with this constellation, but it is critical that *matārthi-virodha* remain an element, since it is the portion that resists ideological appropriation.

Anubhava (experience, yogic insight) came to be of supreme importance as an individualised resource without need of temple, religious professional, or sect. The focus on *anubhava* is the central conventionalisation, approaching institutionalisation, in the Adhyātma line of poetry and thinking. Adhyātma (Jain spiritualism) proliferated and emboldened numerous poets and their audiences; they gained confidence in their own *ātmas* as the sole requirement to attain *mokṣa* (liberation). This confidence coincided with non-religious spheres such as increased

¹² Jains are by no means a homogenous community with a unity of purpose and perspective, this would immediately contradict the doctrine of manifold perspectives. That notwithstanding, several scholars, such as Babb and Cort, have indicated that there is something like a Jain 'style' when it comes to matters of epistemology, of ontology, and I would suggest, of poetics.

mobility, sociality, and entrepreneurship, sharing family resemblances to non-Indian strands of individualisation. *Adhyātmīs* found authorisation for their ideas from critical Jain philosophical concepts and attempted to emplot *anubhava* in Jain intellectual lineages. Yet *adhyātmik* ideas were challenged then and now.¹³

There are many critiques of the concepts of religious experience, and though it is well beyond my ability to consider all of them, I will take the one that seems to come straight to the problem in my material. Robert Sharf's analysis nicely encapsulates one critique of religious experience, which is: appeals to experience remain authoritative because they reference empty signifiers that refer to the ineffable. He writes: 'The category of experience is, in essence, a mere place-holder that entails a substantive if indeterminate terminus for the relentless deferral of meaning. And this is precisely what makes the term experience so amenable to ideological appropriation' (Sharf 1998, 113). Jain thinkers were keenly aware of this problem and therefore almost always couple any discussion of *anubhava* with polemics against ideological appropriation (*matārthi*) and meaning delimiting binaries or dogmatism. Sharf insists that any insight achieved from experience is 'gained at the expense of any possible discursive meaning or signification' (Sharf 2012, 150). Jain poets might agree, adding that the meaning created by experience is indeed aloof of discourse and relational signification, rather this meaning of experience is created in the autonomous neutrality of the Self.

Raymond Williams' discussion of experience is useful here: 'a particular kind of consciousness, which can in some contexts be distinguished from "reason" or "knowledge"'. He continues, 'Experience [...] is then the fullest, most open, most active kind of consciousness, and it includes feeling as well as thought. This sense has been very active in aesthetic discussion, following an earlier religious sense [...]' (1988). Williams makes an important distinction between experience *past* and experience *present*, the former acting as knowledge gained from past events, and the latter a type of full and active awareness. 'The strength of this appeal to wholeness, against forms of thought which would exclude certain kinds of consciousness, as merely "personal", "subjective", or "emotional", is evident' (Williams 1988, 127). *Experience present* is a type of subjective witness, 'offered to be shared [...] as the most authentic truth [...] an unquestionable authenticity and immediacy

¹³ My research traces the career of these individualising strands up to contemporary Jainism by way of interviews with Jain monks, field observations, and the *Samaṇasuttam*. The latter is an unprecedented compendium based on a 1974 Delhi-based conference of Jain monks (all 4 sects) convened to concord the central Jain principles and texts. However, it omits many early modern developments; neither *anubhava*, nor any cognate or equivalent term, appear at any point in the *Samaṇasuttam*. Therefore, we see a decline – or intentional exclusion – of *anubhava* at the hands of religious authorities. This decline was not the case in popular poetic traditions.

[...]’ (Williams 1977, 128). The ‘evident appeal’, to which Williams refers, offers some insight into the practicality and versatility of such a term as *anubhava*.

As each innate *ātmā* already possesses omniscience, and the *anubhava* of each separate *ātmā* is the guiding wisdom for liberation, then one’s own *anubhava* is at once radically individualised and yet qualitatively equal, since each *anubhava* derives from an omniscient *ātmā*. One absolute knowledge should not differ from another absolute knowledge. Therefore, *anubhava* is individually determined and accessed, and yet not *merely* ‘personal’, ‘subjective’, or ‘emotional’, it is an anti-authoritarian, decentralised resource, which resists marginalisation since even as it is atomised, it maintains a radical solidarity (and equality) with the *anubhava* of every other *jīva*. The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* marks a transition of worldviews, institutional relationships, ideology, and history. The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is simultaneously a rupture and continuity in a complex set of discursive and institutional relationships within and without the Jain Sangha.

Towards the end of the *Ardhakathanaka*, after studying Kundakunda et al, Banārasidās explains that from the *guṇasthāna* (gradualist system) he has learned that there are numerous appropriate ways of being and behaving in the world, according to the spiritual stage one has reached. This is a reconciliation for variation and divergence amongst individuals. He even applies this gradualist system to his own literary endeavours at different stages of his life, which allows him to see his early erotic poetry and his later philosophical and spiritual writings as equivalent.

Once again, Banārasī took up his poetic activities, now in a deeply spiritual vein. His early work and his current work were alike, there was no contradiction/opposition there (636). He had had a stain in his heart, and there was a coldness within, which was removed and replaced with equanimity (*samatā*), there remained neither high nor low (*Ardhakathanaka* 637).
(Banārasidāsa 1981)¹⁴

The significant difference of Banārasidās’ approach is how personally he applies Jain concepts to himself, rather than just discussing these concepts abstractly. Through such values as *samatā* (equanimity), and the logic of the *guṇasthāna*, he finds a way of reconciling his many worldly selves over the span of a lifetime. His relationship to Jain philosophy takes a highly personal character, quite different from the theoretical abstractions of philosophers Haribhadra and Yaśovijaya. It is important to note that his language challenges judgmental binaries, equalising

¹⁴ *Taba phiri aura kabisuri, karī adhyātamamāhiṃ | yaha vaha kathanī ekasī, kaḥuṃ virodha kichu nāhiṃ ||636|| Hydaimāhiṃ kachu kālimā, hutī saradahana bica | soṃ miṭī samatā bhāī, rahi na ūṃca na nica ||637||*

the ‘then’ and ‘now’ of his poetry: ‘There was no opposition [...] *samatā* [...] neither high nor low.’ These terms also carry social signification, which subsequent poets will make much more explicit. The importance of *samatā* shows a resonance with *sant* poet ideas as they exist in Jain discourse. Charlotte Vaudeville, writing about Kabir, explains *samatā* in the following terms:

[...] the state in which all differences or opposites such as good and bad, praise and blame, pleasure and pain etc., are abolished, as all appears “equal” (*sama*) to the true Yogi; *samatā* pertains to the Hindu, especially the Yogic ideal of saintliness [...] this transcendent state of absolute “non-conditionment” or bliss is also experienced as *samatā* or *samarasa*, oneness of “enjoyment” or of “emotion”, which implies the constant realisation of the oneness of the whole visible world in spite of its apparent diversity and of the falseness of all duality; on the psychological plane, it implies that the perfect Yogi looks on all things as “equal” (*sama*) and that he has transcended all possible forms of opposition or contrasts, such as male and female, hot and cold, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant etc.

(Kabir and Vaudeville 1974, 253 n.5, 125)

So while these ideas are not uniquely Jain, the force of the concepts take their own form and have relevance in this strand of the Jain world, as they would have in any non-dogmatic enterprise.

5 The *Samayasāra* and the genealogy of discriminative knowledge (*bhed-jñān*)

In the *Ardhakathanaka*, Banārasīdās reports that his spiritual progress was deeply impacted by two texts. He became acquainted first with the *Samayasāra-pāhuda* and, twelve years later, *Gommaṭasāra*. With the first text, Banārasīdās finds himself disillusioned regarding the usefulness of ritual and idol-worship, and becomes effectively unhinged and left in a spiritual desert. However, the *Gommaṭasāra* makes Banārasīdās a staunch Jain again, and moreover, an *adhyātmī*. He tells us that it was the *Gommaṭasāra* that facilitated his understanding of the *Samayasāra-pāhuda*. He was then, he tells us, in a position to joyfully undertake the trans-composition of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* from Sanskrit to vernacular (Banarasidasa and Premi 1943).¹⁵

¹⁵ He fails to mention that he simply appended his version of the *Gommaṭasāra* to the end his *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, thereby significantly changing the text according to his own requirements. He felt that *Samayasāra* was not intelligible without a section on the *gunasthānas*, or stages of a soul’s ascendance.

Scholars believe Kundakunda is a name that stands for the collective authorship of a Prakrit textual tradition between the third and the fifth centuries of the common era, and yet more recently some scholars locate Kundakunda after 750 CE (Dundas, 107). His *Samayasāra-pāhuda* (The Essence of the Self) elaborates on the nature of the innate pure soul (*ātman*) and one's mystical experience of it. In the *Samayasāra-pāhuda*, Banārasidās found answers to many of his tormenting spiritual questions. The *Samayasāra* text has a special career and destiny¹⁶. It fell into the hands of Banārasidās, his free adaptation of the text enjoyed great popularity in the 17th century and was probably read during meetings of the *adhyātmik* groups. The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* was widely distributed across Rajasthan and can be found in nearly every collection of manuscripts (Jain 2006, iii). As the text's most recent translator/re-writer, Banārasidās is in many ways an embodiment of religious individualisation as he recreates a classic text somewhat to accommodate his own worldview. Although the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is not an ego-document in the strictest sense, its author shares many personal anecdotes and insights regarding the text and its uses. He textually performs individualising gestures as he appropriates resources and emplots himself in lineages.

Kundakunda characterises reality as having two levels of truth: the absolute perspective (*niścaya naya*) and the conventional, practical perspective (*vyavahāra naya*). The text focuses on discernment (*bhed-jñān*) between the pure soul/Self and everything else, between *niścaya* and *vyavahāra*, absolute and practical knowledge. As Paul Dundas writes,

Kundakunda taught the centrality of inward experience and the reorientation of all religious practice to focus on the Self [...] The soul is the only true and ultimate category which provides a “certain” (*nishcaya*) standpoint [...] with reference to which all other entities, beliefs and practices can be judged [...] Everything else in the universe has a purely transactional and provisional value and is to be viewed from the perspective of a worldly (*vyavahāra*) standpoint. (Dundas 2002, 91)

Banārasidās makes use of these two-levels truth to help him reconcile the many paradoxes of the individual, namely the possibility of simultaneous difference and equivalence.

16 Kundakunda (2nd – 3rd cent., 750 CE) *Samayasāra-pāhuda* (Saur seni Prakrit)

↓

Amritcandra (8th – 9th cent.) adds *Ātmakhāti* (commentaries in Sanskrit)

↓

Rājamalajī Pande (16th cent.) *Bālabodhini* (commentaries in old Hindi)

↓

Banārasidās (1586–1643) *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* & *Ardhakathanaka* inter alia

↓

The Adhyātmik Poets of the 17th – 19th centuries (e.g. Cidananda and Rajacandra)

The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* of Banārasidās was completed, he tells us, Vikram 1672 (1616 CE), Ashwini 13th, on a Saturday. It is noteworthy that in the precise dating of the text, he only refers to his historical time, as if calendric dating has a new urgency in his moment. He does not date or place the other contributors, such as Kundakunda et al. Rather they exist in the mists of time, somewhere in India, presumably. We see this trend to give precise dates of composition amongst many of Banārasidās' contemporaries and recent predecessors (Jain 1964). In another telling historical signpost, he also refers to the text as his *bādshāh* (Persian, Mughal emperor) of knowledge-manifest, to whom he offers his *taslim* (Arabic salutation) (Banārasidās 1997, 407). Banārasidās historicises the text and salutes it in a Mughal idiom, which is one of many moments where the text moves between religious and socio-historical discourses.

The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is largely based on the Sanskrit commentaries of Amritchandra from the 9th century and Rajmal Pande's 16th century *Bālābodhini*. It is a great deal more than a translation. For one, it greatly exceeds the other versions in size. In a charming moment of immodesty, Banārasidās tells his reader, in the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* itself, how long the text is: 'If calculated using 32-syllable *śloka* as the metric, my *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is 1707 verses in number!' (*Samayasāra Nāṭaka* 422). Yet Banārasidās is not just boasting, but laying claim to have expanded the work, insisting that he is not a mere translator, but one of the authors of the great text. Or perhaps he is influenced by a merchant's training to always take stock and account. In any case, he is asserting his personality and pride of achievement. The available cultural forms, while perhaps not fully adequate, were increasingly capable of representing individual accomplishment, consciousness, and experience, thereby promoting the socio-literary imaginaries that facilitate representations of, and interests in, interiorities and subjectivities. Here Banārasidās explains his discovery of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*:

Now I shall discuss how the vernacular *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* came to be. The original text was Muni (monk) Kundakunda's, and Amritchandra was the author of the commentary (Verse 21). The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is a giver of joy, and the Sanskrit commentaries are understood and bestow special knowledge on the learned (*pandits*). But the simple-minded (common) folks don't get the meaning (Verse 22). Pandit Rajmall is a good Jain and well-versed in the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*. He produced a simple commentary on the text (Verse 23). In this way, in time, in the spiritual mode (*adhyātmik śailī*) in the vernacular (*bhāṣā*) spread, and the voice of the Jina manifested in the world, and from home to home the drama (*nāṭaka*) was discussed (Verse 24). Now in the famous town of Agra there were special meetings of the great thinkers, five men stand out as especially capable, who night and day would discuss the essence of knowledge (Verse 25).¹⁷

17 *aba yaha bāta kahūn̄ hai jaise | nāṭaka bhāṣā bhayau su aise || kundakunda muni mūla udharatā | amṛtacandra ṭikā ke karatā ||21|| samayasāra nāṭaka sukhadānī | ṭikā sahita saṃskṛta*

The narrative strategy here is telling. He brings the voice down to earth (*jagamāhī*) and facilitates discussion from home to home, democratising access to knowledge (*bodha-vacanikā*). Banārasidās is keenly aware he is a threatening, non-conformist. He establishes an august lineage of Kundakunda, Amritchandra, and Rajmall. He then explains that the joy-giving and liberating truth of the text has been available only to the learned *pandits*. Banārasidās considers the domestication of the voice of the Jina an important function of the poet and one that he continues in other works, particularly the *Nāmamāla* (1726–1727), in which he provides a sort of lexicon of key words from Sanskrit, Prakrit, and vernacular languages (Jain 1964, 182–183). Banārasidās continues to give the names of his five friends with whom he ‘constantly discussed the highest truth’. These five friends are historical figures and poets in their own rights: Rūpcand, Caturbhuj, Bhagavatīdās, Kuṃarpāl, Dharmadās. He brings the text, narratologically, out of oblivion, from the mists of time, to datable, public time, and with cartographic precision, in Agra. This is already somewhat a literary novelty, the introduction of an everyday merchant milieu and new chronotopes (Bakhtin 1998).

The inclusion of stories about his friends and his town has another striking literary feature: the anecdote. For Stephen Greenblatt, the anecdote is ‘in compressed form the ways in which elements of lived experience enter into literature, the ways in which everyday institutions and bodies get recorded’ (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000, 30). As Greenblatt has pointed out, the anecdote,

satisfied the desire for something outside the literary, something that would challenge the boundaries of the literary [...] the sphere of practice that even in its more awkward and inept articulations makes a claim on the truth that is denied to the most eloquent of literary texts. Or rather, the anecdote was a way into the “contact zone”, the charmed space where the *genius literarius* could be conjured into existence. (Gallagher, Greenblatt 2000, 49)

Banārasidās is elevating not only his own personality, but also his friend circle, to the level of literary employment. This is an important example of social discourse flowing into literary discourse and thereby presenting an increased interest in personality. The following stanzas are similarly thematically diverse. He discusses the presence of divinity in each sentient being while lashing out at those who would be doctrinal. He then returns to an anecdote of his five friends who whimsically persuade him to write the *Samayasāra*.

vānī || *paṃḍita paḍai su diḍmati* | *alapamati aratha na sūjhai* ||22|| *pāṃḍe rājamalla jinadharmī* | *samaisāra nāṭakake marmī* || *tīna garamṭhakī ṭikā kinī* | *bālabodha sugama kara dīnī* ||23|| *ihi vidhi bodha-vacanikā phailī* | *samai pāya adhyātama sailī* || *pragaṭī jagamāhī jinavānī* | *ghara ghara nāṭaka kathā bakhānī* ||24|| *nagara āgare māṃhi vikhyātā* | *kārana pāi bhae bahu jñātā* || *paṃca puruṣa ati nipuna pravīne* | *nisidina jñāna-kathā rasa-bhīne* ||25||

Now to what extent shall I praise the glory of my friends, it is better to come to the point. In the famous town of Agra lives the meagre-minded Banārasī (Verse 32), in whom the ingenious skill of poetry resides. Those five brothers show him great kindness, and laughing gently, forthrightly say to (Banārasī) the simple-minded (Verse 33): The *Nāṭaka Samayasāra* is the benediction of all jīvas (souls), and (while) Rājmall has provided a simple commentary, If a poetic composition in the popular language and metre should be written (bhāṣā grantha), then everyone may read it (Verse 34). Banārasī in his heart reflected, if I do write this popular poetry then the voice of the Jina will manifest (pragaṭai jinavāni). Having taken the blessing/permission of his five friends, he produced his poetic creation (Verse 35).¹⁸

Many things are happening in this short passage. For one, we see the poet deliberating about the task and ultimately deciding that it is in the service of the dharma, since the voice of the Jina will manifest. This deliberation constructs the narrator Banārasidās as a pensive and apprehensive figure, who eventually takes action. Paul Ricœur makes a distinction between identity as spatiotemporal selfsameness (*idem* – sameness) and the capacity of an agent to initiate an imputable action (*ipse* – selfhood). This dynamic thinking/acting character develops this way in the story, for ‘narrative identity is not based on the permanently subsisting substance (*idem*) but on a living tissue of narrated stories that permits the recognition of the self (*ipse*)’ (Ricœur 1990, 246). As Banārasidās shows us, he is an evolving identity, a narrative self, and it is perhaps this realisation that prompts the subsequent writing of his autobiography.

The anecdotes that Banārasidās provides function precisely as the ‘contact zone’ Greenblatt describes above. Furthermore, we see ‘the ways in which everyday institutions and bodies get recorded’ (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000, 30). Banārasidās describes the birth of an informal institution, and one that is explicitly contrived to support and encourage individualised gestures that will disseminate individualising religious values, thus creating something of an individualising feedback-loop. It is a matter of some irony and pragmatism that such efforts are necessarily group efforts.

Banārasidās positions himself as someone who will be ridiculed and labelled mad. This suggests that he sees his endeavour as (appearing) quixotic or transgressive. He anticipates his detractors and even flatters them by calling them wise or worthy. This is a strategy that he repeats in his autobiography several years

18 *ghaṭa ghaṭa aṃtara jina basai, ghaṭa ghaṭa aṃtara jaina | mati-madirāke pānasaum, mata-vālā samujhai na ||31|| bahuta baḍāi kahāṃlaum kijai | kārija rūpa bāta kahi lījai || nagara āgare māṃhi vikhyātā | bānārasī nāma laghu jñātā ||32|| tāmaiṃ kavitalā caturāi | kṛpā karaiṃ ye pāṃcaum bhāi || paṃca prapaṃca rahita hiya kholai | te banārasisaum haṃsi bolai ||33|| nāṭaka samaisāra hita jikā | sugama rūpa rājamali fikā || kavītabaddha racanā jo hoī | bhāṣā grantha paḍai saba koi ||34|| taba banārasī manamahim āni | kijai to pragaṭai jinavāni || paṃca puruṣaki ājñā līni | kavītabaddhakī racanā kīni ||35||*

later, but it was developed here because his very right to comment on such lofty religio-philosophical matters would have been suspect. This reference to figures who will laugh at him indicates the presence of forces outside the texts whom he presumes to be hostile to his audacity. Whether because of his status as a humble and hapless merchant, a layperson, and/or his transgression into clearly demarcated Digambara terrain (he was a Śwetāmbar), Banārasidās is asserting and risking himself. The proof of this will appear in a volley of attacks from the towering figures of Jain thought at the time (Lath 2005). Yet he is emboldened by his little community of well-wishers, his Agra-five, whom he credits even with the idea of producing a popular verse rendition of a classical religio-philosophical text. What is striking is his insistence on his simplicity and small-mindedness. He gives these five friends credit for the democratisation of this spiritual knowledge, while he ascribes to himself little more than poetic virtuosity. He develops a literary image of himself as having something of a ‘poetic savant syndrome’, that is demonstrating prodigious literary capabilities far in excess of his limited mental faculties. This staged humility may indicate, counter-intuitively, a profound confidence and practicality, or even a conventionality aligned with great contemporaries such as Tulsidas (e.g. *Kavitavali*). Nevertheless, he draws attention to individual roles and strengths that compel him to compose the work. By including his friends, he has added the benefit of implicating them in his endeavour, making them de facto signatories, and thereby forging a solidarity of co-conspirators. In early modern India, one’s clan and community were the most tangible social realities for the common person. An individual’s security and livelihood depended directly on good standing within a community, and this is especially true for merchants (Vanina 1995). Perhaps certain strands of individualisation require group efforts and support to proceed. The *Hindī Sāhitya Kośa* (*Hindī Literature Compendium*) states that volumes were written against and in support of Banārasidās and the *adhyaṭmīs*, but whatever came their way, they were fearless and completely independent thinkers (Tomar 1985). How fearless and independent they may have been is hard to determine, yet Banārasidās gives us the impression that his work was nearly heroic, but also tilting at windmills.

Below Banārasidās admirably anticipates ridicule for wading so far out of his depths, by making his endeavour into a metaphor of courage and wonder.

Just as a fool tries to swim across the mighty ocean [...] or just as a child might grasp at a reflection of the moon in the water, so have I with my limited intellect begun to write the Nāṭaka Samayasāra. The wise will surely laugh at me and say, what a crackpot! (Verse 1.12)¹⁹

19 *jaisaiṃ koṃ mūrakha mahā samudra tīrīvekaṃ | [...] jaisaiṃ jalakuṇḍamaiṃ nirakhi sasi-pratibimba, tāke gahibekaṃ kara nīcau karai ṭābarau | taisai maiṃ alapabuddhi nāṭaka ārambha kīnau, guṇī mohī hasaiṃge kahaiṃge koṃ bābarau ||1.12||*

Banārasīdās elaborates the herculean, perhaps quixotic, task he has set before himself. He concludes by ironically acknowledging that ‘the learned and virtuous’ (*gunī*) will laugh at him and call him a crackpot (*bābarau*); he compares himself to a fool (*mūrakh*), a child (*ṭābarau*), and a simpleton (*alapabuddhi*), suggesting that it may only be precisely those who are free or innocent of opinion that strive for liberation. This should not be mistaken for modesty, since he also just credited himself with bringing the voice of the Jina to the people, but he treads lightly by pre-empting censure through self-effacement. Yet he is really (disguised with irony) targeting the theologically narrow-minded, or in the Jain context, one-sided or partial. Banārasīdās’ couplet below, from his trans-creation of Kundakunda’s work, comes to the heart of the issue of partiality and endorses the individualised resource of adhyātmik (spiritually Self-centred) truth.

In every heart lives a Jina,²⁰ and so does the Jain dharma. Those who drink of intoxicating doctrinal partiality, will be too drunk on bias to understand. (Verse 31)²¹

Echoing Kabir, Banārasīdās emboldens lay people to take charge of their own spiritual lives and not look externally to religious authorities, since the Jina resides within each of us (*ghaṭa ghaṭa antara jina basai*). Then also in the vein of Kabir, he condemns the dogmatic ones for being too intoxicated from bias to see clearly. The operating poetic conceit appears as several wonderful puns on the word mat/mad/matavālā. *Mata* can be: 1) belief, opinion, doctrine (from *mana*), as well as 2) an intoxicant (Sanskrit *mādhu*, Proto-Indo-European *médhu*, German *Met*) (Callewaert and Sharma 2009, 1631–1633). Thus, the line, *matimadira kē pānasaum*, having drunk the doctrine/drink, the dogmatic/drunkards (*matavālā*) are too deluded to understand (*samujhai na*). This conceit of ‘doctrine as intoxication’ becomes the convention in all of this poetry. It is the doctrine/drink (*mata*) that prevents both *samatā* (equanimity) and consequently access to *anubhava* (experience).

Banārasīdās acknowledges bhakti, but then privileges *anubhava* as a form of knowledge that is the true requirement for liberation. In the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, the 14th stanza of the introduction, for example, has an explicit reference to bhakti: *hradayai hamārai bhagavantakī bhagati (bhakti) hai* (‘We have bhakti for

²⁰ The couplet bears a striking resemblance to a very famous doha from the Sant-poet, Kabir: *kastūrī kuṃḍala base, mṛga dhūṃḍhata bana māhi | jyo ghaṭa ghaṭa rāma hai, duniyā dekhe nāhi* | (‘The musk resides in the deer itself, who searches in vain for the scent in the forest. Similarly, Ram dwells in each heart and yet he is not seen in the world’).

²¹ *ghaṭa ghaṭa amṭara jina basai, ghaṭa ghaṭa amṭara jaina | mati-madirāke pānasaum, mata-vālā samujhai na* ||31||

the blessed One in our hearts'; (Banārasīdās 1997, 0.14). Banārasīdās uses the term *bhakti* with the intention of immediately subordinating it by then promoting the idea of the *experience* of the soul as the means to liberation. Banārasīdās writes in his 'description of experience':

We have *bhakti* for the blessed One in our hearts (Verse 0.14) [...] [here] I speak of certain/absolute knowledge, transactional knowledge, the path of liberation, and the authority of *experience* (*anubhava*) (Verse 0.16). That thing upon which one meditates, from which the spirit finds peace, and from which a sense of the essence of the soul manifests, that is what is called *experience* (Verse 0.17). *Experience* destroys karma, and at the highest level joins Love, No religion (*dharma*) can equal *experience* (Verse 0.19).²²

In rapid succession (first 20 stanzas of the text) the supremacy of experience is established, which is intentionally conflated/aligned/entangled with *bhakti*. Thus, Experience joins Love (*bhakti*), at the highest level, and no religion (*dharma*) can equal experience (*anubhava*). This is the closest thing we have to a definition of what is meant by *anubhava*, and how one gains access to it. It is the object of meditation and also the medium by which one gains a glimpse of the Self, and the fount of knowledge. The Jain philosophical concepts play a role here, as it is critical to remain non-absolutist in meditation. Below Banārasīdās explains how *syādvāda* (may-be-ism) is mobilised in meditation to facilitate the necessary neutrality for knowledge:

In the heart in which *syādvāda*-meditation is done, the pure *anubhava* of the *ātma* is revealed, In whom the glory of knowledge radiates day by day, s/he will indeed cross the ocean of existence (Verse 42).²³

Banārasīdās gives one of many clues as to how the experience of the soul is achieved, namely through a meditation or deep focus on core Jain philosophical principles, in this case, the perspectivist and multi-layered nature of reality (*syādvāda* and *anekāntavāda*). The verb *syāt* in Sanskrit is the optative form of the verb 'to be', thus expressing a critical uncertainty which according to Jain epistemology should accompany every truth statement. In other words, every statement should have the mood of 'could be' or 'may be', rather than 'is'. Cidānanda,

22 *hiradai hamārai bhagavaṃtakī bhagati hai* ||14|| [...] *kahaṃ sudha nihacaikathā, kahaṃ sudha vivahāra* | *mukatipaṃtha kāraṇa kahaṃ, anubhava adhikāra* ||16|| *vāstu vicārata dhyāvataiṃ, mana pāvai viśrāma* | *rasa svādata sukha ūpajai, anubhau yākau nāma* ||17|| *anubhava ciṃtāmani ratana, anubhava hai rasakūpa* | *anubhava māraga mokhakau, anubhava mokha svarūpa* ||18|| *anubhau karama torai paramasaṃ prīti jorai* | *anubhau samāna na dharama koṃ aura hai* ||19||

23 *jāke hiradaimaiṃ syādvāda sādhanā karata, suddha ātamakau anubhau praḡaṭa bhayau hai* | [...] *tākau gyāna mahimā udota dina dina prati, soḥi bhavasāgara ulaṃghi pāra gayau hai* ||42||

to whom I soon turn, continues these impulses. The reliance on bhakti is rejected because it is oriented outward from the Self:

Without restraint, you cannot reach the absolute level of knowledge, without love you cannot know the essence of love's refinement, without meditation you cannot still your mind, without knowledge you cannot reach the auspicious path (Shiv Path!) (Verse 7.24).²⁴

This seems to want to take the wind out of the sails of bhakti, since Love teaches you about refinement, but Knowledge is the only and final recourse regarding the auspicious path (Shiva Path)²⁵ to liberation. Banārasīdās tells us repeatedly that this knowledge is the discernment of the experience of the pure soul from everything else.

To conclude this Banārasīdās section, it is worthwhile to recall several elements of his writing that may endorse individualisation. He begins by emplotting his narrative self into the august lineage of the Samayasāra Nāṭaka legacy. He follows this by painting a picture of his life and friends in Agra, in his historical moment, lending importance to an otherwise obscure and humble merchant. The fact that he finds his story worth telling, indeed edifying, elevates his personality to unprecedented heights for his station. Lastly, he repeatedly implores his reader to rely on his/her experience of the Self as the premier source for liberating knowledge, rather than any external (even transactional bhakti) resource. Taken together, these elements have emboldened generations of poets and members of the laity. I now turn to a brief discussion of two more poets.

6 Banārasīdās' legacy

Aside from the conventions of humility possibly learned from Tulsidas and other Bhakti poets, Banarasidas' ironic and self-effacing stance anticipates trajectories of discursivity emanating from his disruption. Some of the Jain orthodox tended to view and write about Banarasidas' innovations and transcreations as an intolerable heresy and as neo-*Digambar*. On the other hand, the Terapanth sect thoroughly institutionalised his ideas and venerate him as their *Adiguru* (prime Guru) (Lath 2005, 9). And still beyond the confines of the Terapanth sect,

²⁴ *nema vinā na lahai nihacai pada, prema vinā rasa rīti na bujhai | dhyāna vinā na thaṃbhai manakī gati, jñāna vinā siva paṃtha na sujhāi* ||7.24||

²⁵ Banārasīdās, perhaps intending multiple meanings, likes to use the word *śiva*, which also means auspicious. He confesses elsewhere to having experimented with Shaivism, but abandons it rather quickly.

the reverberations of Banarasidas' insistence on self-reliance occurs in the subsequent works of *adhyātmik* Jain poetry, thereby conventionalising and institutionalising Banarasidas' audacity. Below I will briefly demonstrate the reach of these poetic conceits and philosophical conventions with examples from two poets who are exemplars of *adhyātmik* thought. While numerous poets would serve as good examples here, I have chosen Cidānanda and Rājacandra because they demonstrate the temporal and spatial reach of these ideas; they are both 19th-century figures and they were based approximately a thousand kilometres to the East and West, respectively, of Banārasidās' base in Agra.

Cidānanda,²⁶ who lived approximately two centuries after Banārasidās, is a somewhat obscure figure in whom we see many of the themes cherished and propagated by Banārasidās. The one source that discusses Cidānanda, the *Cidānanda Granthāvalī*, admits that it is difficult to determine his precise dates, but cites an elegy for his passing from around 1861 (Dhūpiyā 1976, 13–16). Therefore, he presumably lived in the first half of the 19th century. He was said to have spent decades wandering around sacred Jain places, mostly *Sametaśikharjī* (Pārasnāth Hill, Jharkhand), where he was known to practice yoga in caves and where he eventually died. The following poem expresses a description of *samatā* closely aligned with Banārasidās'. Along with this quality of equanimity he inserts a strong critique of bias or partisanship:

“Rare is the Neutral, the feeling of Equanimity”

Hey Seeker (or yogi)! In the world I've seen there are scarce few sadhus who are free of *partiality/bias*. [However,] the one who merges cognition with a spirit of *equanimity*, becomes *neither established nor non-established* (i.e. takes no certain position), and he will come to know the essence of indestructible peace (1). He knows no *distinction* between wealth and poverty, he records gold and stone as *equal*. He doesn't view woman as she-serpent (i.e. temptress), but sees an auspicious temple (2). Upon hearing rebuke or praise, neither joy nor sorrow come to him, as a master yogi in this world, he constantly ascends the *gunas-thānas* (3). Who shines like the moon, and is as serious (deep) as the ocean, always rambling with a bird-like spirit, fully aware (not-intoxicated), pure patience equal to a mountain (4). A lotus (*pankaj*) is so called because it emerges from mud, but the lotus remains detached/distinct. Cidānanda says thus are the great ones, so is the dear lord (5).

(Dhūpiyā 1976, 85–7)²⁷

²⁶ I learned about Cidānanda, the second of these three poets, from the Jain monk Kirti Mahārāj, who claims the poet to be his favorite. To my knowledge, there has not been any scholarship in Hindi or English on this poet (but my search to find some continues).

²⁷ ‘*nirapekṣa viralā-samarasabhāva*'

avadhu nirapakṣa viralā koī, dikhyā jaga sahu joī || ṛera || samarasa bhāva bhalācīta jāke, thāpa athāpa na hoī | avināśī ke ghara kī bātām, jānemge nara soī ||1|| rāya raṅka meṅ bheda na jāne, kanaka upala sama lekhe | nārī nāgini ko nahim paricaya, to śiva maṅdira dekheṅ ||2||

In his exposition on *samatā*, Cidānanda gives some fairly common oppositions to be rejected: rich and poor, stone and gold, but what is far more striking is that he refuses to see women as dangerous or as temptresses. Rather, he recognises the figure of woman as an auspicious temple within which there is also a *jīva* that seeks liberation. While *anubhava* is not mentioned, he means precisely this experience when he refers to ‘knowing the essence of indestructible peace’. He uses a series of beautiful metaphors to describe the qualities of the equanimous: lunar brilliance, oceanic depth, roaming free as a bird, the patience of a mountain. Based on the force of these metaphors, even if they are rather standard, he is not taking *samatā* as indifference or greyness. It is rather a profound accomplishment to break free of all doctrine and opinion; it requires, simultaneously, immense patience, seriousness, and yet bird-like lightness of spirit.

The following three excerpts deal with opinion, *mata*, as something that always contains bias and conflict. Cidānanda insists that it is better not to even entertain a position, since all opinions are self-serving of another self. Rather, he implores his audience to always seek the unique experience of themselves, which is always an unprecedented utterance. No one else can provide this voice, since it remains unspoken until it is listened to, or experienced via *anubhava*. It is precisely here that we see the celebration of the individual:

“The ineffable (unsaid) story [...]” (*pada* 55)

Who knows the ineffable story of your genius, only one lovingly acquainted with your wit (yourself),

The rest, partisan and sectarian types, they only establish deceit and conflict.²⁸

“The all-inclusive way of the Jina” (*pada* 48)

No one can tell you of the true path.

Whomever you ask, they will sing the glories of their own path,

The doctrinal drunkards, discourse-bearers, shamelessly adorn their own dogmas,

Without the benefit of *syādvāda* and *anubhava*, their stories look to me rather pallid.²⁹

nimḍā stuti śravaṇa sunī ne, harṣa śoka nahim āṇe | te jaga meṃ yogiśvara pūrā, nitya calte guṇaṭhāṇe ||3|| candra sāmāna sobhyatā jākī, sāyara jema gambhīrā | apramatta bhāramḍa pare nitya, suragiri sama śuci dhīrā ||4|| paṃkaja nāma dharāya paṃkaja se, rahata kamala jima nyārā | ‘cidānanda’ isyā jana utama, so sāheba kā pyārā ||5||

28 ‘*akatha kathā*’ (*pada* 55)

akatha kathā kuṇa jāne ho terī catura sanehī || nayavādī nayapakṣa grahī ne, jhūṭhā jhagalā ṭhāṇe |

29 ‘*jīnamārga kī sarvāṃḡitā*’ (*pada* 48)

mārāga sēcā kou na batāve | jāku jāya pūchie te to, apānī apānī gave || matavārā matavāda vā-dadhara, apata nija mata nikā | syādvāda anubhava bina tākā, kathana lagata mohe phikā ||1||

“The Pure Nature of the Path” (*pada* 46)

The clever ones thus have this idea, that opinions are by nature numerous,

Like things they come and go, don't bother indulging in discourse and counter-discourse.³⁰

The doctrinal-drunkard, discourse-bearers, is the conceit to which I referred in the Banārasidās section. The paradox is that by having (and holding) an idea you won't have a clue. Through the lens of *syādvāda* (may-be-ism) and *anubhava*, the poet tells us all positions look rather pallid to him, without the flavour of truth. The motif of the ‘unsaid story’, which we will see again, is that only the individual can articulate his or her mind, to take any other or external position as one's own would distract or cloud the sense of the Self. Thus, in the second poem, ‘No one can tell you the true path’. One may only find it via *syādvāda* and *anubhava*, critical non-absolutism and personal yogic insight. In the torrent of discourses and currents of thought, it is better not to get involved.

The last poet I will discuss, Śrīmad Rājacandra (1867–1901), was an anti-sectarian, Jain poet-saint from Gujarat. He models, very succinctly in his poetry and teachings, the way in which *anubhava* was mobilised to confound religious authority. He was aware of Cidānanda and wrote about him as a great yogi with profound self-awareness (Dhūpiyā 1976). Rājacandra represents something of a culmination of the ideas which were given a significant push by Banārasidās in the 17th century. He was not a mendicant, he never took *dīkṣa* (monastic initiation), and like Banārasidās he was a merchant, poet, and religious leader all at once. And similarly, his following was nearly entirely laypeople. He emphasises self-realisation and *guru bhakti* (veneration of the guru). His most celebrated text, the *Ātma Siddhi*, was composed in 1896. Śrīmad Rājacandra, as Emma Salter has indicated, echoes the teachings of Kundakunda. She writes, ‘[He] defines self-realisation as an internal or spiritual state; specifically as the experience of one's own soul as a phenomenon independent from one's physical body or empirical senses’ (Salter 2006, 247). She does not mention that perhaps the most important vernacular language interpreter of Kundakunda was Banārasidās, and it was perhaps the latter who framed Kundakunda's ideas in a way that would assist in reshaping religious authority under Rājacandra. Salter notes that Rājacandra's recognition of self-realisation as the premier source of spiritual authority has had a two-fold effect on Rājacandra's community: It allows lay gurus religious authority and it has evoked a staunch anti-sectarian ethic (Salter 2006, 249). These elements are reminiscent of Banārasidās and Cidānanda, since they also promote experience and eschew any

³⁰ ‘*suddha-svarūpa prāptimārga*’ (*pada* 46)

matimaṅṭa ema vicāro re, mata matiyana kā bhava || *ṭera* || *vastu gate vastu laho re, bāda vibāda na koya* |

sort of dogma, yet Rājacandra institutionalises these principles. Salter also rightly extrapolates the anti-sectarian ethic of Rājacandra and his followers as a scepticism about mendicants since they were seen as representatives of sectarian Jainism. The high premium on self-realisation and experience of the self has allowed the layperson to sincerely participate in the central soteriological objective of Jainism, which had hitherto been the reserve of mendicants.³¹ Rājacandra's 'burning passion for self-realisation', can be seen in the following *pad*.

Knowledge of *Self*, *equanimity*, gained/emerging in wandering experiment, *unprecedented speech*, (i.e. speech full of theories *never heard before*), great knowledge of scriptures, these are the qualities worthy of a true guru (AS 10). (Maheta and Chandrika 2006)³²

Taking this *pad* as an example of Rājacandra's message immediately privileges elements of individualisation: the focus on the self, to begin with, is ubiquitous in his work. *Equanimity*, as I have discussed, has real social implications, namely an openness to a variety of ways of being, this type of non-judgement propels social imaginaries of increased choice and possibility. The *gained in wandering experiment* can be read a few ways, but it reminds one immediately of Cidānanda and Banārasīdās, since they also speak of an untethered itinerancy as a metaphor for a similar process of mind, but also as literally moving about in the world. *Unprecedented speech*, stands out, again, as an openness to the unique and personally creative, a privileging of what has *never been heard before*, rather than received wisdom and doctrines. We saw this above in the poem *akatha kathā* (unsaid story). The poet honours the uniqueness, sincerity, and personality of the individual cum guru. Lastly, knowledge of the true scriptures makes the list, but these are not specified here and maintain manoeuvrability. Below are two couplets addressing the problem of partisanship/bigotry and the phenomenon of plurality.

To wit, there are many doctrinal views (*mata-darśana*) and ways stating many paths to liberation. Which among them is true? Such discrimination cannot be made. (Couplet 93)³³

In which caste is there liberation? In which external guise is there liberation? This cannot be decided because of the many profound differences and proclivities. (Couplet 94)³⁴

³¹ The most famous recipient of spiritual counsel from Rājacandra was, of course, Gandhi. A series of letters written between the two shows that Gandhi sought spiritual guidance and 'refuge' several times from Rājacandra and received elaborate responses in Gujarati. Gandhi wrote in his autobiography that 'no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai [Rājacandra] did' (Weber 2004, 34–37).

³² *ātmā jñāna samadarśitā vicare udaya prayoga | apūrva vāñi paramaśruta sadaguru lakṣaṇa yogya* ||10||

³³ *athavā mata darśana ghaṇāṃ kahe upāya aneka | temāṃ mata sāco kyo bane na eha viveka* ||93||

³⁴ *kayī jātimāṃ mokṣa che kayā veṣamāṃ mokṣa | eno niścaya nā bane ghanā bheda e doṣa* ||94||

The couplets focus attention again on the impossibility of taking any standpoint. The proliferation of views makes it pointless to insist on a correct one, as Cidānanda also advises. He then extends this idea to social variation in the form of caste and outward guise (clothes, appearance, and physical identity), rejecting the idea that people who look a certain way or are in a certain caste have an exclusive claim to liberation. This is also, no doubt, meant to recall the Digambar/Śvetāmbar schism. Therefore, by refusing to hierarchise or attach value and meaning to these social differences, Rājacandra at once brings the ethic of *samatā* into the social realm and also mobilises social plurality as a tangible metaphor for *anekāntavāda* or multiple truths.

In this last *pad*, the poet uses the second person to address his audience, striking a familiar and empowering tone. After beseeching his audience to reject all opinion, he asks them to turn to themselves as they are already everything.

As there is liberation in dharma; you are liberation itself; you are infinite views and knowledge (darśana, jñāna); you are un-disturb-able bliss itself (Couplet 116).

(Rajchandra and Jaini 1964)³⁵

The last *pad* speaks of an immense personal resource that becomes available only after the critical non-absolutism of non-alliance and non-aversion of *samatā* is realised. Here *samatā* resonates with the Neutral: ‘first: suspension of orders, laws, summons, arrogances [...] Then, by way of deepening, refusal of pure discourse of opposition’ (Barthes 2005, 12). *Samatā* follows a pattern that first rejects bigotry/certainty/partisanship and then rejects oppositions, binaries, i.e. recognising no distinctions. Once these paradigms are stripped away, the individual is afforded the calm to experience his or her own Self. This is the moment nuance can be felt and the sensitivity this affords offers a guide on to how to live: ‘nuance is one of the linguistic tools of nonarrogance, of nonintolerance [...]’ (Barthes 2005, 130). As it happens, these poems have non-intolerance in the content as well. This Jain *adhyātmik* literature itself is a nuanced reading of the central Jain tenets as it extrapolates even more from the Jain principles than conditional inclusivism of Haribhadra or Yaśovijaya. The poems of Cidānanda and Rājacandra promote an interpretive practice challenging ‘conditionment’ and privileging a liberating self-reliance and a non-comital attitude towards doctrine. In this sense, they continue what Banārasidās had initiated, and they carry his work further as they focus more precisely on *anubhava* (experience present), *samatā* (Neutral) and the anti-dogmatic.

35 *eja dharmathī mokṣa che tuṃ cho mokṣasvarūpa | ananta darśana jñāna tuṃ avyābādha svarūpa ||116||*

7 Conclusion

In the *Jīvadvēra* section of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, Banārasidās elaborates the counter-intuitive complexity and contradiction of individual beings. He uses a metaphor of fire and fuel to explain how *jīvas* are *essentially* the same, but manifest uniquely:

Grass, wood, bamboo and various fuels of the forest, when put to fire, can be said to appear multiform. But if one considers only their incendiary nature, then all fire is one. Likewise, comprised of the nine elements, all *jīvas* (beings) appear multiform, some pure, mixed, and impure. However, giving mind to their power of sentience, they are grasped as formless and undifferentiated. (Banārasidās 1997, 31)³⁶

Thus Banārasidās attempts to reconcile the enigma of difference and equality, suggesting a perspectivist approach to the problem that allows individuals and fires to have simultaneously identical and differing properties. This both explains individuality (and plurality) and allows for it, and then asserts that from another perspective, all beings are undifferentiated. James Laidlaw has written eloquently about the complexity and would-be paradoxes of the image of Jainism that we frequently encounter, '[...] values and ideals can exist in counterpoint: a relation that is not logical or semantic, but aesthetic. Incompatible ideals can remain compelling [...]' (Laidlaw 1995, 389). If we think about Jainism as austere and mirthless, just orientated towards stark, absolute isolation, we miss the whimsical poetic part that remains defiantly nimble, that offers encouragement to the individual seeker to rely on him/herself. Banārasidās places the activities and experiences of individuals at the centre of his work and his successors push this ethic even further by rejecting anything external to the self. And yet, along with this individualistic impetus, they form a supportive community for those who wish to be themselves. Banārasidās is even able to make dancing a metaphor for the bliss of stark, absolute isolation in nirvana (*kevala*): *ṭhānai nṛtya pāi ekanta* ('finding himself in solitude, he breaks into dance'; Lath 2005, verse 655).

³⁶ *jaise tṛṇa kāṭha bāṃsa ārane ityādi aura, iṃdhana aneka vidhi pāvakameṃ dahiye | ākṛti vilokita kahāvai āga nānārūpa, disai eka dāhaka subhāva jaba gahiye || taisaiṃ nava tattvamēṃ bhayau hai bahu bheṣi jīva, suddharūpa miśrita asuddha rūpa kahiye | jāhī china cetanā sakatikau vicāra kijai, tāhī china alakha abhedarūpa lahiye ||* (Samayasāra Nāṭaka, Jīvadvēra, 8)

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Saurabh Dube

Subjects of conversion in colonial central India

This chapter raises key questions concerning religion, individualisation, and religious individualisation/institutionalisation. It does so by exploring the interplay of conversion, translation, and life-stories. Such interplay was embedded within processes of evangelical entanglements between Euro-American missionaries and central-Indian peoples in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Specifically, I focus on autobiographies and biographies of converts to Christianity in the Chhattisgarh region of central India, especially accounts written in the first half of the twentieth century. Here, the ordinary nature and the very details of these texts – mediated by procedures of vernacular translation – not only reveal the writings as key registers of evangelical entanglements. They further foreground critical queries that turn on religion and politics, individual and subject, individualisation and personhood, institutionalisation and *akrasia*.¹

To anticipate the arguments that follow, the writings of convert subjects in colonial India put a question mark over the notion that individualisation and institutionalisation are opposed ideas. In such accounts, conversion and personhood, subject and author appear within emergent practices and performances of translation. Here, distinctive entailments of myth, legend, and narrative can break upon a missionary's description of a convert's life. At the same time, a son's story of his father's conversion uneasily reveals individuality and religious individualisation but only after drawing on classical figurations of the epic protagonist. Finally, a distinct autobiographical narrative of an Indian evangelical worker appears to be shored up by recalcitrance toward paternal authority and refusal of paternalist power – in a manner that the acute contrariness of the tale puts its particular twist to irony and *akrasia* (for instance, Henderson, this publication).

¹ For some years now, I have been working on Christianity, conversion, and colonialism, conjoining central Indian ethnographic histories and North American cultural pasts. The present paper builds on such prior and ongoing work, based on a familiarity with wider archival, empirical, and theoretical questions. It is in this manner that I seize upon particular texts, broad questions, and their enactments in everyday arenas in order to address issues of the research group of which we are a part.

1 Overture

In 1868, the Reverend Oscar Lohr of the German Evangelical Mission Society initiated evangelical work in Chhattisgarh. Over the next eight decades, six missionary organisations – including, the American Mennonites, the General Conference Mennonites, the Disciples of Christ, the American Evangelical Mission, and the Methodists – conducted their evangelical enterprise there. Aided by paternalist institutions such as Christian villages, hospitals, and orphanages, conversions to Christianity grew haltingly, primarily through ties of family and kinship and principally among lower-caste and *adivasi* (or indigenous) groups. On the one hand, the converts continued to understand missionary injunctions and to interpret evangelical truths through the grids of quotidian cultures. Drawing in the energies of their Western benefactors as witting accomplice and hapless victim, these peoples participated in the making of a colonial *and* a vernacular Christianity. On the other hand, the mission project itself unravelled through contradictory connections with colonial cultures. Furthermore, such processes in central India were intimately tied to those of congregations and Churches in Midwestern America. The missionaries had to leave India after its independence. In 1947, there were only around fifteen thousand Protestant Christians in a population of seven million in Chhattisgarh. At the same time, in independent India, as under imperial rule, the social and political significance of Indian Christians has exceeded their numerical unimportance (Dube 2004).

2 Uncanny witness

All of this now registered, I begin with the words of a catechist recounting his witness, his work of spreading the Word in a remote village in Chhattisgarh very early in the twentieth century. The catechist writes in a hesitant English while reporting on his labour to an American missionary, his employer. My purpose in rehearsing this example is to highlight the fact that, against the grain of stable figures of the individual and author, common sense forms of religion and history, and taken-for-granted apprehensions of (religious) individualisation and institutionalisation, it was the uncanny, the uncommon, and the unstable that often defined such subjects within evangelical entanglements. This will allow me to ask key questions and articulate critical categories turning on issues of the individual and institution, of religion and power, of religious individualisation/institutionalisation, which presages my discussion of the writings of subjects of conversion in this essay.

24 Monday [January 1908, the village of] Khaira. [Met] Kondu Gond. At the time of preaching, I saw a kid which was intended for sacrifice. I explained to him [Kondu] the object of sacrifice in ancient times and that he was right to offer a kid to appease his god for his sins but it was a symbol of Jesus Christ who would become incarnate and shed his blood for all mankind [...] 6 [people were] present.

(Entry for 24 January 1908 from the day-book of a catechist
[Anonymous], Manuscript, 83–5)

This brief passage bears an enormous burden. Early in his vocation of disseminating the Word in central India, the catechist encounters Kondu Gond, an adivasi who is about to sacrifice a kid, a baby goat. Yet the native evangelist does not disabuse Kondu of the ‘superstitious’ nature and the ‘heathen’ character of this action. Rather, the catechist is transported back to the density of descriptions of sacrifice in the Book, particularly the Old Testament, concerning, for example, the Mosaic sacrifice and the Lamb of God, the sacrifice of Abraham and the Lamb of Pascal. The catechist explains to Kondu the ‘object of sacrifice in ancient times’, linking this to the sacrifice of Christ.

Here it can be argued that the catechist is doing little more than elaborating a key tenet of Christianity, contrasting the variety and inefficacy of the Mosaic bloody sacrifices with the uniqueness and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This idea poignantly appears, for instance, in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained redemption *for us*. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

(Hebrews 9: 11–3. *The Holy Bible*, King James Version 1950, 226).

Yet this is not quite the catechist’s intention, nor is it his representation. Rather, drawing a parallel between the sacrifices preceding Christ ‘in ancient times’ and Kondu’s sacrifice of the kid in early twentieth century Chhattisgarh, he finds in both actions a prefiguring of the sacrifice of Christ. ‘I explained to him [Kondu] the object of sacrifice in ancient times and that he was right to offer a kid to appease his god for his sins but it was a symbol of Jesus Christ [...]’. This is remarkable. As we know, Christianity recognises but one sacrifice, the sacrifice once offered by Christ in a bloody manner on the tree of the Cross. Yet, mixing together figures of the past and forms of the present, the Catechist is claiming that Kondu is correct in appeasing his god through the sacrifice of the kid, so long as there is clear recognition of what the goat and the sacrifice symbolise.

Of course, it is important to remember that the Redeemer Himself instituted the sacrifice of the Holy Mass so that the bloody sacrifice of Calvary could be

continued and represented in an un-bloody manner. It was in this fashion that the merits of redemption won by the sacrifice of the Cross were to apply – once and forever – to individuals in sacrificial form, through constant sacrifice. At the same time, as a Protestant, the catechist did not argue from such grounds of Eucharistic sacrifice and its relation to the sacrifice on the Cross. Far from it: ‘I explained to him the object of sacrifice in ancient times and that he was right to offer a kid to appease his god for his sins but it was a symbol of Jesus Christ who would become incarnate and shed his blood for all mankind’.

Through an ambivalence of verb tense and an uncertainty of subject (kid or Christ?), conjoining the past of the ancients and the present of evangelism, the catechist uniquely proposed that there was to be another incarnation and another sacrifice for the redemption of humankind. Of the kid or of the Christ, we cannot be sure. Of the stipulations of the King and the Cross (in the labour of sacrifice and the work of redemption), we do not know. Through excess of application *to* the Book, out of surplus of application *of* the Word, the catechist produced a supplementary narrative on the subjects of kid and Christ, sacrifice and redemption. The very literalism of his procedures – bringing to mind Walter Benjamin’s advocacy of literalism in the task of translation – were definitional of practices of vernacular translation, about which more later.

3 Critical categories

My point now concerns staying with the questions raised by this passage and its implications for our deliberations. What does the encounter with, the entanglements of, this work of witness tell us about individualisation and institutionalisation? In what ways can the processes being described here be captured by the optics of religious individualisation/institutionalisation? What sort of a creature is the catechist – what kind of an individual, what manner of an agent, what variety of a subject, revealing which trajectories of individualisation and what processes of institutionalisation, religious or otherwise?

Questions of religious individualisation and institutionalisation – alongside those of ‘de-individualisation’ and the ‘dividual’ – have been discussed for long years now. Allow me to outline my orientations toward certain categories that might be critical for our deliberations. The exercise has much to do with approaching theory not as a prior overarching structure that frames an enquiry. Instead, theory and method are understood as ways of asking questions. It is in this way that theory-method are thought down to the ground, the demanding terms of everyday worlds, so that theory equally emerges as bound to narrative, each crisscrossing one another.

In thinking through religious individualisation and institutionalisation, it might be useful to begin with religion, and then relatedly turn to power/politics. I approach religion as straddling the personal *and* the collective, the mundane *and* the sacred, the everyday *and* the institutional, epiphany *and* oracle, the ineffable *and* the obvious. Now, far from being antinomies, such elements (and copulas) often actually beget each other. This is because, for me, religion is immanent, turning on historical-cultural practices, meanings, and rituals of spatiotemporal subjects. Here are to be found rituals, meanings, and practices whose renderings and reconfigurations of worlds and divinities are closely tied to processes of authority and alterity, power and value, the appearance of the sublime and the making of the grotesque.

This is where politics, rendered as power, kicks in. For, I understand politics and power as extending further and deeper than merely routine institutionalised attributes of authority and governance centring on the state and its subjects. Rather, power and politics are articulated as equally embodying diffuse domains and the intimate configuration of authority and desire, including their seductions and subversions, turning on race and sexuality, gender and age, class and caste. All this has implications for how, as parts of such force-fields, we unravel the linkages of religion not only with power but with state, nation, and government, critically querying common sense presumptions of the secular and secularisation, all issues I have discussed elsewhere, including in several of the references cited in the bibliography to this essay.² The question now is: where am I going with these musings? The response is simple. For me, issues of individualisation are, ultimately, better understood as involving formations of subjects, processes of *subjectification*, and performances of personhood, all of which turn upon meaning and power: power and meaning, authority and alterity that course through religions, politics, worlds, and the subject-agents who populate these procedures, including those of the productions, effects, and affects of institutionalisation.

Let me elaborate. Before projections of individualisation lie presumptions of the individual, before imaginings of institutionalisation lie images of the institutional.³ And so, it is our exact assumptions about the individual and the

² State, nation, and government, their policy and program, now emerge as bearing twinned dimensions: entailing formidably embodied disciplinary techniques toward forming and transforming subjects-citizens, such protocols, and their reworking by citizens-subjects, register the shaping of authority by anxiety, uncertainty, and alterity, of the structuring of command by deferral, difference, and displacement.

³ I am speaking of epistemic precedence rather than a chronological precedence here, for the latter would simply return to what came first, the egg or the hen? Although if we believed in god-the-creator, the answer to the conundrum/riddle might depend on which divine, what faith, we practice.

institutional that need to be examined and queried, critically and carefully. Is the individual being taken to exist across space and time, through history and across cultures? Is the individual, then, an innate staple of the world and therefore, thereby an *a priori* unit of analysis? In terms of ontological assumption and epistemic precedence, is the individual presumed to be pre-social, in the sense that it begets the social and the institutional, which are further apprehended as taken for granted entities-concepts? That is, is the individual Nietzsche's 'promise-making animal', who enters into binding relations of obligation and responsibility with other individuals to create society, institutions, institutional structures, institutionalised processes? Further, as an entity-category that is already always present, is the individual simultaneously in front of the institutional?

Here, then, is the key query: In its exact essence, is the individual 'autonomous' from structure and the collective, institution and the institutional? (This is a query I draw not from the ether but actually from the result-statements and deliberations of the religious individualisation research group.) It is important to stay with, face up to, think through all this.

Now, I appreciate the interrogation within the religious individualisation project of the Eurocentric propensities that confine the 'individual' only to modern European and Euro-American worlds. At the same time, my question is different: does such an 'autonomous individual' exist anywhere? Or, is this figure the effect and an affect of particular processes of history, meaning, and power, a form that has subsequently been universalised, made to stand in as common currency across the world, over space, through time? This is to ask: is this projection of the autonomous individual shored up by pervasive presumptions of the bounded, intentional subject? Are we in the face of the autonomous individual as the sovereign subject who is seen as the privileged locus of action and reason? As the privileged locus of action and reason that is ever constrained by power and the collective, which this autonomous individual is seen as always militating against even as it begets the institutional, as a latter, external object? Is this the individual, autonomous, sovereign subject who articulates an adjudicatory, meaning-legislative rationality? Does not this rationality frame the objects it considers in the image of the commentator-analysts' singular, self-same reason rather than as subjects of other reasons? Are these images and mirrors not the means for the envisioning of the institutional and institutionalisation, which are already, always apart from the individual?

Let us retrace our steps. The key issue turns on meaningful human actors or agents in history and society. Now, mine is the not the silly suggestion that such meaningful human actors or agents in history and society simply do not exist.

The question is different: Should such actors-agents be cast as ‘individuals’, especially autonomous ones or even otherwise? Or, are such agents better rendered as subjects? This is not terminological nit-picking. Far from it. Indeed, I am looking beyond the principally a priori singular individual to consider instead necessarily heterogeneous subjects. These innately heterogeneous subjects are ever formed and transformed within shifting processes and relationships of meaning and power, within diffuse and structured nodes, networks, institutions, which they create and are contained by, hardly ever under the circumstances of their choosing. (I have in mind relationships and processes, networks and nodes, institutions and structures – and of course subjects – that turn on divisions and solidarities. Here are to be found, for instance, solidarities and divisions of gender, sexuality, and hierarchy, which were outlined above. The processes equally entail wide-ranging articulations, over the past few centuries, of empire and nation, colony and modernity, as bound to the Renaissance and Romanticism, the Enlightenment and Anti-modernism, the Reformation and the Inquisition, to take a few examples.) The point is that in speaking of social actors as historical subjects my reference is precisely to their active participation in these broad relational processes of history and society. Such participation turns on two meanings of the term subject. That is, my reference is to social-spatial actors who have been both *subject to* (shaped by) these processes and relationships but also *subjects of* (themselves shaping) these relationships and processes (Dube 2017).

It follows that the place-play of power in the shaping of subjects is of enormous import here. For power and authority are no longer approached in terms of their exclusively repressive functions, whether as curbing autonomous individuals or as controlling recalcitrant collectivities. That is, I have in mind Foucault’s famous undoing of the ‘no-saying’ propensity of power, which is to say power’s ‘thou shall not’ stricture to its subjects. Rather, power is unravelled in terms of its productivity, fecundity, and promiscuousness but also its anxiety, ambivalence, and uncertainty (*ibid.*).

In terms of the dynamic between power and subject, at stake here are processes of *subjectification*: the ways in which formations of power and their seductions invite and entice human beings to make them subject *to* and subject *of* authority, including institutionalised disciplines of state and religion, offering and inciting action and imagination. Turning to the figure of the ‘modern individual’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘individuality’ have not been the end results of a developmental (or civilising) process. Rather, the claims upon and performances of ‘individuality’ and ‘autonomy’ are the (at once emergent and institutional) effects, affects, and consequences of the processes of subjectification. Indeed, since power is not simply an external force but an intimate commandment, here

might be found variously the will to improve and progress, the desire to obey and respect, and the impulse to resist and challenge.

Now, if subjects and their formations are necessarily heterogeneous, ever enacted within wider processes of meaning and power, such subjects bear different personhoods – their senses of selves and others, cognates and affines, friends and enemies, images and colours, smells and sounds, and words and worlds. Understood in this fashion, the individual's is only one among distinct personhoods. Effectively, the individual is a particular sort of subject or agent or actor, who imagines and emotes, stages and rehearses, performs and practices, lives and loses her/his personhood, including autonomy and individuality, the institutional and the institutionalised, their fissures and fractures. As forms of personhood, such practices of becoming and being individuals can themselves vary enormously, as imagination and institutionalisation.

I acknowledge of course that the term individual can be used as implying simply meaningful human actors or agents in history and society. At the same time, the problem with any invocation of the 'individual' is that it readily and routinely takes us back to a singular abstraction, an a priori presence, that primary locus of agency. The haunting of knowledge and the world by this figure of the individual cannot be wished away. And so too what come to be overlooked are the different dimensions of the subject, their performance of personhood, including of the individual.⁴

Of course, no term is perfect. Actually, I am attracted to the very contrariness of subjects, the contrariness of the category-entity of the subject, including the mutual begetting of individualisation and institutionalisation under modernity. Indeed, it is in this spirit I distinguish between historically located 'subjects of modernity', bearing heterogeneous reasons/understandings, on the one hand, and routine representations of the 'modern subject', as insinuating a singular rationality, on the other (ibid; also Dube 2004). Rendered in practice, this distinction queries a meaning-legislative, adjudicatory reason; it grounds theory in the world; and it traces the active interchanges between subjects of modernity, modern subjects, and individual personhoods, that are all necessarily not-one. Here is heterogeneity that is not merely empirical but acutely critical. It is some of these concerns that I elaborate in the pages ahead.

⁴ Within the religious individualisation project, these issues have been imaginatively addressed by articulating the notion of the dividual and processes of de-individualisation. At the same time, I wonder if after all dividual and de-individualisation are not *premised* upon the grounds of individual and individualisation, which they seek to refute. Instead, I seize upon the idea-entity of the subject.

4 Questions of conversion

I have shown elsewhere that dominant conceptions of conversion – as an ‘individual’ event or a ‘collective’ endeavour – are bedevilled by two overlapping difficulties (Dube 2010; 2003). First, they remain rooted in common sense European connotations of the category. Second, they turn conversion into a self-contained analytical apparatus, a self-generative descriptive domain. It is in this way that the event of conversion is widely understood as intimating a singular life and indicating an exclusive history for the convert, ‘individually’ and ‘collectively’. At stake in thinking through such conceptions are wide-ranging questions that undergird issues of religious individualisation.

The autobiographical and biographical materials – as well as accounts of witness – explored in my paper narrate the words and worlds of subjects of conversion in colonial India. On the one hand, all too often, and particularly in social science literature, Christian conversion in non-western contexts appears as an essentially collective endeavour, opposing it to the image of the solitary Saul who sees the light in understandings of conversion in western arenas. Here modular understandings construe conversion as a search for meaning in front of the onslaught of modernisation/modernity in remote non-western theatres. A particular problem with such schemes lies in their tendency to bracket the distinct experiences of conversion, especially converts’ notations of lives and histories and their performances of personhood. On the other hand, Pauline propositions and psychological prototypes regarding conversion tend to present it as an exclusively personal act, also intimating a solitary trajectory. Here the lone seeker transfers to a new, primary religious affiliation through a judicious choice among distinct and competing faiths, and then acts upon this choice through sincere personal belief and committed membership of community in Christ. Such understandings are based upon meta-historical and meta-cultural assumptions regarding action and understanding, the personal and the collective, conversion and Christianity. Unsurprisingly, these two opposed orientations can incline toward discounting what is salient and specific about lives and histories in the wake of conversion, the acute performances and practices of becoming and being Christian as attributes of distinct personhoods – the substance and spirit (or the stuff) of subjects of conversion.

We noted that most conversions to Christianity in colonial Chhattisgarh came about through networks of extended kinship, further entailing bonds of caste and sect, and the prospects of a better life under the paternalist economies of mission stations. Yet people also converted in other ways, variously negotiating kith and kin, caste and sect. Indeed, even those Christians whose conversion was effected through conduits of kinship were not simply figures of a singular, collective logic.

In each case, conversion provided a resource for distinct plotting(s) of selves, different telling(s) of selfhood, discrete performance(s) of personhood, diverse enactments of individuality, disparate measures of subject-hood – being subjects, subjects *of* and subjects *to*. This is revealed by the writings discussed ahead.

These narratives were at once shaped by colonial verities *and* marked by vernacular attributes, both aspects of an evangelical modernity. Although apparently formulaic in nature, they engage and exceed the *telos* of dominant narratives of conversion to Christianity, further raising questions for proposals of religious individualisation. The accounts imbue such exclusive story lines with their own notations. Here conversion and personhood appear as processes, practices, and performances of translation, involving the entangled work yet the unequal labour of the convert and the missionary. They reveal that at the core of colonial histories and evangelical entanglements lie the complex making and unmaking of historical forms, social identities, ritual practices, mythic meanings, and narrative forms. If we are to find religious individualisation at all, it is within such matrices that we are obliged to do so, modalities of religious individualisation as beleaguered (not brave) protocols, turning on formations of subjects, processes of subjectification, and performances of personhood – all of this shored up by vernacular translation.

5 Terms of translation

Beginning with the issue of the impossibility of translation, which I have discussed elsewhere, the subject of translation is a vexed one (Dube 2008a). My point here is merely that, as George Steiner's (1975, 250) 'abundant, vulgar fact', translation is possible because it happens, and happens all the time in social worlds. Indeed, it is precisely the routine performance and the quotidian practice of translation that have been subject to critical considerations in recent times (especially Barnstone 1995). To begin with, in debates on cultural translation there has been keen recognition of what Talal Asad (1993, 171–99) has described as the 'inequality of languages'. Such inequality also implies inequity, the two together inscribing and re-inserting asymmetries of languages and idioms, knowledge and power in the name of a neutral science and in the guise of an authoritative translation. All of this has led to distinctive bids toward a critical-creative practice of translation in history and anthropology (for instance, Chakrabarty 2000, 7–18; Sakai 1997). It has also encouraged critical scholarship to emphasise that processes of translation were central to the elaboration of colonial cultures, instituting distinct forms of colonising power and eliciting diverse practices of colonised subjects (for example, Rafael 1988; Larson 1997; Peterson 1999; Fabian 1986; Mignolo 1995). Indeed, in the articulation

of Christianity and colonialism, as Vicente Rafael (1988, 21) has argued, by ‘setting languages in motion, translation tended to cast intentions adrift, now laying, now subverting the ideological grounds of colonial hegemony’. Here was dialogue and distinction that secured and subverted colonial power and missionary authority by construing these through familiar referents and unfamiliar premises.

At this point, it is important to clarify my use of the category *vernacular translation*. The notion at once builds upon and departs from Vicente Rafael’s imaginative discussion of Spanish colonial and Christian translation among the Tagalog. Now, for Rafael (*ibid.*, xi, 21, and *passim*), translation refers to certified practices involving clerical-colonial renderings of the Word and its attendant tools and texts into the vernacular. He describes the Tagalog ‘response’ to such processes as ‘vernacularisation’. In contrast, my own focus concerns non-certified procedures of translation set in motion among Indian Christians in the wake of evangelisation and translation initiated by the Euro-American missionary. It is such procedures that I call vernacular translation. Put differently, vernacular translation does not simply indicate the linguistic rendering of texts and works from the English language into vernacular idioms. Rather, it equally refers to procedures of the transmutation of distinct categories and discrete concepts. These procedures lay between the interplay (and inequality) of languages, between the exchange (and inequity) of idioms, ever on the cusp of the English and the vernaculars, incessantly straddling and scrambling the boundaries and horizons of the original and the translation.

Understood in this fashion, the practices of vernacular translation that underlie the narratives in front inhabited the interstices brought into existence by the ‘separation between the original message of Christianity [...] and its rhetorical formulation in the vernacular’ (*ibid.*, 20–1) by missionaries in colonial India. Indeed, as we shall soon see, the missionaries themselves could not escape the force and reach of vernacular translation. And so, procedures of vernacular translation often constrained the universalising assumptions of a colonial Christianity in British India. Yet, they did this not so much by turning away from its ‘totalising impulses’ as by imbuing these with an excess of meaning, a surplus of faith. In other words, vernacular translation illuminates Indian renderings of Christianity and empire but not simply as a ‘response’ to – which is to say, never ever split apart from – the Euro-American evangelist and colonial power.⁵ All this should become clear in the accounts ahead, which underscore that the terms of religious conversion are a critical resource to think through the concept of religious individualisation.

⁵ I elaborate these considerations of vernacular translation by reading the catechist’s chronicles alongside the Bible and different missionary writings in English and Hindi in a book ahead (Dube forthcoming).

6 Divergent subjects

I turn to two biographical accounts of the Reverend Ramnath Simon Bajpai, who was an evangelist of the German Evangelical Mission. One of these accounts was drafted by the missionary Theodore C. Seybold, who served in central India between 1913 and 1958; the other was written in 1958 by Ramnath Bajpai's son, David Bajpai. The two typescripts show particular overlaps but they also reveal critical differences.⁶

Specifically, the missionary Seybold's (Typescript undated) was a most singular rendering of the conversion of the Brahman Ramnath, which followed a given blueprint, a prior pattern. Yet, even in this account, to plot the life of a primordial upper-caste convert, a connection had to be made between an ancient prophecy, a pioneer missionary, and the lone seeker Ramnath Bajpai – uncanny tales at the core of evangelical encounters (Dube 1998). Where am I going with all this? On the one hand, in the testimony of Theodore Seybold, the conversion of Ramnath was exclusive in nature, based on the likeness of the solitary Saul who saw the light, intimating a novel trajectory of faith and life. What order of individuality and autonomy do we discover in the density of such descriptions that envision the life of an Indian convert in the image of the Apostles? If indeed we are to find religious individualisation and institutionalisation here, is this of a regular or an irregular kind? On the other hand, simultaneously in this account, the very terms of an immaculate conversion were acutely forged through the force of rumour and the strength of prophecy. This is to say that distinctive entailments of myth, legend, and narrative broke upon the missionary's description of Ramnath's life, placing a question mark on the exact terms of religious individualisation and institutionalisation. Thus, an exclusive rendering of conversion was yet enacted through wide-ranging formations of meanings, constitutively turning on processes of vernacular translation. Did this not acutely reveal both the convert Ramnath and the missionary Seybold as concrete and contrary subjects of evangelical entanglements? What does this tell us not just about the multiple mappings but the fraught registers of religious individualisation/institutionalisation?

This brings me to Ramnath's life-history that was written by his son, David Bajpai (Typescript 1945, 1–2). The account follows a different direction from the

⁶ Theodore Seybold served as a missionary in Chhattisgarh between 1913 and 1958. For nine years, he frequently met Ramnath Bajpai; Seybold lived for a long time in the home of the Missionary Jacob Gass; Ramnath was the head catechist working under Gass, and was often present in the missionary's home. Few biographical details are forthcoming about David Bajpai. I have earlier authored a wider and deeper discussion of the life-histories explored in this chapter (Dube 2008b, 259–90).

missionary's narrative. It is based on a rather particular blueprint, that of the biography of an exemplary character, itself inflected by the lore of the learned Brahman. This story is based upon Ramnath's already distinguished ancestry, at once Brahmanical and martial, as well as his intellectual prowess as a student. This portrayal is rooted in the widespread lore of the learned Brahman conquering all with his liturgical abilities and scholarly propensities, so that he finds high office in a royal court. This tale is founded on Ramnath's own spiritual experience as envisioned in the mirror of Hindu *darshan* (vision/envisioning of divinity). Indeed, it is only after he is thus primed and presented that Ramnath Bajpai can sail forth to consummate his manifest, Christian destiny.

Ramnath is not just a mimic man or an acute double, simply envisioned in the evangelical mirror, in the likeness of the missionary or the image of the Apostles. In David Bajpai's account, Ramnath's sincere character and self-commitment to the Bible put him on a par with the missionaries, while distinguishing his persona from their personalities. It follows that distinct from the missionary Seybold's more straightforward account of Ramnath's change of faith, David Bajpai's narrative of his father's conversion traverses a jagged trajectory. In the missionary's tale, a single string binds Ramnath's conversion with his baptism – his formative change of spiritual orientation with his formal entry into the Christian church – where each step is marked by a breach with the past.

The son's story exceeds the life of the convert as a reflection of the history of the mission. On the one hand, Ramnath's upright character and his self-commitment to the Word – on par with the missionary, yet innately different – seemingly surmount all obstacles in his path to conversion. They lead Ramnath inexorably toward his entry into the community of Christ through baptism. On the other hand, bonds of caste and kin constitute more than hurdles that are deftly overcome by the enquirer-into-convert. Rather, they also bear a distinct gravity, a discrete force. It is Ramnath's realisation of the rupture with these ties and the fear this engenders that lead him to seek refuge among Christians, unto his conversion through baptism – as a last step, a final resort. Indeed, we are at last, possibly in the face of an account that uncertainly betokens autonomy, individuality, and religious individualisation, which are yet grounded in the classical, figurations of the ancient, not unlike the entanglements of the concept of the modern, as Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (1992) reminds us.

At the same time, David's was a lone text. Few autobiographical accounts embedded in the evangelical encounter could take for granted the distinctiveness of their own lives. Here the uncommon and the unremarkable had to be conjured and construed; the distinctive and the routine had to be reckoned with and sorted out. Such is the case with most of the writings of native evangelical workers, elicited by missionaries in the 1920s and 1930s, possibly for publication, as well as

the life stories of Indian Christians, which I collected in the 1990s for the purpose of research. Mired in the common and the quotidian, in various ways these narratives dramatised the ordinary as the remarkable and pursued the uncommon in the everyday. In the case of all these narratives, it would be much too facile to present the lives they narrated as ‘all-of-a-piece’, whether seen through the optics of individualisation or sieved through filters of conversion. To do so will be to ignore the ‘inner tensions – the fluctuations and hesitations between opposing ideas or moods’ that run through such accounts, as Arthur O. Lovejoy (cited in Kern 1983, 10) reminded us many, many decades ago. The attempt of these narratives was to revealingly dramatised the very commonness of the lives of their protagonists. Such dramatisations were themselves propelled and circumscribed by the constitutive tensions of the accounts. Here, an acute contrariness can run through several of these accounts – ‘inner tensions’ escape and exceed the exclusive life of the convert insinuated by dominant conceptions of conversion and put a distinct spin on notions of religious individualisation.

As an illustration of what I have been arguing, let me briefly turn to the ‘Life Story of Johann Purti’, a typescript of three and a half pages, which was first drafted by J. Purti (Typescript 1934) and then typed by a missionary in April 1934. At the beginning, through an emphasis upon geographical detail and historical chronology, Johann Purti establishes his ancestry and the fact that he was born a Christian. Here there is no rhetorical rhapsody or tortured tale of religious transformation.⁷ A simple sentence suffices: ‘After Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 he [Purti’s grandfather] became a Christian and was named Samuel Purti in baptism’ (ibid.). Next, the account quickly covers Johann’s initial lack of interest in attending school, his appreciation of learning upon moving to a boarding house, and his return home in the last year of high school after discovering that his father was borrowing money for his education. None of this is remarkable, hardly preparing us for the change of tone that now follows.

After leaving school my father asked me to join the Theological Seminary but I refused, telling him that one who wanted to be a padre should join because I looked down on the padres. Then my father asked me to learn the work of petition writer in the court but I said to him that one who would tell a lie and would rob the poor, should go to the court. Then my

⁷ Indeed, conversion does not appear as a dramatic or miraculous event in any of the life histories written or narrated by Christians in Central India that I consulted for this essay. This is true of various autobiographical accounts of women and men in Chhattisgarh today. It also holds for narratives written in the colonial period. If contrary tendencies characterise David Bajpai’s story of his father’s conversion and Johann Purti narrates the event of his grandfather’s becoming Christian as an un-dramatic fact, even those accounts in which conversion was accorded centrality told the tale in rather low-key ways.

father asked me to get a position in the railway or in the Forest Department. I answered him that one who wanted to be a vagabond should join these two lines. Then my father asked me what should I do. I told him I would be a farmer. Outwardly he assented but inwardly he wanted that I should change my mind. So he began giving me very hard works. I was working with servants as servants. I was working so hard that it changed my mind. I went to a relative who was a doctor with the intention to learn the work of a compounder but I was not satisfied and wanted to go to a great hospital for which I asked a recommendation from the Principal of my school (*ibid.*, 1–2).

This unusual passage introduces us to the critical devices shaping Johann Purti's autobiographical account, which together constitute a curious amalgam. First, the narrative is entirely cast as that of a life seeking an occupation, an existence stalking a vocation. Second, recalcitrance toward paternal authority, refusal of paternalist power, runs through the text. Third, a perpetual note of dissatisfaction afflicts the protagonist of this story, which is also the basis of his recalcitrance. Fourth, the sources of this discontent often lie in the nature of the occupation ahead of Johann Purti and in the hardships such work entails, which teach him a lesson. Yet, the roots of this discontent equally constitute an existential condition. Fifth, abrupt changes of mind as much as God's guidance lead our protagonist in his choices of career. Sixth and finally, such tropic designs – especially, the salience of occupation, the place of recalcitrance, and the presence of dissatisfaction – pattern the entire narrative, driving it toward its resolution. Here the critical forms are the vocation of a padre and the work of a compounder. Yet like the narrative itself, the resolution too is unstable.

Let me explain. After miraculous encounters with passages from the Book of Timothy in the Bible, Johann accepts the vocation of a padre in 1927, declaring that he was 'now a compounder of the greatest physician Jesus' (*ibid.*, 4). How might we read the end of Johann's story? It is not only that the transformation that follows Johann's encounter with passages of the Book loses some of its motive force because obedience to God's command had also characterised his earlier life. It is also that the resolution itself – Johann's becoming a compounder of the greatest physician Jesus – is not simply joyous. Instead, it is equally accompanied by an acute note of discontent.⁸ The point is that the acute contrariness that runs through this account also echoes the contrariness of the subject that was discussed earlier. It bids us to ask: In what ways does such contrariness of the

⁸ Elsewhere, I have discussed a critical conflict that consumed Purti's life and vocation (Dube 1995, 171–201). It is worth noting here that the precise terms of its dramatisation and the exact form of its contrariness distinguish Johann's tale from other life histories within the evangelical encounter. While the contrast with the writings of Theodore Seybold and David Bajpai should be abundantly clear, it equally extends to other accounts, written and oral (Dube 2008b).

subject square up with the terms of religious individualisation? Or, is the contrariness of this subject better articulated in terms of historical irony and the embodied *akrasia* of evangelical entanglements?

7 Coda

And so we return to the catechist with whose account I began. Had the catechist read the Word in English, in the original? Had he read the Book in Hindi, in translation (itself carried out by missionaries)? Had he read the Bible in both, in original and in translation?⁹ The catechist had rendered God's Word in Hindi and reported on his labour in English, enacting procedures of reading, translation, and life that yielded difference rather than equivalence, subject rather than the individual. Might this have something to say to, some stuff to ask of, projections of religious individualisation/institutionalisation?

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⁹ As I argue elsewhere, it is important to think through such ambiguities and tensions, which do not admit clear resolution, while discussing them in context-bound ways (Dube forthcoming).

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Max Deeg

Many biographies – multiple individualities: the identities of the Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang

1 Introduction

What is usually called the school of Buddhist Illusionism or Idealism (or, as others prefer to call it, Phenomenology),¹ Yogācāra (Chin. Yujia-xing 瑜伽行) or Vijñānavāda (Weishi-zong 唯識宗), argues that all phenomena experienced as real are just projections of the mind (Skt. *citta*, Chin. *xin* 心) or consciousness (Skt. *vijñāna*, Chin. *shi* 識) and have no ultimate and intrinsic reality (Skt. *asvabhāva*, Chin. *wu(zi)xing* 無(自)性).² In this chapter, I will extend and apply this very simplified description of Yogācāra to the question of (religious) individuality and individualisation. The argument I will offer is that processes of individualisation, those ascribed to individuals and groups as well as those described by others in biographical (or auto-biographical) narratives, are always (and only) imagined (Skt. *prajñaptimātra*, Chin. *weijiashe* 唯假設) and are not, thus, historically and/or ontologically real or ‘true’. I assume that the individual under discussion, the Chinese monk and East Asian Yogācāra master *par excellence* Xuanzang 玄奘 (600/602–664), would fully agree with such a statement.

In this paper I focus on two things: first, on the ways in which individualisation is projected – or, according to my chosen terminology, ‘functionalised’ – in the historical sources in the form of narratives about one specific individual; and second, on how this form of individualisation is dependent on specific social and cultural contexts, preconditions, and the (individual) intentionalities of the agents involved. I am aware of the fact that this ‘narrative individualisation’, to give it a preliminary name, is different from certain other expressions of individualisation, such as discourses concerning ‘conceptions of an immortal individual soul’ (‘Vorstellungen von einer unsterblichen Einzelseele’) and other religious experiences and ‘expressive actions’ (‘expressives Handeln’).³ To me, however, a critical discussion of the genre of ‘narrative individualisation’, the use

1 E.g. Lusthaus 2002.

2 Among the many publications on Yogācāra, see, for example, Schmithausen 2014, and Lusthaus 2002.

3 See KFOR 1013/2 Fortsetzungsantrag Rüpke/Mulsow: Individualisierung: 6f.

of autobiography and biographies as sources for tracing processes of individualisation, is crucial for the wider discussion of such processes.⁴

Critical reflection on biography, from a common sense standpoint the most natural (written or oral) expression of individuality, raises the question of whether or not everything subsumed under the label of ‘individualisation’ is, in some way, projected and/or imagined in the sense of Yogācāra philosophy. If such a stance is accepted, and be it only provisionally, the concept of ‘individuality’ becomes quite fuzzy. The agency and autonomous authority of the subject or individual over his or her individual biographical identity and, thus, the assumed epistemological hierarchy between autobiography and biography, becomes blurred. This is particularly the case if the contingency of autobiographical memory and its fixation (German: *Festschreibung*)⁵ is taken into account to the same degree as the selective power (and, at the same time, weakness) of the biographer. In the end, all these narrative expressions relating to an individual – and I include here also non-written media, such as pictorial, performative, or cinematic expressions – are entangled and embedded in their specific socio-historical contexts the analysis of which will not necessarily bring us closer to ‘the individual’. Nevertheless, an analysis will at least enable us to understand how a specific ‘individuality’ is construed and (thus) understood in a specific context. This sort of analysis will, then, contribute to a more general understanding of the processes of individualisation.

With reference to Xuanzang, my own chosen example (German: *Fallbeispiel*), I agree with the basic assumption of the KFG that processes or discourses of individualisation (and their analyses) are complex and result from ‘contingent constellations [...] in which individuals become central parameters of determination of processes of socialisation [...]’.⁶ As might be expected, I am very much interested in the ‘become’ here: how and under what circumstances

⁴ By this I do not mean to ask for a ‘biographical turn’ (Chamberlain, Bornat, Wengraf 2000) in the overall context of studies on individualisation.

⁵ There have been some recent analytical publications on this aspect of autobiography, ranging from the radical statement of the ‘impossibility of auto/biography’ (Evans 1999) to a more nuanced discussion of the literary genre (Olney 2014). In fact, quite often modern autobiography is not so naïve as to be unaware of its constructiveness, as e.g. expressed in the title of the autobiography of the native American writer Gerald Vizenor, ‘Interior Landscapes – Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors’ (Vizenor 2009). The ‘closest’ example in classical German literature is Goethe’s autobiographical ‘Dichtung und Wahrheit’. In the context of East Asian Buddhist biography, this dismissal of the fundamental distinction of authority between biography and autobiography is indirectly made by Kieschnick 1997, 3.

⁶ KFOR 1013/2, 5: ‘[...] aus kontingenten Konstellationen resultierende Prozesse, in denen Individuen zu zentralen Bestimmungsgrößen der Vergesellschaftung [...] werden’.

is an individual first made ‘parametrical’ in narrative terms and then becomes determinative in some way or another (institutionalisation?)? The answer seems to lie in the ‘constructedness’ of religious biography and in its tendency towards function: the religious figure represents a specific aspect – or function, as I will call it for the sake of broader applicability and concreteness – of the religious ideals of a certain time and social group: the ascetic, the scholar, the martyr, the self-immolator, etc.⁷

My individual ‘object’ of choice, the Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang, seems to offer a useful case study for playing through some of these basic ideas because of the impact he had in different periods (early medieval, medieval, early modern, and modern), different regions (Asian and Western) and different ideological contexts, religious as well as secular. This impact is reflected, first of all, in the fact that Xuanzang’s biography has been received, projected and remodelled constantly, all the way up to the present day.⁸ Several biographies are extant (see below), with the earliest being nearly contemporary with the lifetime of the monk. These biographies were themselves the starting point(s) for a further re-imagining, emphasising certain aspects (functions) of Xuanzang that were represented by particular features in the earlier biographies. I would thus claim that the creation of Xuanzang’s different biographies reflects a rare historical process during which many identities⁹ are constructed and multiple individualities are implied.

7 In the context of Muslim biographical literature, Cooperson 2000 identifies the legitimacy of the followership of Muhammad as a leading motif. This could also be claimed for certain strands of Buddhist biographical sources which are concerned with (correct) succession of heirs (patriarchs, Chin. *zu* 祖) of the *dharma* of the Buddha, as are so prominent in the biographical snippets that form the ‘transmission of the lamp’ (*chuandeng* 傳燈) literary genre of Chan 禪.

8 The latest example of such a biographical construction is the cinematic re-enactment of Xuanzang’s life, *Datang-Xuanzang* 大唐玄奘 (2016), an Indo-Chinese co-production which was agreed upon at the highest political level during the visit of India’s president Narendra Modi to China on the 14th to the 16th of May 2015. The movie was shot over an extremely short period at original historical sites in China, Central Asia, and India and had its debut in Chinese cinemas in April 2016, less than a year after production was set in motion.

9 I am not going to discuss here the relation between the terms – and underlying concepts of – ‘individual’, ‘individualisation’, and ‘identity’, but would like to point out the possible applicability of ‘identity’ for a discussion of processes of individualisation in the sense that the concept seems to be anchored somewhere on the spectrum between individualisation and de-individualisation/socialisation. For a recent sociological study of the formation of religious identity in auto-biographical reflections, in which, surprisingly, the questions of ‘individuality’ and ‘individualisation’ are not really taken into account, see Lorenz 2016.

2 Buddhism and individualisation

We can start with some preliminary general observations concerning individualisation in the context of Buddhism, if only to cut through and problematise some popular preconceptions about this religion. According to a wide-spread modern conceptualisation, Buddhism appears to be a perfect example of religious self-reflective individualisation, with this notion being crystallised in the practice of meditation. This is reflected by and in the standard narrative (biography) of the founder himself,¹⁰ the individual Śākyamuni Siddhārtha Gautama, called the Buddha¹¹ after finding his ‘true’ identity through a long period of contemplation on the experience of enlightenment or awakening (*bodhi*). Despite their genre, it is possible to read the stories of the Buddha’s previous lives (*jātaka*) in the light of individualisation: from individual existence to existence (rebirth), the *bodhisattva* (an aspirant for Buddhahood) develops and cultivates the characteristics necessary for the final goal, the attainment of ultimate awakening (*samyaksambodhi*) which results in transcending individuality (*anātman*, ‘without self’) (Reynolds 1997; Appleton 2010). One could even argue that such individualisation in the previous existences and in the first part of the Buddha’s biography, prior to his awakening, finds its materialised expression in the localisation of some of these stories. A number of the stories occur in concrete places in South Asia and beyond: one can, therefore, go to the locations and ‘witness’ or ‘experience’ the reality of such individuations of the Buddha in his previous lives.¹² This is underlined by the opposite tendency towards a kind of de-individualisation in the Buddha’s life post-enlightenment, which is ‘boringly’ stereotype and in which only two specific places are identified: the place of his first sermon (the ‘Deer Garden’, *mṛgadāva*, in Sārnāth near Vārāṇasi) and the place of his death or *parinirvāṇa* (Kūśinagara). On the doctrinal side, the teaching of retribution for individually committed acts and their consequences (*karma*) drives forward this connectedness and entanglement of individual lives (and deaths) (see Appleton 2014).

However, if we look deeper into the doctrinal tenets of Buddhism and their narrative ‘translation’, the individuality of the Buddha becomes blurred again: on the one hand, the basic doctrine of ‘selflessness’ (*anātman*, Chin. *wuwo* 無我) and the (historically later) teaching that all phenomena are without substance,

¹⁰ Discussions about the role and function of religious founder figures are collected in Gray 2016. However, the question of the function of biography in and outside the tradition is strangely absent and overwritten by a focus on ‘religious invention’.

¹¹ On the historical development of the Buddha biographies, see Deeg 2010.

¹² These localisations are mainly traceable in the records of Chinese Buddhist travellers. For concrete examples, see Deeg 2005.

‘empty’ (*śūnya*, Chin. *kong* 空), indicate a rather uncompromising approach to individuality, denying even the possibility of its substantial existence. Furthermore, from a very early period there existed the concept of multiple Buddhas of the past (Kāśyapa, Konakamuni, Krakucchanda, etc.).¹³ These were then ascribed biographies that have the same basic pattern¹⁴ as that of the Buddha himself, who explains the common scheme by reference to the example of the Buddha Vipāśyin. This, then, would be a clear example of de-individualisation of and by the one who is conceived in Western scholarship as the historical Buddha Gautama Siddhārtha Śākyamuni.¹⁵ One could even argue whether an intentional individualisation of the Buddha existed at all in pre-modern Buddhist traditions, or whether it is not, at least partially, a construct of historicist-positivist Western interpretation starting in the nineteenth century.¹⁶

Both aspects point towards a tension between individuality and the normative uniformity asked for by the exemplary nature of the great individual. In the case of the Buddha, one could argue that the multiple episodes in the different versions of his life story¹⁷ refer to constant and continuous attempts at re-individualising the de-individualised biographical scheme.¹⁸ The expression of this tension between individuality and the (more or less de-individualised) model role or the (almost)

13 This idea can be traced back at least as far as the 3rd century BCE, when the Mauryan emperor Aśoka referred in one of his pillar inscriptions to the Buddha of the past Kanakamuni (and also to another Buddha Krakucchanda), for whom he had enlarged a *stūpa* in the vicinity of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni’s hometown, Kapilavastu: see Deeg 2004.

14 Textually, this is exemplified in the (Skt.) Mahāvadānasūtra – P. Mahāpadānasutta in the ‘Longer Collection’ (Dīghanikāya) of the Pāli Suttapiṭaka, with its parallel in the Dīrghāgama/Chang-ahan-jing 長阿含經 of the Chinese canon. See Waldschmidt 1953 & 1956; Fukita 2003.

15 The tension between this historicisation and the historical inaccessibility of the Buddha raises questions about the validity, or at least demonstrability, of the Axial Age theory in relation to individualisation. In the light of what is stated here about the biographical process, in the sense of the gradual emergence of biographies as narrative individualisations, the same questions would also arise for other eastern ‘religious’ ‘founder figures’, such as Confucius (Kongzi), Laozi, Zhuangzi, Zarathushtra, etc., who are so central to Jaspers’ argument: see the first paragraph in his subchapter ‘A. Characterisation of the Axial Period’ (Jaspers 1953, 2).

16 Ironically, there is a link between this historicisation of the Buddhist biographical texts, through processes of harmonisation, selection and interpretation, in the 19th century, and Xuanzang’s approach in his ‘Records of the Western World’, with its textual and archaeological exploration and reconstruction of an early form of Buddhism in India. I touch on this very briefly below.

17 Reynolds 1976 rightly speaks of the processual and re-interpretative character of the Buddha biography, of the ‘many lives of the Buddha’.

18 This seems to be reflected in what Jonathan Silk (2003) has called the paradox of the Buddha’s biography, in which constant negotiation of the Buddha’s human-ness (individualisation) and his transcendent super-human-ness (de-individualisation) is at play.

unreachable religious and soteriological status of the founder¹⁹ is mostly found in the genre of Buddhist biography or hagiography; autobiographies in the stricter sense of the genre are absent in the early period. It is in this genre of hagiography that I would like to situate my analysis of the various attempts to narratively individualise one particular individual, the Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang.

3 Biography in South Asia and China

Before I introduce my sources, it will be worth outlining some fundamental differences between South Asian and East Asian biographical literature²⁰ should be outlined. Ancient and early medieval South Asia (c. 500BCE-1000 CE) has no clear biographical (or autobiographical) genre. What we find in, for instance, Vedic and late Vedic literature are episodes about the deeds or conversations of exceptional individuals, mostly *brāhmaṇas* and kings. The religious ‘revolution’ – Jaspers’ postulated shift in the Axial Age – of the *śramaṇa* movements in the sixth/fifth century BCE Gangetic plain area resulted in the establishment of institutionalised religious ‘orders’, among which Buddhism and Jainism were the most successful. The desire to memorialise the founding figures of these orders, Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha and Mahāvīra Jina, nurtured the need for biographies of exceptional individuals.

In South Asian (Indian) Buddhism, biographies were for a long time only partial and were normally integrated into a wider anthological context of other literary genres and giving biographical bits and pieces rather than constituting independent biographies. There are rare texts that can be understood as autobiographical statements, such as the ‘Songs of the Elder Monks’ (Theragāthā) and ‘Songs of the Elder Nuns’ (Therīgāthā) in the Pāli canon, but these are an exceptional Theravāda tradition and stand out as unique in the South Asian Buddhist literary production. As complex texts and parts of the Theravāda canon, these originally anonymous verses were ascribed to specific monks or nuns, partly in

¹⁹ Here it is important to make a distinction between the soteriological final goal of ‘becoming a Buddha’ and an ‘imitatio Buddhae’ which is hardly found expressed in Buddhist biographical literature. The biographies of the Buddha are never a direct exhortation to follow his example, as the gospels are, at least to a certain extent, for the concept of the ‘imitatio Christi’ (see e.g. Capes 2003).

²⁰ A lot of ink has been spilled on Asian religious biography – see e.g. Granoff, Shinohara 1988 – but so far there has been no comparative-critical approach to what ‘biographies’ in the different Asia contexts have in common or to what makes them different in terms of structure, function and meaning.

order to localise and contextualise them in the Buddha's lifetime and his direct biographical environment.²¹

The biographies of the Buddha and certain of his disciples are, at least in their extant form, of a relatively late date, although evidence for the formation of a biography in the form of standardised episodes from the Buddha's life can be dated back to the 3rd century BC on the basis of (aniconic)²² art-historical evidence (*stūpas* of Sāñcī or Bharhūt). These scenes mainly depict episodes or moments in the Buddha's life that are religiously important and linked to places of pilgrimage and worship, e.g. the four major events of birth (*janman*, in Lumbini), enlightenment (*bodhi*, in Bodhgayā), first sermon (*dharmacakrapravartana*, in Sārnāth near Vārāṇasī), and the final extinction (*parinirvāṇa*, in Kuśinagara).²³

Fully-fledged biographies only emerged gradually²⁴ and consisted of complete (and over times still growing and expanding) lives of the Buddha,²⁵ his disciples (Ray 1999, 105–212) or Buddhist patriarchs (e.g. the patriarch Upagupta: see Strong 1992), and other eminent individuals.²⁶ They reflect a clear tendency towards narrative individualisation insofar as they try to cover the full life-time of the protagonist. They include not only specific episodes that are important for doctrinal or soteriological reasons but also 'minor episodes' like the young Siddhārtha's education at school, his marriage, the birth of his first son, and so

21 Von Hinüber 1996, 51ff.; Ray 1999, 79–104. Shaw 2010, 39ff., does away, too simply in my opinion, with the complex textual transmission process in order to categorise these texts and others from the Pāli canon under the rubric of 'autobiography'. One might talk, as with the early Chinese cases mentioned below, of a pervasive trend towards individualisation of anonymous texts or text corpora over time.

22 I.e. the Buddha is not physically visible but only represented through symbols, such as a seat on which he is supposed to sit or an umbrella underneath which he should stand or walk. On the aniconic period of the earliest Buddhist art, see Karlsson 1999, and more generally on the development of narrative Buddhist art, see Dehejia 1997.

23 On the development of the Buddha biography, see Deeg 2010.

24 This development is reflected in some biographical texts which only cover a certain period of the Buddha's life, such as the *Catuṣpariṣatsūtra* (from the night of enlightenment to the first conversions) and the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (the last months in the life of the Buddha).

25 Mostly anonymous, like the *Lalitavistara*, the *Mahāvastu*, or the later *Nidānakathā* (Pāli). One of the oldest extant biographical texts, the poem *Buddhacarita*, is attributed to the poet Aśvaghōṣa (second century CE). Other early biographies are only preserved in Chinese translations; some of these only deal with a part of the Buddha's life.

26 Like the legendary life of the king Aśoka, the *Aśokāvādāna*: Strong 1983. Aśoka provides a good example of individualisation in 'ego-documents' ('Ego-Dokumente'; Aśoka's own inscriptions) and narrative individualisation in the form of a hagio-biography (*Aśokāvādāna*): see Deeg 2009b. The different biographies discussed in Schober 1997 range heterogeneously from Buddha biographies to modern Buddhist individuals and are restricted to South and South East Asia.

on.²⁷ The emergence of this biographical literature, starting around the beginning of the Christian era, is complemented by the narrative (iconic) Buddhist art of Gandhāra. This flourished in the Northwest of the Indian subcontinent between the late first and the fourth centuries of the Common Era and is often called Indo-Greek because of the obvious Greek stylistic influences.

In China, on the other hand, biographical writing – again, autobiography is a relative newcomer in Chinese literature (see Levering 2002; on later Neo-Confucian autobiography, see Taylor 1978) – about individuals has been part of Chinese official (i.e. imperial) and semi-official²⁸ (Buddhist or Daoist) historiography from the 1st century BC onwards (see Nienhauser 2011). The first biographies appear as part of the earliest comprehensive historiographical endeavour, which resulted in the *Shiji* 史記 ('Records of the Historian') of the Chinese 'arch-'historiographer Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145–86 BC). Starting with this model, almost all subsequent Chinese historiographical writings include biographies (*zhuan* 傳) of not only emperors but also other eminent individuals, such as ministers, religious figures, and outstanding intellectuals. The appearance of such biographies in one specific and rather comprehensive section became a mandatory feature in historical writing.²⁹ It might even be argued that the traces of Chinese historical writing which survive Chinese antiquity – the 'Classic of Document' (*Shujing* 書經) and some poems in the 'Classic of Songs (or Poems)' (*Shijing* 詩經) – show rudimentary features of biographical individualisation in their presentation of the mythical past in terms of the action and deeds of individual cultural heroes like Yu 禹 or Yao 堯 (other examples are the pseudo-historical founders of the Western Zhou dynasty (trad. 1046–771 BC), Duke Wen (Wen-gong 文公) and his son, King Wu (Wu-wang 武王)).

It is generally assumed that Buddhism was introduced into China in the first century CE. By the fifth century, Buddhism had become a consolidated, though not undisputed, part of Chinese cultural and religious discourse (see Zürcher 2007). Beside the translations of Indian (or Central Asian) Buddhist texts, autochthonous Chinese texts, such as commentaries and catalogues of scriptures, were also being

²⁷ There is a clear tendency to concentrate on the pre-enlightenment period of the Buddha's life, which may point to a structural 'division of labour' between a part of the biography that lends itself more easily to narrative individualisation (pre-enlightenment) and a part that reflects the 'institutionalised' and de-individualised role of the Buddha as an omniscient religious teacher and transcendent being (post-enlightenment).

²⁸ 'Semi-official' insofar as most of the religious literature had to be acknowledged, at least in principle, by the respective court bureaus.

²⁹ For an overview of the entanglement of biography and historiography during Chinese history and its change in the late nineteenth century, see Moloughney 1992. On the development of Chinese biographical writing in the twentieth century, see Moloughney 1994.

produced. In the early fifth century, the Chinese ‘push’ for biographies³⁰ began to impact Buddhist writers and the first collections of biographies of eminent monks ((Liang-)Gaoseng-zhuan (梁)高僧傳, ‘Biographies of Eminent Monks (of the Liang [dynasty])’, 519, T.2059) were collated by Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554).³¹ Such biographical anthologies were then produced on a fairly regular basis throughout the dynastic history of China, loosely following the pattern of other historiographical writings in collating the biographies of an earlier period (or dynasty): Xu(or: Tang 唐)-Gaoseng-zhuan 續高僧傳 (‘Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks (of the Tang [dynasty])’, 665, T.2060), by Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667); Song-Gaoseng-zhuan 宋高僧傳 (‘Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Song [dynasty]’, 988, T.2061) by Zanning 贊寧, Daming-Gaoseng-zhuan 大明高僧傳 (‘Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Great Ming [dynasty]’, 1600, T.2062) by Ruxing 如惺.

These biographical ‘anthologies’ are organised and structured in a way which already reflects what could be called the typical hagiographic tendency of de-individualisation: the collections are divided into ‘types’ of expertise, with the divisions based on the functional roles of the protagonists. Huijiao provides the model for this approach by dividing the biographies into the following categories, followed more or less by his successors: 1. translators (*yijing* 譯經); 2. exegetes (*yijie* 義解); 3. wonder-workers (*shenyi* 神異); 4. practitioners of meditation (*xichan* 習禪); 5. specialists in explaining monastic rules (*minglü* 明律); 6. self-immolators (*wangshen* 亡身); 7. specialists in reciting Buddhist texts (*songjing* 誦經); 8. collectors of (special) religious merit (*xingfu* 興福); 9. hymnodists (*jingshi* 經師); and 10. proselytisers (*changdao* 唱導). The singling out of translators as the first group is justified by the role they played in the transmission and spread of Buddhism throughout China (Kieschnick 1997, 8f.).

30 As for Buddhist biographies modelled along the lines of the established biographical model – minus the hagiographical features and themes – of the secular historiographies, Kieschnick 1997, 5, states aptly that they are ‘in style and structure squarely in the tradition of secular biography established [...] in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*’. As part of the classical Chinese division of scriptures and categorised under ‘historical texts’, biographies could even escape the destruction of literature in periods of anti-Buddhist persecution and survive the prohibition of publication and dissemination: Storch 2014, 14ff.

31 See Kieschnick 1997; 2011. Huijiao’s compilation was, in a way, a reaction to a slightly earlier work by the monk Baochang 寶唱 (464–post 514), the Mingseng-zhuan 名僧傳 (‘Biographies of Famous Monks’), of which only fragments have survived: see Wright 1954. Baochaong also compiled a collection of ‘Biographies of Nuns’ (Biqiuni-zhuan 比丘尼傳), dated 516; see Tsai 1995. The biographical ‘push’ was so strong that biographies of translators of the type of the Gaoseng-zhuan were already incorporated in one of the earliest Chinese Buddhist catalogues, the ‘Collection of the Records of the Compilation of the Three Baskets (*tripitaka*, i.e. the Buddhist canon)’ (Chu-sanzang-jiji 出三藏記集, 510–518) by the monk Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518).

Some hagiographical (de-individualising) *topoi* are at play in the individual biographies: already in their early years the protagonists demonstrate a high degree of intelligence or clairvoyance, a fondness for traditional Chinese and/or Buddhist learning and/or devotion, and their death is very often accompanied by miraculous events. It cannot be overlooked, however, that some individual monks are granted more space and individual biographical features, although this reflects their specific importance for the spread or development of the Buddhist teaching or the Buddhist institution(s) rather than referring to a more accurate historical reality.³² The biographies are mostly hagiographies in the sense of ‘representations of the image of the monk, of what monks were *supposed* to be’ in ‘monastic imagination’ (Kieschnick 1997, 1).

Motivation and intentionality influenced by and drawn from the wider Chinese cultural context had an impact on the de-individualising aspects of Chinese Buddhist (and Daoist) biographical writing,³³ as reflected in, for instance, the need to show Buddhism’s (and Buddhists’) positive relationship with the imperial state.³⁴

4 Biographies of Xuanzang

While in the cases of most Buddhist monks of whom biographies were written in Chinese there exists, as a rule, only one biography, much more material of different genres and types is preserved on Xuanzang.³⁵ Those works that can be called

32 Among the earlier monks, I only want to point out the biographies of Shi Daoan 釋道安 (312–385) and Kumārajīva/Jiunoluoshi 鳩摩羅什 (343–413) in the *Gaoseng-zhuan*, the first being the earliest polymath and synthesiser of Chinese Buddhism and the latter (projected as) the most eminent translator of the period (on Shi Daoan, see Zürcher 2007, 184ff.; Kumārajīva’s biography was translated into English by Johannes Nobel 1927).

33 The Confucian and Daoist precedents of these ‘extrapolated’ and religiously specialised biographical collections were the *Liexian-zhuan* 列仙傳 (‘Collected Biographies of Immortals’) by Liu Xiang 劉向 (fl. 77–76 BC) and the *Shenxian-zhuan* 神仙傳 (‘Biographies of Divine Transcendents’) Ge Hong 葛洪; see Campany 2002, particularly 98–117.

34 Timothy Barrett speaks of an ambivalence towards religious biographies in China that ‘has much to do with the emergence of a new form of biography of a more religious sort into a culture that had hitherto been dominated by *vitae* structured either by bureaucratic values, [...], or by their inversion [...]’ (Barrett 2002, 2).

35 When speaking of different biographies I do not mean the parallel biographies in the earlier collections, such as the *Chu-sanzang-jiji*, the *Mingseng-zhuan* and the *Gaoseng-zhuan*, which mostly copied material from one to the other and showed relatively little difference in their projection of biographical individualities. These parallel biographies may, however, reflect the different approaches of their authors to one and the same individual, as Yang has shown in a study

biographies in the strict sense were written partly during his lifetime or after his death.³⁶ However, the fact that several slightly different biographies exist does not help us to get closer to the ‘real Xuanzang’³⁷ through a process of ‘historical distillation’. Rather, the varying accounts reflect different layers of interpretation of the individual Xuanzang and his life. Before introducing these biographies it will be worth considering the text which most triggered the imagination of his contemporary audience and later recipients, the voluminous ‘description’ of Central Asia and India based on his sixteen-year-long journey to India.

This work is the famous ‘Records of the Western Regions of the Great Tang [Dynasty]’ (Datang-xiyu-ji 大唐西域記, T.2087; here abbreviated as ‘Records’) in twelve chapters, commissioned by the second Tang emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649) and written in less than one year after Xuanzang’s return to China in 645. The ‘Records’ are not, as usually assumed,³⁸ a personal record of the monk’s journey and nor can they *stricto sensu* be called descriptive documentary.³⁹ Rather, they combine the fulfilment of the task given by the emperor, to give information about the different kingdoms of the Western Regions⁴⁰ (a very

on Kumārajīva’s biographies (Lu 2004), which anticipate to a certain extent the situation in the case of Xuanzang’s biographies.

36 An overview and discussion of these biographies is given by Mayer 1992, 34ff.

37 This refers, of course, to the well-known British Sinologist Arthur Waley’s booklet ‘The Real Tripiṭaka’ (1961), which is dedicated to the ‘historical’ Xuanzang in comparison with the literarily-transformed figure of the famous Ming-period novel Xiyou-ji (‘Records of the Journey to the West’) (see below). Waley had paraphrased this latter text in English as ‘Monkey’ (1942) almost two decades earlier and with such success that the famous scholar and translator deemed it necessary to put things right and do justice to the historical figure at the root of the novel.

38 This assumption is fuelled by the fact that the Western translations of the ‘Records’ (Stanislas Julien, Samuel Beal, Li Rongxi) insert a personal pronoun (‘I’) where there is none in the Chinese text and thus imply inner-textual agency where, again, there is none. This has serious hermeneutical consequences when, to give only one example, Malcolm Eckel (1994) uses the text as an eye-witness (‘to see the Buddha’) as the basis for a ‘revisiting’ of the role of the Buddha in Buddhist religion and philosophy.

39 Mayer 2000, 156, correctly speaks of ‘die Abwesenheit [...] eines auktoriellen Subjektes und eines implizierten Betrachters’, although I do not share his view that this is due to a Buddhist negation of the substantiality of the individual person (p.161). Rather, I would argue that he had to write in the non-auctorial genre of ‘Records’ (ji 記, *zhuan* 傳, *zhi* 志) about the Western regions that had already been compiled during the Sui dynasty in the wake of the western expansion of the Chinese empire.

40 A clear indication that the text was written for this purpose is the fact that it starts not in Chang’an, the Tang capital and departure point, but in Central Asian Kuča and ends in Khotan on the southwestern corner of the Tarim basin (Chinese Turkestan or the modern Autonomous Region of Xinjiang), i.e. exactly at the border of Chinese-controlled territory in 629 when Xuanzang travelled West and in 645 when he returned to China.

stretched concept in the Tang period, comprising the traditional Central Asian regions but also including Iran/Persia and India), with Xuanzang's own aim of describing Buddhist sacred places and educating the emperor and other high-ranked readers at the Tang court (Deeg 2009a; 2012).

A reader comes looking for autobiographical statements in the 'Records' will walk away quite disappointed. The text does, however, contain a few self-references in the report of the monk's meeting with the North Indian emperor Harṣavardhana Śīlāditya (Harṣa) of Kanauj (Kanyākubja) (c. 590–647).⁴¹ These may best be taken as biographical snippets through which Xuanzang presents himself as a kind of ambassador of Chinese culture and informant for Harṣa about the situation in China, clearly aimed towards the Tang ruler Taizong as a *captatio benevolentiae* self-recommendation. Yet, the passage is interesting in that it reflects individual agency in an autographically-projected form and is thus worth quoting in full:

At that time Śīlāditya was inspecting the kingdom of Khajuṅghira and issued an order to King Kumāra (of Kāmarūpa/Assam) [saying]: "It is appropriate that the visiting *śramaṇa* from afar in Nālanda should immediately come and attend our meeting". Thereupon King Kumāra went to see [Xuanzang]. Śīlāditya, after having taken the trouble, said: "From which kingdom did you come and what is your wish?" [Xuanzang] answered: "I have come from the kingdom of the Great Tang in search of the law of the Buddha". The king said: "In which direction is the kingdom of the Great Tang situated?" [Xuanzang] answered: "It is several ten thousand li to the North-East. It is the kingdom which in India is called Mahācina". The king said: "I have already heard that there is the heaven's son, the King of Qin in Mahācina. When he was small he had a high spirit, when he had grown up he was a gifted warrior. Before, when the former dynasty was collapsing in disorder and parts of the land were divided, fighting had arisen and the people were tormented, the King of Qin early had conceived a strategy and sensed great compassion, rescued the sentient beings, pacified the region between the oceans, cultivation was far spread, the [imperial] kindness was harmoniously [established] in far [regions], distant regions and foreign countries took refuge and submitted to him, all the people carry along his well-balanced instruction, all perform the 'Music of the King of Qin's breaking the battle-lines',⁴² his eulogy has been heard here since long – isn't there really praise of his virtues? Isn't the Great Tang like this?" [Xuanzang] answered: "What is called Zhina 至那 is the former name of the kingdom, Datang 大唐 is the name of the kingdom of our ruler. Before he had ascended to the throne he was called King of Qin. Now that he has already ascended to the throne he is called Son of Heaven. When the fortune of the former dynasty came to an end the living beings had no ruler, fighting and turmoil arose and people were cruelly injured. The King of Qin, [endowed with] heaven's grace, opened his mind with compassion and, stimulated by his dignity, the calamities of the people were wiped out. The eight directions were pacified and ten thousand kingdoms

⁴¹ An analysis of Xuanzang's description of Harṣavardhana and his rule is given in Deeg 2016.

⁴² This (*Shengong*-) *Qinwang-pochen-yue* (神功秦王破陣樂) was a dancing performance on the occasion of Li Shimin's 李世民 – the later emperor Taizong – suppression of the rebellion of Liu Wuzhou 劉武周 in the year 619, when he was still king (or prince) of Qin.

paid tribute to him. He loves and cultivates the four kinds of living beings and venerates the three jewels. He levied taxes and issued amnesty on capital punishment. The national expenditure achieved a surplus; the etiquette of the people is flawless [and] their behaviour has undergone a great change [to an extent] that it is difficult to describe it in detail". Śīlāditya said: "How magnificent! The people of this land are blessed [and should] be grateful to their sacred ruler". (T.2087.894c.20ff.-895a.18)

The actual dialogue between the two certainly did not occur in this form⁴³ but the written version reflects a self-understanding or self-projection of Xuanzang as a mediator between the two great empires of China and India and as an educator for both the Indian king, by informing him about China and her ruler, and the Chinese emperor Taizong, by showing him, in the passages before and after this dialogue, the ideal behaviour of an Indian Buddhist king. This self-assumed role is taken up in all the biographies and even pushed further when the Indian king pays the highest honour to the Chinese monk because of his status as an eminent Buddhist scholar and monastic and even urges him not to return to China.

Xuanzang's biography in the *Xu-Gaoseng-zhuan* ('Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks'; T.2060.446c.8–458c.13), written by his short-term collaborator, the Buddhist polymath Daoxuan, is one of the earliest biographical sketches. According to the colophon of the compilation, the first draft of the text was made in 645, the year of Xuanzang's return to China. There is broad agreement that, if this date is correct, Daoxuan made many changes and additions to the compilation over the years before his death in 667 (Wagner 1995, 78–81).

A relatively brief individual biography, i.e. not part of a biographical anthology, is the *Datang-gu-sanzang-Xuanzang-fashi-xingzhuang* 大唐故三藏玄奘法師行狀 ('Brief [Posthumous] Biography of the Deceased Tripiṭaka Dharma Master Xuanzang of the Great Tang', one fascicle, T.2052) by Mingxiang 冥詳 (dates unknown). While Daoxuan's biography and the long individual 'Biography' (see below) share elements and descriptive patterns – sometimes repeating each other word for word – this biographical sketch goes in a different direction. It treats the journey to India in a very unsystematic and eclectic manner, focusing on Xuanzang as a translator and exemplary monastic figure.

A biographical sketch which draws mainly on the previous biographies is preserved in the older official historiography of the Tang (*Jiu-Tangshu* 舊唐書 191),⁴⁴

⁴³ One inner-textual indication of this is that some word-by-word passages of this dialogue are repeated in the description of a meeting between Xuanzang and King Kumāra, the ruler of Kāmarūpa/Assam: T.2087.927b.14–927c.14.

⁴⁴ Compiled by Liu Xu 劉昫 and Zhang Zhaoyuan 張昭遠 around the middle of the tenth century. The biography is omitted in the 'corrected' new historiography of the Tang, the *Xin-Tangshu* 新唐書, compiled by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 between 1044 and 1060.

a genre which normally does not include biographies of Buddhist individuals. On the one hand, this demonstrates the status that the monk had attained in Chinese cultural memory towards the end of the first millennium. On the other hand, it relativises Xuanzang's status and position as an extraordinary personality by listing him under the category of '[Individuals endowed with] magical and specific technical [skills]' (*fangzhi* 方伎) as one among a group of less celebrated monks (*seṅ* 僧). This biographical sketch focuses mainly on his translation activities and his role as an exegete of Buddhist scriptures who was supported and protected by the emperors Taizong and Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683). It is his connection with the court that is important to the biographer, a fact demonstrated also by the focus on Xuanzang's funeral, an important indicator of social status in the early Tang Empire. Getting wrong both the year of death (661 instead of 664) and his age at the time of death (56 instead of either 64⁴⁵ or 62), the text emphasises that the funeral was attended by many members of the social elite (*shinü* 士女): 'In the sixth year [or the era Xianqing 顯慶, i.e. 661] [Xuanzang] died, at that time 56 years old; [his] funeral was on the White Deer plain, and the funeral was attended by several ten thousands of ladies and gentlemen'.⁴⁶

The most extensive biography, however, was written by Xuanzang's disciple Huili 慧立 (fl. 629–665) and redacted and extended by the monk Yancong 彥棕 (fl. 650–688), the 'Biography of the Tripiṭaka dharma master from the Great Cien-monastery of the Great Tang' (Datang-Daciensi-sanzang-fashi-zhuan 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, T.2053; here abbreviated as 'Biography'). The chronology and compositional process of this biography is not entirely clear. Most likely the first five chapters, which include Xuanzang's youth and his travel to and stay in India, were written by Huili first and then complemented by another five chapters, covering the period from Xuanzang's return to China to his death, written by Yancong, who also expanded on and revised Huili's chapters.⁴⁷ It is also not entirely clear what the relation is between this biography and that of Daoxuan's biography, the first draft of which is said to have been written quite some time before Huili's first version. While some questions remain open, it is nevertheless clear that this biography had the strongest impact on the shaping of the different identities of Xuanzang, not

⁴⁵ This could be a scribal mistake for 65 – 五十六 instead of 六十五 – which would suit 600 as the year of birth and 664 as the year of death, keeping in mind that according to Chinese tradition a person is already one year old when he or she is born.

⁴⁶ 六年卒，時年五十六，歸葬于白鹿原，士女送葬者數萬人。

⁴⁷ This can be concluded from the style and content of the two halves, e.g. no dates are given in the first five chapters while in the second half, following good Chinese historiographical tradition, dates are given for all episodes which have mainly to do with Xuanzang's dealing – his correspondence in writing – with the emperor and the court.

only in historical East Asia but also in the contemporary world, a point to which I will return in the chapter about functional identities or individualities.

5 Commonalities and differences

The fact that there exist three biographies of Xuanzang is remarkable, but it does not answer the question of why Xuanzang was and is special – was he indeed an extraordinary individual, or was he individualised by his biographers? – to the extent that he not only attracted the attention of his fellow-believers and fellow-countrymen but also led all kinds of after-lives and re-incarnations. To answer this question it will be necessary to look at the ways in which the early biographies, which served as the basis of all later representations of the monk, depict Xuanzang. Is there anything different from the way that other eminent monks were portrayed when they were singled out and memorialised in a biography? To answer this question I would like to look at the way in which an ‘eminent’ monk is defined in the Chinese hagiographical discourse. Huijiao, the compiler of the first Buddhist biographical collection, defines an eminent monk (*gaoseng* 高僧) as follows: ‘If men of real achievement conceal their brilliance, then they are eminent but not famous; when men of slight virtue happen to be in accord with their times, then they are famous but not eminent’.⁴⁸

A famous monk (*mingseng* 名僧) is an ordained Buddhist who represents the moral and religious (from a Buddhist perspective) tenets and standards of his time – he is exemplary and can and should be a model to his fellow-monastics. But such a monk is not outstanding (or eminent). In contrast to a merely famous monk, an eminent monk is exceptional – he is brilliant (*guang* 光) – but does not propagate himself publicly (*qian* 潛), a job which is then done by the biographer anyway. Biographical individuality is, as it were, gained by standing out from the crowd in virtue of extraordinary skills, talents and actions.

In the case of Xuanzang’s biographies, the extraordinary and exceptional goes beyond the ‘normal’ hagiographical standard. Xuanzang is represented in the biographies as the most eminent (or at least one of the most eminent) monks of his time.

48 T.2059.319a.24f. 若實行潛光，則高而不名。寡德適時，則名而不高。(all translations from Chinese are my own); for a discussion of this passage see Kieschnick 1997, 4. This is a clearly derogative distinction of Huijiao’s own work from that of his predecessor Baochang’s *Mingseng-zhuan* (‘Biographies of Famous Monks’). In practice there is a significant overlap between the biographies in the compilations of Baochang and Huijiao.

In Daoxuan's *Xu-gaoseng-zhuan*, although in this compilation Xuanzang is in a way in a de-individualizing competition with other hagio-biographies of other monks in the collection displaying similar features as his own (extraordinary degree of learning, adviser of high officials and the emperor, etc.); this is expressed by the sheer length of the Xuanzang's biography: it comprises almost the complete fourth chapter (or fascicle: *juan* 卷) of the compilation. Daoxuan categorises him under the heading of 'translator' (*yijing*), thus giving him the same prominent position Huijiao had already assigned to this expertise or skill.

In the 'Biography', Xuanzang is described in a number of places as carrying out actions or behaving in a way that fundamentally sets him apart from other monks. However, the text also emphasises that he did not see himself as an exceptional person but as someone following in the tradition of earlier eminent monks who had visited the sacred lands of the Buddha in India: '[Xuanzang] further said: "Formerly Faxian and Zhiyan and learned men of their time all were able to search for the *dharmā* and bring benefit to the living beings. How can it be allowed that [nobody] follows [their] eminent traces and [their] distinct tradition is cut off? A man of status should be able to follow them!"'⁴⁹

Xuanzang's 'Biography' demonstrates a freedom of choice, to use one often stressed aspect of individualisation, on his behalf which is lacking in others. It is in this characteristic, I suggest, that we can locate a grade of narrative individualisation which differs from the hagiographical patterns and norms of behaviour in other comparable biographies of the time. This can be seen in the example of the narrative concerning Xuanzang's departure from China, which reflects the monk's willingness to act 'against all odds'. According to the 'Biography', Xuanzang is forbidden by imperial order from leaving China:

Thereupon [Xuanzang] came together with [his] companions, [and they] submitted a petition to the court. [But] it was ordered that [the journey] would not be allowed. Everyone [from the group] gave up the plan, and only the *dharmā* master did not yield. [He] then sincerely prepared [his] lonely journey, keeping in mind the dangers of the road to the West. He therefore tested his mind and [in his imagination] inflicted on himself all kinds of pains human beings [could experience in order to be able] to endure [them] and not falter.⁵⁰

The right time for the departure, in the eighth month (October) of the year 629, was revealed to Xuanzang by a prophetic dream, which indicated that he would

49 T.2053.222c.6-8 又言：“昔法顯、智嚴亦一時之士，皆能求法導利群生，豈使高跡無追，清風絕後？大丈夫會當繼之。”

50 222c.8-11. 於是結侶陳表。有壘不許。諸人咸退，唯法師不屈。既方事孤遊，又承西路艱嶮，乃自試其心，以人間眾苦種種調伏，堪任不退。

overcome all obstacles before him.⁵¹ And, indeed, there were several unsuccessful attempts by officials to hinder the monk as he tried to leave the country.⁵² In narrative terms, the motif of the dramatic illegal departure⁵³ is taken up again in the fifth chapter of the ‘Biography’, when Xuanzang is residing at the border of the Chinese empire in Khotan after his return from India and before returning to the capital. He writes a long apologetic letter or petition (*biao* 表) to the emperor, justifying his departure from China sixteen years earlier and indirectly asking to be pardoned for his former disobedience and allowed to return.⁵⁴ Xuanzang’s request is, of course, granted happily by the emperor, who even sends an escort to bring the monk and his extensive luggage of Buddhist texts and artefacts to Chang’an.

This disobeying of an imperial decree or order is, as far as I know, unique and unheard of anywhere else not only in the Buddhist biographical literature but also in other Chinese texts. It would normally have resulted in the death penalty for the offender, a fact of which the biographer was certainly aware. The illegal departure, which frames the whole of the journey to India, thus clearly serves the purpose of demonstrating and flagging up the extraordinary and superior personality of Xuanzang.

51 In his dream, Xuanzang wants to cross the sea and to climb the cosmological Mount Sumeru, and is enabled to do so by stone lotus flowers growing underneath his feet and a wind lifting him to the peak (222c.15–23). This dream is preceded by a dream his mother had when Xuanzang was born: she saw her son clad in white and going westward, and when she asked him what he was up to do he answered that he was searching for the *dharma* (222c.13–15).

52 223a.6–10. 時國政尚新，疆場未遠，禁約百姓不許出蕃。時李大亮為涼州都督，既奉嚴勅，防禁特切。有人報亮云：“有僧從長安來，欲向西國，不知何意。”亮懼，追法師問來由。法師報云：“欲西求法。”亮聞之，逼還京。（At that time the imperial rule [of the Tang] was still new and the borders not very far yet, and there was a prohibition for common people not allowing them to go to the western barbarians. At that time the governor of Liangzhou, Li Daliang, imposed the prohibition very consequently since he had received strict imperial orders. Someone informed [Li Da]liang: “There is a monk who has come from Chang’an and wants to go to the western kingdoms, and it is not known for what purpose”. [Li Da]liang became afraid and sent for the *dharma* master to ask [him] why he came. The *dharma* master informed [him]: “[I] want to go to the West to search for the *dharma*”. [When Li Da]liang heard this, [he] sent [him] back to the capital.’)

53 Historically the story is rather unlikely for several reasons, one of them being that there is no legal regulation found in the extensive Tang administrative documents which interdicts those leaving the empire, and another one being the internal contradiction of the text, speaking of an individual petition (*biao* 表) but of a general imperial prohibition (*jinyue* 禁約, *yanle* 嚴勅).

54 251c.12–252a.3.; see especially 251c.18f. 遂以貞觀三年四月，冒越憲章，私往天竺。（Then in the fourth month of the third year of [the era] Zhenguan (629) [I] took the risk to transgress the regulations and privately went to India.’)

6 Functional identities or individualities

Xuanzang has more than one identity in the three original biographies: he is the pious and striving young monk; the outstanding scholar and intellectual; the adventurous and brave traveller; the advisor and teacher of foreign rulers; and, finally, mapping the preceding function to the second half in his life, the trusted *kalyāṇamitra*, ‘spiritual friend’, of emperor Taizong and advisor of his son and successor Gaozong. These different identities, or rather functions, of the same individual in one biography is structurally more evident in the biographies of Huili and Yancong than in the two others. The ten chapters are equally divided into two halves. The first five are principally concerned with the journey to and the sojourn in India, and depict the monk as a religious-intellectual hero. The second half is very much devoid of action and focuses instead on Xuanzang’s interchange with the emperor and the court, mostly in lengthy letter exchanges between the protagonist and the highest elite of the state. It thereby portrays Xuanzang as a clever monk-politician who is capable of securing imperial support for the Buddhist *saṅgha*, represented by himself and his entourage of scholar and translator monks. So, already in the earliest biographical layer, we grasp at least two ‘Xuanzangs’ with each representing a specific identity or function.

Here I can only briefly introduce some other, later examples of what I consider to be functional identities (or individualities?) of Xuanzang that were constructed in different sources under different conditions and with different intentionalities or for different purposes. I favour the term function (and its derivative vocabulary: functional, functionality, etc.) over others because I think that it best conveys the link between the producer/creator and the consumer/recipient aspects of the biography. My understanding of function here is derived from a practical context (let us say: a screwdriver) but certainly can also be applied to ideas and concepts: something (e.g. a tool or a text/biography) is produced/created by someone with the intention of serving a specific purpose,⁵⁵ of fulfilling a specific task, and it is only the higher degree of functionality (plausibility) in practice⁵⁶ (being used or accepted by the user/audience) that proves and guarantees not only the practical applicability (it works!) but also the continuity of use or the appeal to potential users.⁵⁷ Applied to the example of Xuanzang, such a concept of function allows

55 To us the practical example of the screwdriver: screwing screws into an object.

56 The screwdriver being more effective than, e.g., a coin to fulfil the task.

57 Continuous use of the screwdriver and no need to develop another tool.

for an explanation of processes of re-interpretation (appropriation) which do not, however, lead to a fully-fledged and stable institutionalisation.⁵⁸

Over the centuries and across a variety of contexts, Xuanzang has been (re-) presented in different functions: as a founder of a Buddhist school, as a traveller, teacher, advisor, philosopher, spiritual adventurer, eye-witness, archaeological guide, etc.⁵⁹ This (re)presentation also found its expression in different media, such as text, relics and in pictorial, theatrical, and cinematic form. Xuanzang was, after a peak of narrative individualisation in the biographical tradition during his lifetime and the decades immediately following his death, functionalised in different ways.

Institutionalisation: while the group of translators and exegetes of Yogācāra philosophy that formed around Xuanzang was very short-lived in China, Xuanzang (Jap. Genjō) became institutionalised, in the common sense of the term, in early medieval Japan in one of the five so-called Nara schools, the Hossō-shū 法相宗, ‘School of the characteristics of the *dharmas*’.⁶⁰ This school had its own monastic centres, such as the Kōfukuji 興福寺 and Yakushiji 薬師寺 in Nara and considered Xuanzang to be its main Chinese patriarch.

Aestheticisation: after his death, Xuanzang very quickly became the object of pictorial representation. A clear iconography developed (Mair 1984; Wong 2002) which even appears in the latest cinematic presentation of the spiritual adventurer. The very fact that Xuanzang had become institutionalised as a patriarch in Japan led to the artistic representation of his life in the popular medieval genre of the *emaki-mono* 絵巻物 (‘pictorial scrolls’ of sequences of episodes) on the basis of the ‘Biography’, the Genjō-sanzō-e 玄奘三藏繪 (‘Pictures of the Tripiṭaka[-master] Genjō’) (Minamoto 1962; Wong 2002, 53ff).

Literarisation: the popularity and omnipresence of Xuanzang as the paradigmatic eminent monk has transformed him into a literary figure known by every Chinese person, even if he or she is not aware of the underlying historical persona. The version of Xuanzang who appears as the ‘Tripiṭaka *dharma*-master’ (*sanzang-fashi*) of the Ming novel *Xiyou-ji* 西遊記 (‘Journey to the West’) by Wu Cheng’en 吳承恩 (16th cent.)⁶¹ is, in a sense, anonymised. The monk’s journey is

⁵⁸ I am using this in a rather common-sense understanding of ‘institution’ as a form of the concretisation or materialisation of an idea or – again – function. I thereby differ slightly from the more open concept of institutionalisation used by the KFG.

⁵⁹ See Deeg 2012, esp. 91–100.

⁶⁰ For an overview, see Matsunaga, Matsunaga 1974; Kleine 2011, 67–85; on Xuanzang/Genjō as a patriarch see Wong 2002, 53–59.

⁶¹ Complete translations into English are provided by Yu 1977 and Jenner 1984. On the literary interpretation and contextualisation, see several articles by Yu in Yu 2009.

completely de-historicised and mythologised in this popular work. Other mighty but comical heroes, such as the monkey Sun Wukong 孫悟空 or the pig Zhu Bajie 豬八戒, are introduced and these reduce Xuanzang to the role of an almost decorative figure. The historical process through which this functionalisation of Xuanzang as (or his transformation into) the protagonist of a secular novel happened is fascinating (Dudbridge 1970) and helps to reveal the different levels of functionalisation that can occur in biographical material.

‘Scientification’⁶²: in the first half of the 19th century, Xuanzang was ‘discovered’ by western scholarship. The focus here was on Xuanzang as an eye witness, a traveller, ethnographer, and geographer, a proto-scholar, as it were, who could help to reconstruct Indian history or the history of Indian Buddhism or help identify archaeological sites in colonial India (Leoshko 2003). In a way, this led to the Indianisation of Xuanzang and the texts affiliated with him.

Politicisation: in recent times it has been possible to observe a politicisation of Xuanzang in a range of contexts. He is invoked by the Indian and Chinese government and cultural and intellectual circles as an early witness of Sino-Indian exchange and friendship. This connection reached its first peak with the donation of Xuanzang relics by the Dalai Lama on behalf of the Chinese government to India, represented by Jawarhal Nehru, on the occasion of the celebrations of the 2500th birthday of the Buddha in 1956, and has culminated more recently in the Xi Jinping-Modi move to establish a new phase of Sino-Indian friendship.⁶³ Xuanzang became the main figure for symbolising the Sino-Indian friendship, the ups and downs of which are mapped by the changing fates of the Xuanzang Memorial Hall near the archaeological site of the old Nālandā monastery, started already in 1957 but only completed in 2007.⁶⁴ In the context of the new economic and cultural master-project of the Chinese government, the ‘One Belt, One Road’ (*yidai yilu* 一帶一路) initiative, with its strong rhetoric of reviving the Silk Road, Xuanzang is frequently flagged up as a historical paradigmatic antecedent of China’s outreach to the wider world.

⁶² I use ‘scientification’ in the absence of a better term.

⁶³ See e.g. <https://cpianalysis.org/2014/11/21/searching-for-inner-peace-in-sino-indian-relations-xi-and-modis-buddhist-diplomacy/> (accessed 29-05-2017). One of the continuous promoters of Xuanzang as the beacon of Sino-Indian friendship and cultural ties was Tan Yun-Shan (Tan Yunshan) 譚雲山 (1898–1983), a Chinese who had lived and taught at Santiniketan and is often dubbed as a modern Xuanzang: see Tan 1999.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/exhibit/-gLy1Bey76EHJA> (accessed 14-05-2017).

7 Conclusion

Religious biographies construct lives between individuality and religious functionality or purpose. How much individuality is given to a protagonist is dependent on the intentional parameters within which the biography is constructed. The construction of religious individuality is, thus, entrenched and restricted in given patterns of religious ideals and concepts, to such an extent that the protagonist is paradoxically de-individualised in the process of biography-making.

In the case of Xuanzang, this is evident in the earliest biographical depiction of the monk as, on the one hand, a religious ‘adventurer-hero’ and, on the other, a scholar-monk and advisor of the Chinese emperor in two different phases of his life. His biographers Huili and Yancong portray him as an exceptional and extraordinary individual whose unique life is beyond comparison to others. Individuality is reached by going beyond the usual hagiographic ideals and patterns, and this is achieved by combining identities or functions which are rarely found individually in other monastic biographies and even less encountered together in one individual.⁶⁵

It would be interesting to explore whether the concept of multiple layers of identity or constructed individuality is also traceable in other cultural contexts of religious autobiography and biography (e.g. Mani, Shōtoku Taishō 聖德太子, Augustine, Martin Luther, etc.), and how such biographies contributed to and influenced the shaping of ideas of religious individuality. But this is beyond the scope of the present paper and must remain a project for future work.

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[Texts from the Chinese Buddhist canon are quoted according to the electronic version of the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA), Fagu-shan 法鼓山, Taiwan, of the Taishō print edition (Taishō-shinshū-daizōkyō 大正新脩大藏經, ed. Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭, Takakusu Junjirō 高楠 順次郎, Tokyo 1924–1934); this also includes one quote from the Zoku-(or Manji-)daizōkyō (Man-shin-zokuzō 卍新續藏, X). The quotations are given by volume number, page, column (a, b, c) and lines, e.g. T. (or X)]

⁶⁵ Without theorising it explicitly, a similar approach has been taken by Chen Jinhua (2007) in his monumental ‘intellectual biography’ of the monk Fazang 法藏 (643–712).

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Sabine Sander

Jewish emancipation, religious individualisation, and metropolitan integration: a case study on Moses Mendelssohn and Moritz Lazarus

Beginning as a representation of the cosmos, a means of bringing heaven down to earth, the city became a symbol of the possible. (Mumford 1961, 31)

Space, places and the topic of *Bodenlosigkeit* (homelessness, also bottomlessness) were always privileged topics in the reflections of Jewish scholars and artists – unsurprisingly, given the precarious ‘diasporic existence’ of the Jews, bonded by shared history and a shared destiny. The cities in Western Europe which had grown, prospered and served as vessels for economic, social and cultural crystallisation since the middle of the eighteenth century held out a particular promise for immigrant Jews. They offered them hope that they would be able to escape the physically cramped conditions and the intellectual narrowness of their *shtetls* and emancipate themselves step by step from the strictures of religion and tradition, taking on a double identity as Jews and as Germans in the process. The path taken ‘out of the Ghetto’ (Katz 1973) by European Jews between 1750 and 1850 is closely interlinked with the emergence and development of the modern metropolis and with the processes of religious individualisation. The metropolis as a real and as a symbolic place creates an urban community made up of people from different social classes, professions, and geographical regions.

In the light of the fact that metropolises were grasped as symbolic proxies of Utopia from an early stage onwards, it is startling that so little attention has been paid to the relationship between religious individualisation, Jewish emancipation, and metropolitan integration since the Haskalah. To remedy this imbalance, this paper will give evidence of the integrative tendencies of the Haskalah and their interrelationship with the emergence and development of metropolitan areas.

This development will be investigated by taking up a case study on the parallel biographies as well as on the religious and linguistic writings of two German-Jewish scholars, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903). The paper shows how a variety of different processes of religious individualisation are entwined with other social and political developments. The focus is in particular on forms of sociality, sociability, community and collectivity, on the questioning of traditional forms of belonging within the Reform Judaism,

and on the question of how these factors provided social spaces for enabling the development of the personal options or paths for Jews.

The paper takes up this material for both, as a case study on the intellectual biography of these Jewish scholars, and as an approach to explore through the lens of individual cases a more general, universalistic pattern of an existing entanglement between Jewish scholarly writings, on the one hand, and processes of religious individualisation, metropolitan growth, and social as well as political emancipation, on the other. The paper will show how their writings, as well as their life stories, initiated, catalysed, and later even institutionalised these processes of individualisation, but are yet also the subsequent expression of these developments within the Jewish religion.

1 The role of language in Judaism

In his essay 'Meta-Rabbis,' George Steiner (b. 1929) describes Jewish scholars as commentators who stand outside the Jewish Law but continue to advance the interpretative legacy of the Jewish tradition, which he relates to Jewish thinking on language and creativity (Steiner 1976, 64–76). He credits the Jews with a certain obsession with the written word and 'a kind of Talmudic trust in the supreme dignity of text and exegesis' (Steiner 1976, 64). In this view, the traditional practice of learned study and hermeneutic interpretation ultimately led Jewish poets, philosophers, artists, and academics to revolutionise language, enrich linguistics, initiate movements founded on revolutionary theories and establish new disciplines such as sociology, which constituted itself as a distinct discipline around the turn of the last century. This subtle observation raises the question as to the extent to which Judaism or Jewish experiences were sources – perhaps hidden ones – for this theoretical work. It seems pertinent to subject the relationship between theory development and the self-image of the Jewish-German authors of these theories to further study and to examine how questions that were originally Jewish were transformed into more general, systematic theoretical questions.

The investigation of the question of how the Jewish heritage has shaped our present-day culture has largely focussed on exploring the theological context of Jewish thinking on language. The process of secularisation undergone by Hebrew from the eighteenth century onwards has been recognised and investigated, and it has been seen how the Maskilim acquired a historical perspective on the holy language of the Torah (Schatz 2009). The social and theoretical consequences of such changes in language use and in reflection on language are readily apparent: reflection on language precipitates social, historical, political, anthropological,

aesthetic and cultural assumptions (Trabant 2006). Entering the space of a foreign culture is always bound up with linguistic or cultural barriers, and this also applied to Jewish life in the diaspora and to the migration of Eastern Jews to Western cities. The interest in the German language shown by Jews since the Haskalah has often accompanied the appropriation of new cultural or social forms. Against this background, it becomes easier to understand what Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) was driving at when he celebrated the significance of Mendelssohn's translation of the Pentateuch and the Psalms for the Jews in the following words: 'Language was to become the medicine with the power to free them from the Ghetto, and he selected the German language as the medicine for Judaism' (my own translation. The German original in Cohen 1915, 24 reads as: *'Die Sprache sollte das Heilmittel werden zu ihrer Befreiung aus dem Ghetto. Und die deutsche Sprache hat er als Heilmittel des Judentums erwählt'*).

Lazarus also affirmed the value of Mendelssohn's work, highlighting in particular the role of language in Jewish emancipation through education and interpreting Mendelssohn's translation as an integrative contribution to understanding between peoples:

'Again, showing profound insight, he identified and reached out for the right book, perhaps the only book that could form a bridge which would lead broad swathes of people into German intellectual territory. No other, no foreign, but their own spiritual content, the books of the Law of Moses and the Psalms were what he offered people, expressed in pure German: in their own soul they were to receive the link that connects Jews and Germans [...] For the power of language over the soul was something he recognized from an early stage' (Lazarus 1887, 181–223, here 202). (My own translation. In the German original it reads as: *'Wiederum mit wunderbar tiefem Blick und Griff wählt er das rechte, vielleicht das einzige Buch, das für breitere Schichten die Brücke bilden konnte, um sie darauf in deutsches Geistesland zu führen. Keinen anderen, keinen fremden, sondern seinen eigenen geistigen Inhalt, die Bücher des mosaischen Gesetzes und der Psalmen bietet er dem Volke in reiner deutscher Sprache; in ihrer eigenen Seele sollen sie das Band empfangen, das den Juden und den Deutschen verbindet; [...] Denn welche Macht die Sprache für die Seele hat, hat er früh erkannt und oft dargestellt'*).

There are various reasons for the keen interest of Jewish-German scholars in language, and for the diverse variety of language concepts that originated within this group. The language of the sacred scriptures in religious contexts and the language of Yiddish in day-to-day communication were and are what links Jews around the world. Heinrich Heine put his finger on the symbolic significance of scripture for the Jewish diaspora when he called the Torah a 'portable fatherland.' The formative experiences of living in the diaspora, in outer and inner exile, often walking a tightrope between inclusion and exclusion over real and metaphysical bottomless chasms, was bound to raise questions about the cultural and

social significance of language, about multilingualism and about human sociality through language, especially in combination with the experience of living in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Many Jewish-German scholars, writers, and artists came up with theories about language or reflected on the conditions, possibilities, and limits of language and language loss in their writings on religious, philosophical, political, anthropological and aesthetic themes. These scholars had often been raised multilingual. They cultivated the traditional Jewish relationship to textual scholarship and often possessed an acute sensitivity to the expressive powers of language – something which was also reflected in a tendency to take up genres such as the philosophical essay, in a predilection to speak in riddles and metaphors, in the ready wit of much Jewish humour, and in a high output of literature and poetry. In this latter context, one only needs to think of the many Jewish-German poets from Czernowitz, Prague and Vienna – among them such prominent names as Theodor Lupul (1838–1858), Rudolf Kommer (1887–1943), Rose Ausländer (1901–1988), Itzig Manger (1901–1969), Paul Celan (1920–1970) and Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924–1942).

Language as identity and the loss of this identity as the loss of a homeland was a topic tackled by Jewish scholars on numerous occasions. Not only were many Jews socialised in multilingual environments; scripture and its interpretation played a prominent role in the education of Jewish children, who received instruction in Talmud studies from their fathers or from local rabbis well into the nineteenth century. It is also worth recalling the particular position occupied by Germany in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe: Other nation states had long since emerged, but Germany was still fragmented into separate territories and existed only as what intellectuals such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) defined as a *Kulturnation*. As such, Germany appeared to represent a positive utopia in which people of different nations and confessions could co-exist peacefully. Humboldt understood the *Kulturnation* as a community whose members had developed a feeling of belonging through their shared participation in art, literature, language, and customs. By this logic, belonging to the nation did not result from one's biological, national or religious origins but was the product of becoming conscious of a sense of cultural communion.

All of those contributing to the entirety of objective culture should, in this view, belong to the nation. The conceptualisation of Germany as a *Kulturnation* probably also contributed to the fact that many Jews living in Germany (and, after the foundation of the German Reich in 1871, holding the same legal status as other Germans) hoped that they would be accepted without reservation as belonging to the community of all Germans. Many of them held the German language and culture in high affection and cultivated both assiduously. In the nineteenth

century, this conception of language and culture going back to Humboldt was propagated almost exclusively by Jewish-German scholars; the enthusiasm Jewish Germans showed for Humboldt may not have been entirely unrelated to the fact that the latter had attempted to legislate for the legal emancipation of the Jews (von Humboldt 1903–1936, 97–115; see also Hubmann 2001, 125–52, here 141ff.). He did so as early as in 1809, in his role as Prussian Minister of Culture – around seventy years before the so-called ‘Jewish Question’ was furiously debated in the Berlin Anti-Semitism Dispute of 1879 (Boehlich 1965; for a more recent account of the Berlin Anti-Semitism Dispute in English cf. Stoetzler 2008).

Apart from this interest in language originating in biographies, history, and cultural politics, reasons for the heightened sensitivity of Jewish-German scholars towards language can also be found in intellectual history and in the sociology of knowledge: language stands between nature and culture. The fact that the ability to produce language is part of human nature, but that language as it is spoken is culturally determined and continually evolving, may go some way towards explaining why language theories formed such contested territory in the periodic skirmishes which broke out between the natural sciences and the humanities from the late eighteenth century onwards and escalated further in the nineteenth century. Heymann Steinthal (1824–1899), for example, expressed scepticism in his annotated edition of the linguistic works of Wilhelm von Humboldt about nativist language theories emanating from circles surrounding the noted Indogermanist August Schleicher (1821–1861) (Schleicher 1863; cf. also Sander 2017, 105–145, Hartung 2003 and Lang 1989). Nor should the social and political dimensions of language be forgotten: language is a medium of communication and interaction and therefore a medium of sociality; it touches on questions of human culture and the constitution of social orders. From that point of view, it makes sense to examine the opportunities presented by human language and the workings of language when processes involving the formation of communities, inclusion or exclusion are to be described. But Jewish scholars were not only particularly drawn to language-related questions; they were also more attuned than most other scholars to questions involving places or placelessness or bottomlessness.

2 Location and dislocation in Jewish thought

People who live in one place lastingly and unquestionably have no particular reason to concern themselves intensively with this place – it is characteristic for *Heimat* (homeland or native place) that it grants identity in a manner which demands no explanations and need not be questioned. But those with no fixed

place of residence have every reason to seek to understand and come to terms with their current location. Given the Jews' experiences of loss, exile, and life in the diaspora, it is unsurprising that the themes of place, placelessness and bottomlessness play a prominent role in Jewish thinking: a vast body of literary, cultural and religious evidence bears testament to experiences of rootlessness, mobility, migration, homelessness, and otherness (Schlör 1995). The experience of the fragility of an existence linked to one place is not singularly a Jewish one, of course, but rather an eminently modern one, linked closely to the emergence of large cities. However, this experience was often particularly dramatic in Jewish biographies, not least because many Jews underwent this experience multiple times. Even when they did not, it still formed an integral element in Jewish cultural memory and Jewish identity, as it had since the exile of the Jews to Babylon. It was also often the case that even successful Jewish immigrants found their legal and social status in their new elective homes to be precarious.

The exceptional level of symbolic significance accorded to places is reflected in Jewish vocabulary. The Yiddish concept *doikeyt* can be translated as 'being here' 'presence' or 'belonging' and 'covers an entire network of experiences, attitudes, habits, and traditions which are connected to a particular place and to the relations among the Jews living in that place' (Schlör 1995, 359). The Hebrew word *makom* has a similarly diverse range of meanings: it can refer to topographical and to imaginary places, as well as to a spiritual home. Attempts to understand Jewish emancipation and Jewish integration following the Haskalah can only profit from taking a closer look at the significance Jewish scholars ascribed to the metropolis. The path 'out of the ghetto' was also the route from the village communities of the *shtetl* to big cities. Most Jewish scholars took this historical and symbolic path, as Mendelssohn and Lazarus did, or reflected on it and were thus able to perpetuate an aspect of Jewish memory culture which was transformed into more general questions and still occupies theorists in cultural studies and sociology today.

3 Representatives of emancipation through education

Although Lazarus was born around a hundred years after Mendelssohn, the parallels in their biographies are remarkable: both grew up in devout Jewish families and were instructed in the Talmud as children; both were intellectually precocious, exceptionally interested in education and thirsty for knowledge, which one acquired largely auto-didactically and the other at Berlin University. Both were drawn from a rural or small-town setting to the metropolis Berlin, both rapidly established

themselves in learned intellectual circles, both worked towards the renewal of Jewish traditions, and both profited from Berlin's urban environment, although their legal and social status there was precarious at times. Finally, both were publicly challenged over their Jewish faith: Mendelssohn in 1770 in a controversy with Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) and Lazarus around a hundred years later (1879) in the Berlin Anti-Semitism Dispute, by his antipode Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1896).

Moses Mendelssohn, born in Dessau in 1729, was instructed in the Talmud from his childhood onwards, first by his father, and later in the local Talmudic school, as well as by the chief rabbi in the Duchy of Anhalt, David Hirschel Fränkel (1707–1767). He reached the city of Berlin when he was thirteen years old, as a protected Jew and in the charge of his beloved teacher Fränkel (Knobloch 1987). Legend has it that the young Moses, still called Moses Dessau at this point, walked for five days to reach the Prussian capital. At the time, Jews needed to gain permission to enter the city of Berlin. When Mendelssohn, standing before the city walls, was asked what he wanted to do in Berlin, his terse answer was: to learn. Whatever the legend, the young Moses took his studies seriously, acquiring second-hand copies of the books of John Locke (1632–1704) and Shaftesbury (1671–1703) and teaching himself English, French and Latin. He earned his living as a private tutor in the house of silk merchant Isaak Bernhard. The importance of such tutoring for the Haskalah should not be underestimated; many Maskilim worked as private tutors in the households of wealthy Jewish families and consequently had a direct influence on the socialisation and education of their pupils. In this way, they were able to gradually implant reformist ideas in the minds of coming generations, so that no major upheaval took place, but rather an inner fermentation and reinterpretation of religious ideas and inherited traditions.

The role of the metropolis as an intellectual and cultural centre also enabled Mendelssohn to become active as a literary critic, contributing both to the periodical 'Briefe, die neueste deutsche Literatur betreffend', which was edited by Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811) and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), and to the 'Teutsche Merkur' produced by Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813). Mendelssohn finally became well-known beyond the borders of the city in the 'Lavater controversy.' The Swiss philosopher and pastor Johann Caspar Lavater, mainly known today for founding the study of physiognomy, had sent Mendelssohn a copy of his translation of Charles Bonnet's (1720–1793) 'Inquiry into the Evidence for Christianity.' He publicly challenged Mendelssohn to disprove the theses of the noted theologian or to convert to Christianity (Lavater 1770).

It cannot have been easy for the modest and mild-mannered Mendelssohn to take up this challenge, but he reacted with equanimity and replied that Bonnet's proofs could be used to defend any religion, but that he was, and would remain Jewish, out of a sense of deep conviction (Knobloch 1987, 167). In his 1770 letter to

Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (1735–1806), Mendelssohn finally wrote, in the spirit of the Enlightenment postulate of tolerance: ‘As all people are destined by their creator for eternal bliss, a religion which excludes those who do not adhere to it from this cannot be a true one’ (Mendelssohn 1968, 556: ‘Da die Menschen alle von ihrem Schöpfer zur ewigen Glückseligkeit bestimmt sind, so kann eine ausschließende Religion nicht die wahre sein.’ For an English account of the debate between Mendelssohn and Lavater, see Meyer 1967, 29–56). He addressed Bonnet with the lines: ‘What a happy world we would live in if all men accepted and practiced the truths that the best Christians and the best Jews have in common’ (Mendelssohn 1968, 532. English translation from Meyer 1967, 33: ‘In welcher glückseligen Welt würden wir leben, wenn alle Menschen die Wahrheiten annähmen und ausübten, die die besten Christen und die besten Juden gemeinsam haben’).

The figure of Nathan in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s drama *Nathan the Wise*, which was published in 1779, had its premiere four years later in Berlin, and it contained an implicit plea for inter-religious dialogue, was based on Mendelssohn. The debate rumbled on for several years and was followed widely, with Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and other noted theologians and philosophers criticizing Lavater’s provocation. Even Charles Bonnet himself, the author whose work had given rise to the controversy in the first place, excused himself publicly for Lavater’s affront. Lavater persisted in his attempts to fish for Jewish souls despite his lack of success in the case of Mendelssohn, and eventually elicited a mocking satire from Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799), which the latter published in 1773, using the pseudonym Conrad Photirin, with the amusing title ‘Timorus: or, Defence of Two Israelites Who Were Moved to Convert to the True Faith on the Strength of Lavater’s Arguments and Göttingen Sausages’ (Knobloch 1987, 171). In the original German Lessing’s piece was entitled *Timorus, das ist die Verteidigung zweier Israeliten, die durch die Kräftigkeit der Lavater’schen Beweisgründe und der Göttingischen Mettwürste bewogen, den wahren Glauben angenommen haben*; for a detailed account of the controversy in English, see Real 2005, 110 f.).

After Lavater had been forced to put up with his missionary efforts being compared to the seemingly irresistible taste of smoked pork, the search of this man of God for Jews he could convert faded from public view. As in so many other cases, humour offered a tried and tested defence against provocations and hostilities – it is no coincidence that jokes have a long, rich and distinct tradition of their own in Judaism as well as in other cultures.

About a century after Mendelssohn had reached Berlin from the small world of Dessau, Lazarus followed his intellectual preceptor to Berlin from Filene (now Wieleń), a small, polyglot German-Polish town in the Prussian Province of Posen. Lazarus had grown up speaking Yiddish, and in his autobiography, he

describes his efforts to learn to speak High German without an accent (Lazarus 1913). Much in the spirit of his role model Mendelssohn, he viewed the German language as the key that would open up the entire culture of the *Wilhelmine Empire* to him (cf. also Sander 2017, 145–182 and Sander 2009). Lazarus lived in the *Second German Empire*, in which Jews had been granted full legal rights but were continually confronted with anti-Semitic challenges that culminated in the *Anti-Semitism Dispute*. Like most other Jewish-German academics, he was never appointed to a full professorship in Germany. He was appointed to a professorship in Berne, Switzerland in 1860, and remained in that position for six years, before he found himself drawn back to Berlin, where he ran a literary salon together with his first wife, Sarah Lazarus née *Lebenheim* (1819–1894), and after her death with his second wife, the writer and actor Nahida Ruth Lazarus née *Sturmhöfel* (1849–1928), who had converted to Judaism.

The salon was vividly frequented by academics, politicians, writers, and artists, among them popular personalities such as Georg Simmel (1858–1918), Theodor Fontane (1819–1898), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Berthold Auerbach (1812–1882) or the painter Adolf Menzel (1815–1905). In the spirit of the Enlightenment ideals of eighteenth century salon culture, Lazarus was an enthusiastic proponent of the idea of emancipation through self-improvement and sociability. In the era of Enlightenment, and subsequently in the *German Empire*, the opportunities for upward mobility and advancement through education offered by salons were taken advantage of by Jews, but also by women: it is probably no coincidence that the best-known women of the eighteenth and nineteenth century were frequently the hosts of such salons. Some of the most famous *salonnières* included Mendelssohn's daughter Dorothea Schlegel (1764–1839), Henriette Herz (1764–1847), Arthur Schopenhauer's mother Johanna Schopenhauer (1766–1838), Rahel Varnhagen (1771–1883), Bettina von Arnim (1785–1859), Henriette Solmar (1794–1888), Fanny Lewald (1811–1889), Clara Mundt-Mühlbach (1814–1873), Hedwig Dohm (1831–1919) and Misia Sert (1872–1950), among others (Wilhelmy 1989).

4 The language theories as matrices for understanding alterity or otherness

The ability to read and write multiple languages belonged to the achievements and ideals of Jewish scholars from an early stage. The Jewish scribe and priest Ezra, author of the Old Testament book of the same name, acknowledged the necessity of translating sacred texts as far back as 400 BCE, when there were already Jews living in the diaspora, surrounded by foreign languages and cultures (Bechthold

2005). The act of translation as opening up new horizons of meaning, or as a transfer from one field of meaning to another, was a central topic pursued by Jewish intellectuals from the Haskalah onwards. During the epoch of the Jewish Enlightenment, Mendelssohn initiated this trend with his Hebrew-German translations of the *Pentateuch* and the *Psalms* – a project which he worked on from the middle of the seventeenth-seventies onwards in collaboration with other Maskilim, among them Salomo Dubno (1738–1813), Herz Homberg (1749–1841) and Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805). Mendelssohn had initially intended his work to be used for the instruction of his children in language and religion but shortly afterward he saw the opportunities the translation offered to make the ideas of the Haskalah accessible to all German-speaking Jews. He had the translation printed as a bilingual edition, with the Hebrew text next to his German translation, which was also printed in the Hebrew alphabet. The translation was manifestly intended for Mendelssohn's Jewish contemporaries. In the tradition of rabbinical interpretation of scripture, Mendelssohn accompanied the translation with a *Bi'ur* or commentary and termed the entire work *Sefer netivot ha-Shalom*, which means 'Book of the Paths of Peace.'

Different interpretations of Mendelssohn's primary motive for carrying out the project exist. The translation is frequently seen as providing a possibility for opening up in the direction of German culture and language – often, revealingly enough, by Jewish scholars themselves. Others have asserted that Mendelssohn's main motivation was to bring Holy Writ closer to German Jews who would now be able to read Hebrew and to start the rediscovery of buried Jewish traditions (Römer 1994, 49–58). Mendelssohn's own testimony allows both interpretations but stresses the practical aspects of the project. The Bible translation was to enable a resourceful paterfamilias to educate his children in the spirit of Judaism. But this finding should not distract from the fact that Mendelssohn, like Lazarus a hundred years later, was interested in improving the situation of Jews in Germany by familiarising them with the German language and culture. This can be seen as a form of acculturation. In a letter to his friend August von Henning (1748–1826), Mendelssohn described the 'better translation and explanation of the Holy Books' as a 'first step to culture, something from which my nation, sadly, is kept at such remove that one might almost despair of the possibility of an improvement' (Mendelssohn 1976, 148f. The English translation is cited from Meyer 1967, 43).

When modern Jewish schools were being set up under the Habsburg monarchy as a result of the tolerance patents issued by Joseph II (1741–1790) from 1782 onwards, Mendelssohn sent the theologian tasked with reforming the school system in Bohemia, Ferdinand Kindermann Ritter von Schulstein (1740–1801), finished sections of his as-yet incomplete translation. He added by way of explanation that the translation had occupied him for a long time

as a way of delivering a German translation into the hands of the youth of his own nation that would conform to their religious principles (Mendelssohn 1977, 97f.). In the light of Mendelssohn's insistence on the inviolate nature of the text of the Torah and his preference for literal rather than interpretative commentary, it is surprising to see how severely his text was criticised soon after its publication. Ezekiel Landau (1713–1793), chief rabbi in Prague and Bohemia from 1754 onwards, criticised Mendelssohn's project in the strongest terms, maintaining that it reduced the Torah to the role of a maidservant to the German tongue (Brenner, Lowenstein, Meyer 1996, 291). Critical voices such as these speak volumes about the level of upheaval in traditional Judaism sparked by Mendelssohn and other Maskilim. But scolding was not enough to prevent the success of the book: even the first edition of 750 copies found purchasers in such far-flung locations as Holland, Poland and Russia, and in the century between 1783 and 1888 seventeen new editions of the work appeared. With this, the innovations of the Maskilim had entered the mainstream and the liberal Reform Judaism, which Lazarus, among others, would come to represent, had been established.

As was also the case for many other Jewish-German scholars in the Wilhelmine Empire, Lazarus found himself standing between the enlightened world of Western culture on the one hand and the Jewish traditions he sought to reform on the other. Lazarus presided over the first and second Israelite Synods in Leipzig (1869) and Augsburg (1871). Extensive reforms of Jewish religious ceremonies, prescriptions on clothing and food, as well as legal matters, were discussed on both occasions. At the Leipzig synod, for example, songs and psalms in the German language and organ music were introduced into the synagogues. At the Augsburg synod, various legal reforms were passed, including the involvement of the bride and the mutual exchange of rings in marriage rites, the admittance of testimony given by women in courts, the abolition of the *chaliza* and the legitimisation of driving on the Sabbath for charitable or religious reasons.

Without exploring these reforms in further detail, it can be noted that the effect of this modernisation was to bring Jews closer to Western culture. Lazarus understood the synods above all as attempts to establish a balance between Jewish religiosity and the ability to lead a social existence bounded by the same legal norms that applied to others (Lazarus 1869; Philipson 1907, 307ff.; Malamet 1976, 836ff.; Brenner, Lowenstein, Meyer 1997, 116ff., 137ff.). In his late work *The Ethics of Judaism*, he explored the role of the stranger and love for strangers from the perspective of Jewish religiosity. He cited the Talmud and Talmud commentaries as sources for Jewish moral teachings and explained the high esteem accorded to strangers in Jewish religiosity in terms of the Jews' own experience of exile in Babylon (Lazarus 1898, 87. See also Sander 2017, 341–382).

What is particularly remarkable is the fact that Lazarus saw Jewish moral teachings as a form of social ethics – for, according to him, ‘true recognition of man’s destiny in this world can be reached only on the basis of a social philosophy’ (the English citation is taken from Lazarus 1900, 187; in the German original in Lazarus 1898, 142 it reads as: ‘[...] *in der Sittlichkeit aber spielt gerade die Gesamtheit die Hauptrolle; alle Ethik ist (wie schon angedeutet wurde und weiterhin noch genauer dargelegt werden soll) wenn nicht ganz und gar, dann doch vorzugsweise S o c i a l e t h i k. – Das Dogma des Jenseits gründet sich lediglich auf eine Philosophie des Ich; alle wahre Erkenntnis aber von der Bestimmung des Menschen, zunächst im Diesseits, wird nur auf dem Grund einer Philosophie des W i r gewonnen werden*’).

The task of the new discipline he initiated, *Völkerpsychologie* or ethno-psychology,¹ was to be the examination of the cultural and social dynamics, which arise as a result of people interacting with each other. Lazarus stressed that social ethics was not a national principle but a universal one: ‘We shall see how, from the unity of mankind, the equality of all nations was deduced, and furthermore, within the ranks of each nation, the equality of all its members. One law for all – no hereditary privileges for the one or the other estate or family’ (the English translation is taken from Lazarus 1900, 195; in the German original in Lazarus 1898, 148f. it reads as: ‘*Wir werden sehen, wie aus der Einheit die Gleichheit aller Nationen abgeleitet ist, aber auch innerhalb der Nation die Gleichheit aller Glieder; einerlei Recht und einerlei Gesetz für Alle, also daß alle erblichen Vorzüge einzelner Stände und Geschlechter verschwinden*’).

Lazarus rejected evolutionist schemes of history and with them biological or racial definitions of human dignity, stressing that the Talmud contained multiple allusions to the necessity of according respect to strangers. In a lecture he gave to the general assembly of the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Higher Institute of Jewish Studies) in 1879 he took a stand against the nation-state theories recently expounded by Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1896) at Berlin’s university, and against Treitschke’s anti-Semitic rhetoric. In his lecture, Lazarus argued that

¹ *Völkerpsychologie* is not a concept easily rendered in English. Urs Fuhrer considers ‘folk psychology’ to be merely an ‘absurd mistranslation’ and observes that ‘cultural psychology’ and ‘Ethnopsychology’ are both closer but still open to various objections. See Fuhrer 2004, 41. Ivan Kalmar notes that Lazarus and Steinthal called their new discipline a branch of psychology, shying away from terms such as ethnology and anthropology because both terms were strongly focused on issues of biology and race at the time. The irony that the two scholars, who more than anyone foresaw the direction that anthropology was to take, were forced to reject anthropology as a term is not lost on Kalmar, who points out that both scholars would surely be better known among anthropologists today if they had opted to use the word. See Kalmar 1987, 671–90, here 673. For a more detailed account on the concept of *Völkerpsychologie*, see Sander 2017, 145–82.

communities were not constituted by such objective traits as race, origin, blood relationships, religion or character (Lazarus 1880; an English translation of Lazarus's lecture is available in Stoetzler 2008, 317–59). He made no reference to external determinisms in explaining the emergence of history, opting rather to accentuate the impact of the imagination, emotions, subjective will and sense of selfhood of the actors involved as necessary and adequate factors for the development of a community: 'That which makes a nation a nation lies [...] in the subjective views of the members of the nation, all of whom regard themselves as its members. The concept of a nation rests on the subjective view of the members of the nation of themselves' (my own translation from the original German, from Lazarus 2003, 88; in the original it reads as: *'Das, was ein Volk zu eben diesem macht, liegt [...] in der subjektiven Ansicht der Glieder des Volkes, welche sich alle als ein Volk ansehen. Der Begriff Volk beruht auf den subjectiven Ansichten der Glieder des Volks selbst von sich selbst'*).

Such a description applied to the inclusion of the Jews in the German Empire – although they were not of Aryan origin, they belonged to the German nation through a common language and through education and participation in cultural and political life. Culture, as Lazarus concluded emphatically, was the product of diversity. While Lazarus opposed the biological understanding of a nation held by Heinrich von Treitschke, his views also differed from those of Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903). Mommsen was in favour of complete assimilation of the Jews but Lazarus pleaded for an alternative model of acceptance of what is foreign to ourselves. With this approach, the Jewish-German theorist had anticipated the concept of the construction of nations and identities, a model which asserts that belonging to a community is a process negotiated through active involvement in the life of that community.

Seen from this point of view, nations do not appear as pre-existing entities or realities but as specific historic and cultural projections. In this context, it is noteworthy that Lazarus' lecture manuscript 'What does national mean?' was passed on to Ernest Renan (1823–1892), who made reference to it in correspondence and seems to have incorporated much of Lazarus' thinking into his seminal essay 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?'. While no mention of Lazarus is made in Renan's essay, Lazarus was justified in assuming that his work had influenced Renan (Smith 2008, 111–3 as well as Jansen and Borggräfe 2007, 138). As such projected or 'imagined' communities are not bound by territorial borders, they can function as the connection which links people in a diaspora, in as much as members feel a sense of belonging towards the imagined community, wherever in the world they may find themselves (Anderson 1983).

In *Völkerpsychologie*, or the ethno-psychology developed by Lazarus, language has a double function. Both aspects are reflected in the concepts of 'condensing of thinking' and 'appropriation' which lie at the core of his theory

of the 'objective spirit': language is an expression of the spirit of the whole group because it stores knowledge which has crystallised during centuries of human history. It is also the medium through which such knowledge is acquired: language makes it possible for individuals to participate in shared, collective beliefs and ideas, in the objective spirit of a community. Lazarus accorded particular significance to *Volksschriften*, or folk literature, extolling the significance of Homer for the Greeks and the importance of fairy-tales or the Bible for his own era. In these texts, collective interpretations of the world, shared values, desires, hopes, and fears, in short, the sum total of human imagination is condensed. Folk literature has a relevance which transcends epochs and social class: 'Good folk literature evens out intellectual injustices, and the Bible is a spiritual sun which casts its rays into huts and palaces alike and warms and illuminates both' (my own translation from the original German in Lazarus 2003, 72; in the original it reads as: '*Gute Volksschriften ebnet die geistigen Ungleichheiten aus, und die Bibel ist eine geistige Sonne, welche in die Hütte wie in den Palast ihre Strahlen wirft und hier wie dort erleuchtet und erwärmt*'). The study of various languages and their canonical texts gives information on the imaginative capacity of society and on the ideas about the world shared by the collective. From that point of view, language – both academic research on language and the practical acquisition and use of language – is the key to culture. Through language, the close links which bind individuals to their respective communities are established.

Apart from his general interest in linguistics, Lazarus also devoted attention to the everyday conversation long before an interest in the workings and effects of everyday conversations became a fashionable topic in linguistics and communication studies circles (Lazarus 1986). Dialogue with others, even 'small talk,' preserves what we are familiar with and ensures orientation on values, norms, and experiences. Over and above these factors, language allows us to appropriate new thoughts, to share the experiences and thoughts of others, and to understand their views of the world. Lazarus argued that dialogue is the basis for building communities but also saw that interactions through the medium of language paved the way for a cultural and social change. For the act of speech – as Humboldt had already acknowledged when he categorised language as *energeia* rather than as *ergon* – changes as it is executed; it is a continual process which in turn impacts on culture and creates invisible bonds between people: 'But conversations do not simply reinforce themselves; they have a purifying and uplifting effect on public opinion. They transform many smaller and larger minds into one great, public spirit' (my own translation from the original German in Lazarus 1986, 41; in the original German it reads as: '*Aber die Gespräche befestigen nicht bloß, sie läutern und heben die öffentliche Meinung; sie machen aus den vielen kleinen und mittelmäßigen Geistern einen großen, öffentlichen Geist*').

A shared language and everyday conversations create an inter-subjective reality, an objective culture within which the individual manoeuvres. At the same time, speech is the privileged medium for the appropriation of the material objectification of cultural forms, such as architecture, art, technology or utilitarian objects, but also for appropriating its immaterial manifestations, from tact and morals to customs and habits. When children learn their native language, they acquire – in the process – the sum total of their own objective culture. Seen from this point of view, according to Lazarus, linguistic research offers insights into the imagination and attitudes of collectives. At the same time, language is the intellectual tool which assists in understanding what is foreign to us and integrating it into our own experiences.

The perceptions of language and culture of Jewish-German scholars allow us highly revealing insights into the historical and political changes that took place in the two hundred years between the Jewish Enlightenment and the eve of National Socialism and in the different environments of the Prussian state, the German Empire, and the Weimar Republic. Mendelssohn had understood his translation as the first step towards that culture which his nation had previously been so far removed from as to despair of the possibility of improvement – and thus begun a process of crossing over from German Jewishness to Jewish Germanness, setting an important precedent in the process. It is revealing that the practice of translating scripture by Jewish-German scholars reached its zenith in the Second Empire, when pressure to assimilate was running at a particularly high level. From the middle of the nineteenth century right up to the Second World War, not a single decade passed without at least one Jewish Bible translation being published in German (Bechthold 2005). For the children and grandchildren of the Maskilim and the Reformed Jews, however, the Hebrew language and Jewish religiosity often appeared to be merely empty shells. Among other sources, Franz Kafka's 'Letter to his father' – a letter which was never sent – bears witness to this. Kafka maintains that his father's Judaism was devoid of real faith, 'a mere nothing, a joke'. He rejects his father as a role model with an accusatory flourish: 'Had your Judaism been stronger, your example would have been more compelling too' and he describes how the residue of Jewish culture his parents still possessed was lost: 'Even in this there was still Judaism enough, but it was too little to be handed on to the child; it all dribbled away while you were passing it on' (Kafka 1975; English translation cited from Kafka 1966).

The environment described here – awareness of the loss of Jewish traditions and attempts to return to the roots of Jewish religiosity and culture – finally formed the historical background to what has been the last major Jewish-German Bible translation to date: right on the eve of the rise of Nazism to power, Martin Buber (1878–1965) and Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) began their *Verdeutschung*

der Schrift, a ‘Germanification’ of the Hebrew Bible (Buber, Rosenzweig 1956–1968). Their translation stood exactly on the margin between two languages and cultures, in that the Hebrew text was translated into German but the cadences of the original Hebrew were retained, so that a new and unusual language emerged. Buber and Rosenzweig aimed to create a new work which would run against the grain of readers’ expectations and in this way bear testament to the irreducibility of the experience of the ineffable. In their synthesis of Old Hebrew and German, Jewish faith in revelation and a creative reworking of the German language were to be moulded into something new, a third element that would extend the range of what could be thought and perceived, a language and culture in which German and Jewish elements would condense to form a new whole (Rosenzweig 1926). Buber and Rosenzweig created a Hebraic German to give their contemporaries, most of whom were rooted fast in the German language and had no knowledge of Hebrew, a sense of the holy language of their ancestors. With that, they strove to initiate a ‘Renaissance’ of lost Jewish traditions as an answer to the acculturation of German Jews which had gone before and only shortly prior to the unleashing of National Socialism’s horrific and vast destructive potential.

5 The metropolis as the pre-condition for emancipation and individualisation

Against the background of prototypical Jewish metropolitan biographies, such as those of Mendelssohn and Lazarus, and the resultant body of theoretical work, numerous scholars from diverse academic disciplines, many of them Jewish, have devoted considerable attention to studying the consequences of these metropolitan developments. They have focussed on the spatial and social order of the metropolis, its population structure and the cultural, social, psychological and imaginary dispositions and mentalities which developed through the co-existence of diverse social classes, nationalities, and cultures. In order to get to the heart of the distinct qualities of life in the metropolis, representatives of the emerging discipline of social theory postulated the existence of typical figures, such as the ‘marginal man’ and the ‘stranger.’

Reflections of this nature can aid us in gaining a perspective on the huge revolutionary significance of the lives of Mendelssohn and Lazarus. Robert E. Park’s social type of the ‘marginal man’ fits both Jewish-German scholars perfectly (Park 1928, 881–93). Park conceived of the ‘marginal man’ as existing in an urban setting on the fringes of more than one world, occupying a marginal, borderline position. But Park’s main point is not that the ‘marginal man’ is separated

from the homogeneous mainstream community by a border. Rather, it is that the 'marginal man' finds himself on this border between several antagonistic cultures. The 'marginal man' is a product of migration and acculturation; Park saw assimilated and emancipated European Jews as prototypical representatives of the concept. What is described in spatial metaphors as a borderline existence results in subjective feelings of ambivalence. Both models, adaptation to a new cultural system of reference and self-assertion within a group one does not quite belong to, require a homogeneous frame of reference which must be negotiated and created through forms of exclusion, distancing oneself, and attributive processes. As a result of this intermediate position, the 'marginal man' advances social change and cultural developments: finding otherness within himself and something of himself in others, he joins both to form a third entity. Mendelssohn and Lazarus straddled the margin between Jewish traditions and Western Enlightenment humanism and can thus be considered representative cases for this model.

Park's concept of the 'marginal man' also bears witness to the fact that he spent a semester studying in Berlin under Georg Simmel, who was both one of the founders of sociology in Germany and a student of Moritz Lazarus. Simmel's highly detailed observations and descriptions of the dynamics of the development of the metropolis and its cultural and social forms were ground-breaking when first published early in the twentieth century, and they are still highly relevant today (Simmel 1900; Simmel 1903, 185–206). Simmel observed that the metropolis is an environment that allows the individual a great degree of anonymity but also promotes the 'intersection of social circles' in a manner which he saw as a prerequisite for the emergence of individuality. Individuality arises, according to Simmel, when people belong to various social circles or groups at the same time and is found in the unique area of intersection between these different circles (Simmel 1908, 305–44). Above and beyond his seminal work on the metropolis, Simmel was also preoccupied with the figure of the stranger as a person 'who comes today and stays tomorrow' (Simmel 1908, 508–12, here 509). Strangers are characterised primarily by the interaction of proximity to and distance from a given community – they are not 'inhabitants of Sirius' (Simmel 1908, 509), so far away as to be imperceptible, but those who find themselves amid a homogeneous group from which they are separated not in spatial terms but through a cultural or social border. Simmel maintained that this ambivalent position between proximity to and distance from a (closed) group gave strangers the ability to regard existing structures and social orders objectively and to anticipate change particularly sensitively. Simmel himself, and before him Mendelssohn and Lazarus, were certainly all particularly well-attuned to the socio-cultural environment around them.

It should be clear from the overview given of the biographical stations and theoretical concepts of Mendelssohn and Lazarus that metropolitan Berlin had enormous significance for the Jewish emancipation movement and for Reform Judaism. The Enlightenment in Europe and its tender offshoot, the Haskalah, began in big cities because these places, with their schools, universities, publishing houses, printers, associations, literary salons, and coffee-houses, provided the locations and the points of intersection where education, the exchange of ideas and networks could be initiated and deepened. Drawing on Simmel, Louis Wirth (1897–1952) came to define urbanity as a specific way of life, a ‘complex of traits which makes up the characteristic mode of life in cities’ (Wirth 1938, 8). In Wirth’s views, the typical features of this urban way of life are segmented role relationships, memberships to different groups, the loss of family ties, and forms of contact with others which are anonymous but tolerant of social and cultural differences. A highly concentrated population creates the critical mass required for specialist demands to emerge and so makes the formation of cohesive networks and subcultural institutions and movements easier (Fischer 1995, 543–77).

Cities were always places where different lifestyles and subcultures intersected and interacted. Competition between multiple parallel strands of thinking makes social dynamism, innovation, and progress possible. The pulsating atmosphere and vibrant social life in eighteenth and nineteenth century Berlin, with its coffee houses, salons and learned circles, created the fruitful ground for Jewish-German emancipation. This occurred not least because cities such as Berlin had a large number of journals, publishers, and printers; this allowed for the quick dissemination of new experiences and different cultures of knowledge that could enter into cultural memory. Encapsulated in books and other publications, this knowledge and this culture took on a portable quality, which ultimately meant that the Jews who emigrated were able to take it with them.

6 Conclusion and prospects

This paper draws on early social theory texts and biographical sketches to review the impact of the metropolis on intellectual life and the impact of the ‘marginal man’ on the emergence of an integrative metropolitan culture. To this end, the effects of Jewish migration on the ‘grammar’ of urban co-existence and the role of urban structures as a catalyst for Jewish emancipation have been explored. Berlin provided opportune conditions for the Haskalah movement, resulting from its rapid population expansion and its increasingly important position as the capital of the Prussian kingdom; but also the fact that the metropolis, as a location of

cultural and social crystallisation, always accommodated alterity as well as homogeneity, goes a long way in explaining the fruitful role of the big cities for the movement of the Haskalah and for processes of religious individualisation.

The biographic paths of Mendelssohn and Lazarus are paradigmatic for a process of emancipation through education which was largely successful, although it must be emphasised that the striking degree of optimism in the ideas voiced by Mendelssohn, Lazarus, and other Jewish-German intellectuals (see Sander 2017) was at stark variance with the actual political realities of their respective eras: both Mendelssohn and Lazarus were confronted with modern anti-Semitism in various forms. Their conceptions of language, culture, and national identity can be interpreted as intellectual ‘parallel worlds’ which they set against the ambivalent social and political realities they encountered in – respectively – the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The study of intellectual biographies is an excellent medium within which to identify and to better understand the manifold overlaps of personhood, individualisation, and institutionalisation, for there is no ‘lonely genius’ outside of society and its agencies of socialisation and education, on the one hand, but there would be no scientific or historical progress, on the other, if it was not for those outstanding individuals who moved beyond their cultural and religious ties’ or who transformed their social ‘package’ into a universalistic viewpoint. The investigation of intellectual biographies gives evidence of the intertwined relationship between tradition and deviance, norm and creativity, or structure and agency. Intellectual biographies also testify to the fact that there is an undeniable link between the historical experiences of a generation and its actions or cultural works. The history of ideas matters, for it is ‘social imaginaries’ (Taylor 2003), worldviews, ideas, and particularities that drive the history of mankind and foster social change and cultural dynamics, such as processes of religious individualisation.

This case study of the intellectual biographies of two German-Jewish scholars who were representatives of the Haskalah and the Reform Judaism testifies to multiple processes of religious individualisation:

- 1) Both scholars walked a tightrope between traditional bondage and deviant behaviour, and this tightrope translated in their meandering between norm and creativity, or between collectivity and individual self-assertion in their lives and writings; for the Reform Judaism allowed the expansion of the scope of action for the individual (Jew) without converting the Jewish people into renegades.
- 2) Both scholars had a great capacity to ‘translate’ their (metropolitan) cosmopolitanism, as well as their multiple cultural identities and affiliations, their status’ as ‘marginal men’ (Robert E. Park), in a particularly fruitful way into their scientific writings and the stations of their intellectual life and career.

- 3) In the writings of both scholars, deep religious piety on the one hand, and modern scientific scholarship on the other, were interwoven. It allowed for the representation of a unique social, cultural, religious, and historical constellation.
- 4) According to the thesis expounded here, the historical process of emancipation through education left significant traces in the writings of both scholars, in both cases weaving a type of 'cultural matrix for understanding alterity' into their work on language and culture.

It would behoove today's cultural studies practitioners and sociologists to rediscover this intellectual legacy and develop it further. Finally, the survey of the complex relationship between urban development and Jewish emancipation presented here confirms the accuracy of Lewis Mumford's description of *The City in History* in his opus magnum of the same name, first published in 1961:

The city first took form as the home of a god: a place where eternal values were represented, and divine possibilities revealed. Though the symbols have changed the realities behind them remain. We know now, as never before, that the undisclosed potentialities of life reach far beyond the proud algebraics of contemporary science; and their promises for the further transformations of man are as enchanting as they are inexhaustible. Without the religious perspectives fostered by the city, it is doubtful if more than a small part of man's capacities for living and learning could have developed. (Mumford 1961, 575)

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Afterword: texts and narratives

The ‘texts’ portion of this part of the publication has explored narratives of religious individualisation that have set in motion discourses which, to varying degrees, empower and promote religious individualisation. The authors of these narratives are, in a sense, the founders of discursivity, from whom currents of thought seem to flow which have informed modes of religious individualisation. It is, however, often the ‘modes of circulation, valorisation, attribution, and appropriation’ (Foucault, Faubion 1998, 220) that provide insights into the cultures and social relations of a process of individualisation. It is the production and modifications of the ‘author function’ that indicate the emergence of institutions that propel and valorise the ‘individual’ author. In this section, we have discussed how the author does not necessarily connote a specific individual; several narrators, selves, and subjects confuse and complicate the link between author and individual (historical or imaginary). The author may function as a mere ‘scriptor’, the composer of a text, but its ultimate use, meaning, and destiny are in the hands of the recipients of that text (Barthes, Heath 1977, 145). Some of the contributions here have engaged with the idea that the author/scriptor plays a smaller role in the emergence of conventions than the community that rallies around their texts. For it is this community that valorises the author as an exemplar to be emulated. Yet other contributors have examined the intentionality of an author’s narrative strategies to initiate discursivity and to provide a model for posterity. We have discovered, in contrast to the ‘Practices’ section of this part of the publication, that texts intuitively tend toward collective efforts of stabilisation and conventionalisation, sometimes tangential or even at variance with the pronouncements of the author.

Processes of text composition, reception, and itinerancy, and the many ironic and quirky stances that authors, characters, and audiences take with regard to texts, suggest that previous assumptions about sequential and/or dialectical dynamics of religious institutionalisation and individualisation need to be reconsidered. Is it possible to think of individualisation and institutionalisation as intertwined processes rather than opposing or contrasting and sequential processes? In other words, can we think of a process in which the narrative creates the author? And one in which the individual author is produced when he or she is institutionalised or stabilised through the work? In such a scenario, individualisation and institutionalisation, rather than being ambiguous and ambivalent processes, can become mutual, reciprocal, and coeval, and the congealing of

plural, multiple identities into a single one of the ‘author,’ subject, or individual can simultaneously set into motion his/her institutionalisation, or as we have preferred, their conventionalisation. The genres of biography and autobiography offer one prominent path for individualising a figure/person but there are also a number of other possible pathways. The contributions here accept the mutual imbrication and complementarity of individualisation and conventionalisation, which has allowed us to examine how an ‘individual’ or a text gains the ‘authority’ to become institutionalised. We have posed the question, if we accept the presence of the author and his/her text as ‘real’, what would the interface of individualisation and institutionalisation tell us?

Facets of the institutionalisation of individualisation occur both along with the composition and authorisation of a text and as a longer process over generations, indeed sometimes centuries. Ishita Banerjee-Dube explores an Indian, 15th-century Oriya telling of the *Mahabharata*. In this case, practices of collective ‘reading’ and recitation of the text, as well as its continual transcription, result in the many makings of the figure of the ‘author’ as well as of his composition. Endeavours to ‘standardise’ the text and its author from the second half of the 19th century resulted in the institutionalisation of its ‘author’, Sarala Dasa, as an ‘individual’ and an exemplary figure. It is of particular importance that he identifies himself as a Sudra-Muni, a lower-caste, ignorant person who is bestowed with the power to produce the Mahabharata by the goddess Sarala Devi. The audacious act of a Sudra rendering a vernacular telling of a Sanskrit epic was valorised and enhanced over subsequent receptions of the text that anachronistically celebrated, individualised and institutionalised him. Here we have seen an example of how the text and author are constructed by the community in order to develop an exemplar of individualisation, rather than the text holding sway over the recipients. In the case of Bhima Bhoi, a mid-nineteenth century poet-philosopher of Mahima Dharma of Odisha, India, the enduring presence of the kandha (khond) poet among the followers of a radical yet marginal religious faith is reflected in the composition of texts ascribed to him decades after his death, once again illustrating the intersection of individualisation and institutionalisation. In Max Deeg’s contribution, a similar promotion and reification occurs to the Chinese monk Xuanzang (600/602–664). In this case, we see how multiple biographies of one figure can reveal the institutional functionalisation of a historical figure, repeatedly and simultaneously authorising the monk and drawing authority from him. Some examples of his functionalisation were literarisation, politicisation, aestheticisation, iconography, scientification, etc., with every instance performing this two-way authorisation. Therefore, the increasing exceptionality and individualisation of Xuanzang have a direct relationship to authority drawn from him by the authors and their institutions; the repetition of his story itself

becomes a convention. In both cases we have observed a simultaneity of authorisation, rather than a sequential authorisation that we may have assumed because of the chronologies of the author, individualised exemplar, text, and community.

What seems consistent in our texts, an aspect that counter-intuitively establishes trustworthiness, is that the central figures simultaneously transmit tradition and norms yet at the same time are made extraordinary by a deviation from them. The frequent acknowledgement of knowing the ‘rules’ and then exceeding them is an aspect of the texts that consistently gives them force, since it maintains a tension which refuses to be resolved. Anne Feldhaus’ contribution discusses the Mahanubhav writings from 13th-century India, texts which preserve in minute detail, the doings and wanderings of avatars of the same divine being. Since Chakradar disappears in 1274, the successors must preserve the teachings over time in order to preserve the presence of Chakradar. The teachings insist that the presence of the god gives one liberation and so this presence is produced imaginatively and textually. One of the quirky avatars asks questions such as, ‘do I have to know everything’? This both transmits the assumption and the self-evident truth that the divine is omniscient; yet the figure himself won’t allow this to be stable. This tension, which we might even call irony, finds its way into several of the works. In Rahul Parson’s study of early modern North India, we see that Banarasidas, the 17th-century Jain merchant, repeatedly calls himself a fool, like a child grasping at the moon in a reflection, and yet because of the acknowledgement of his inability to comprehend dense philosophical positions, he would have us trust his rendering of an immense treaty on the Self and the voice of the omniscient precisely because of his apparent innocence. Aside from the conventions of humility borrowed from Tulsidas and other Bhakti poets, Banarasidas’ ironic and self-effacing stance anticipates trajectories of discursivity emanating from his work, propelled by both his detractors and his well-wishers. Depending on whom one asks, Banarasidas’ innovations and transcreations either amount to intolerable heresy, or they are the basis of a proper institutionalisation witnessed in the rise of the Terapanth sect, who venerate him as their *Adiguru* (initial Guru) (Lath 2005, 9). The reverberation of Banarasidas’ insistence on self-reliance is felt more widely than just this sect. We also find it in the subsequent works of this particular strand of Jain poetry, thereby conventionalising and institutionalising Banarasidas’ audacity.

A yet more productive and complicated use of irony appears in Chapter VII of Paul’s letter to the Romans, as we have seen in Ian Henderson’s contribution. Paul, the historic Paul, writing this ‘I’ or ‘Ego’, functions as an ironic staging of a fictional, imaginary Paul, or ‘I’ ‘Ego’, which becomes canonical and also normative, framing how a Christian should feel (i.e., self-tortured). This imaginary Paul stages *akrasia*, the ethical problem of someone who knows what the right thing to

do is but still does the wrong thing. Paul performs this, the Ego knows the good, affirms the good, and does something else. In other words, this ‘I’ consents to the Torah, knows that it is doing the wrong thing but has consented to the revelation this ‘I’ has received from God. Chapter VII of Paul’s letter to the Romans was designed to be institutional by representing personhood in some exaggerated way. The irony here functions as a positive ambiguity, with multiple meanings that are all sincerely intended, even if irreconcilable. Imagined institutionalisation is a potent mode of individualisation – and imagined individualisation is a potent mode of institutionalisation – in a text written by a real person named Paul who dictated a text to be performed elsewhere. The performed-elsewhere Paul evokes the Paul needed for the institutionalisation, one who is constructed simultaneously by Paul’s words and the community’s performing/hearing them.

Movement, mobility, itinerancy, and plurality are recurring motifs that shore up tales of and about the authors and narrators, contributing to a different sort of institutionalisation. At times the physical text itself gains audience and authenticity by way of travel. The mobility and legitimacy over space is part of this institutionalisation. The itinerancy of figures in the text produces a legitimisation through worldliness, the reach of its acceptability, and the dynamics of social diversity one encounters in the chronotope of the road and the urban (Bakhtin 1998). As Sabine Sander has demonstrated in her contribution, the path taken ‘out of the Ghetto’ (Katz 1973) by European Jews between 1750 and 1850 is closely inter-linked with the emergence and development of the modern metropolis and with the processes of religious individualisation. The metropolis as a real and symbolic place (of encounter) creates an urban community made up of people from different social classes, professions, and geographical regions – as once described by Georg Simmel in his *Sociology* with his famous formula of the ‘intersection of social circles’ as a pre-condition for individualisation. This was the institutionalisation of a trajectory that headed towards the emergence of the enlightened and emancipated Jew, as an acknowledged citizen of the state. Sander’s case study on the parallel biographies and the religious and linguistic writings of two German-Jewish scholars, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903), reveals how a variety of different processes of religious individualisation are entwined with other social and political developments. The questioning of traditional forms of belonging, coupled with particular forms of sociality, sociability, community, and collectivity, provided social and imaginative spaces which enabled the Jews of that time to choose from a variety of personal options, developments, and paths.

Finally, Saurabh Dube has shown that the autobiographical and biographical materials of convert subjects in colonial central India query persistent projections of individualisation and institutionalisation as opposed ideas and

processes, presumptions that lie at the core of dominant conceptions of conversion. These narratives were simultaneously shaped by colonial verities and formatively marked by vernacular attributes, both aspects of an evangelical modernity. Although apparently formulaic in nature, they engage and exceed the *telos* of commonplace apprehensions of conversion to Christianity, inscribing such exclusive story lines with their own notations. In such accounts, subject and author, conversion and personhood, appear within emergent practices and performances of translation involving the entangled work of the irregular labour of convert and missionary, individualisation and institutionalisation. Here, the very terms of an immaculate conversion could be acutely forged through the force of rumour and the strength of prophecy, such that distinctive entailments of myth, legend, and narrative broke upon a missionary's description of a convert's life. A distinct autobiographical narrative of a lowly Indian evangelical operative appears as a life seeking an occupation, an existence stalking a vocation – shored up by recalcitrance toward paternal authority and refusal of paternalist power – in a manner that the acute contrariness of the tale puts its particular twist to irony and *akrasia*.

Across the texts considered here, we find the conventionalisation of certain *modes or patterns of communication*. Irony and *akrasia* seem to occur most consistently and appear to have a much greater institutionalising potential than consistency or straight didacticism. Recall the 'dim-witted' master poet-philosopher Banārasīdās; or the Sudra-Muni author of the great epic, Mahabharata; or Chakradar of the Mahanubhavs who questions his own omniscience, or the necessity of it; or the many Pauls and their *akrasia*; the elite German-Jews who knew where they had belonged and aspired to exceed that by belonging somewhere new; and Xuanzang, who disobeyed the emperor and yet had his anecdote repeated and celebrated as heroic from within a frame of political power that would not have it emulated. The contributions here specifically disrupt the traditional authority ascribed to an author or text by showing that the discourses, rhizomatic narratives, and currents of thought in each case study contain a collage of voices, suggesting that the religious individualisations, and conventionalisations thereof, are dynamic and co-constitutive.

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Part 4: **Authorities in religious
individualisation**

Jörg Rüpke

Introduction: authorities in religious individualisation

Concluding a publication on religious individualisation with three sections on different aspects of the notion of ‘authorities’ requires an explanation. The sections of this fourth part lead back to our starting point: the study of individualisation as a social phenomenon, as a phenomenon involving complex processes with different agents and time-lines in varying social contexts.

If new religious practices are an expression, as much as a trigger, of religious individualisation, it is processes of grouping (see Lichterman et al. 2017) and, hence, institutionalisation that stabilise this individualisation. ‘Associations’ (*collegia*, *thaisoi*) were present in ancient Mediterranean cities from quite early on in their development but it was during the imperial period, in particular, that they started to become ever more important as organisational forms of religious grouping. *Collegia* were private organisations that could acquire a legal status (and, from the second century AD onwards, own property) by being ‘registered’ (for the following see Rüpke 2007, 205–14). The gamut of different types of *collegia* is very wide: the slaves owned by a large household (*familia*) might unite to form a *collegium*; independent craftsmen formed large professional organisations partly for convivial purposes but also to protect their rights and status, as did the mediaeval guilds in a period of European history. The name of the association and the location of the meeting place suggest that religious identities were ascribed to these groups by members and observers. A membership of between fifteen and one or two hundred members was common.

Internal forms of organisation were highly variable. By the middle of the second century, nearly four hundred members of a Dionysian club set up an inscription to honour the daughter of the founder, Pompeia Agrippinilla. This inscription from suburban Torrenova takes the form of a membership list identifying a wealth of different functions for about fifty members of the association. Hierarchically ordered, it lists *dadouchos* – *sacerdotes* – *theophoroi* – *hypourgos kai seilenokosmos (minister)* – *cistaphoroi* – *archiboukoloï* – *boukoloï hieroi* – *archibassaroi* – *amphithaleis* – *liknaphoroi* – *phallophoroi* – *pyrphoroi* – *hieromnemon* – *archineaniskoi* – *archibassarai* – and finally custodians, *antrophylakes*, listed only after the mass of female *bakchai* and male and female *seigetai* who, as newcomers, had ‘to remain silent’ (see Rüpke 2006). Obviously, at least a minimally corresponding complexity of rituals and ritual space has to be imagined for this religious group made up from an extended family.

The temporal structure of the group's interaction was, likewise, open to definition. From the mid-second century AD, the rules of the *collegium* of Aesculapius and Hygieia gave a schedule of dates that might give some indication of the usual practice.

On 4th January: New Year gifts are to be distributed as on 19th September.

On 22nd February, the day of the Caristia (family feast): a distribution of bread and wine to be made at the *schola* near the temple of Mars, in the same amount as on 4th November.

On 14th March, at the same place, a dinner is to be held, which Ofilius Hermes, the president, has promised to provide each year for everyone present; alternatively a money distribution in the usual amount.

On 22nd March, Violets day: in the *schola*, gifts of money, bread and wine to those present, in the amount stated above.

On 11th May, Roses day: in the *schola*, gifts of money, bread and wine to those present, in the amount stated above, on the condition, agreed at the full assembly, that the monetary gifts, bread and wine allocated to those who do not attend shall be put up for sale and given to those who do attend, except in the cases of those who happen to be abroad or who are indisposed through illness.

(From *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.10234 = *Année Epigraphique* 1937, 161, trsl. Richard Gordon in *ibid.*, 209.)

The whole association had been financed and (re-)organised by a certain Salvia Marcellina, wife of a libertine named Capito, in commemoration of her husband and his superior (Flavius Apollonius, a procurator Augusti in charge of the imperial painting galleries), to whom Capito was assistant. Thus, the association had received a roofed structure as a meeting place and funds to hold banquets. In order to make the bequest meet the costs, the donor had limited the maximum number of members to sixty. The most important dates were related to the cult of consecrated emperors and further meetings were scheduled for days commonly used for the commemoration of the dead. Surely, such a practice was a consequence of the Roman laws controlling associations, which limited official meetings to one per month and allowed monthly contributions only up to a certain sum. Tertullian, at the turn of the third century AD, claimed that Christian associations – in fact churches, with their Sunday services and alms-giving – conformed to these rules (*apol.* 39.5). Such a claim might be the lie of an ‘apologetic’ to cover the illegal behaviour of more frequent meetings and giving, but given the spaces available for meetings and working conditions for many potential participants beyond members of the household, we cannot be sure that frequent meetings could have been efficiently institutionalised. But the very presence of the source, a lasting inscription inscribed in stone, regulating details and ordering meetings so as to assure the memory of a founding figure, demonstrates the dialectics of

individualisation secured by institutionalisation, even if the idea that such associations could exercise influence over the members' life-style, *disciplina*, developed only slowly. Already in Hellenistic and earlier times, such a connection was known and accepted for groups qualified as philosophical 'schools'. Such rules could include regular attendance, abstaining from meat, even sexual regulations (Sen. *epist.* 108.17–22; Diog. Laert. 8.19).

The notion of 'Authorities', as thematised in this last and fourth part of our publication, points to the impact of power relations, to the relationship of the ruling few and the many subjects, of majorities and minorities, of centres and margins in terms of political power, cultural or religious authority, economic dominance – and the collaboration between the two sides. Again, this demands a nuanced concept of individualisation in accordance with our previous treatments.

Contrary to the still dominant view of individualisation as a uni-linear and coherent process, the perspective from the history of religion reveals diverse, temporary, and discontinuous processes. The claim of uniqueness, unity, and the irreversibility of individualisation (above all as a process of Western modernity) is not the result of empirical findings, but is in itself part and parcel of a self-description that finds a scientific expression in modernisation theory. For historical analysis, it is useful to differentiate between the concepts of 'individual' and of 'individuality', of 'individuation' (the biographical process of acquiring a full member's role in a society, see Musschenga 2001, 5 for these terms) and 'individualisation' (the social structural process of institutional or discursive changes allotting more space for individuality). Elsewhere I have proposed to differentiate between types of individuality, in order to enable a closer look at the phenomena and their contexts (these will be introduced and developed further below, see Rüpke 2013 for the following).

But what kind of phenomena does such a concept of individualisation embrace? What kind of family resemblance does it produce? First and foremost, it includes the notion of de-traditionalisation as thematised in the first section of Part 4. Individual action is less and less determined by traditional norms handed down by family and the wider social context. Options open up, choices can be, and need to be, made. On the part of the individual, this development is reflected in changes in 'individuation' – the process of a gradual full integration into society and the development of self-reflection and of a notion of individual identity. Socialisation is the parallel biographical process of being integrated into ever larger social contexts. The individual's appropriation of social roles and traditions and, more specifically, religious roles and traditions, goes hand in hand with the development of individual identity. I know how to act in society and I act strategically, being self-aware but not necessarily selfish. Religious individuation, for instance, does not imply the individual's wish to be different. On the contrary, in many historical circumstances being different was not a value that informed individuation. Dignity

and honour were such values, notions of competition, being better than others in certain respects, or even being perfect. Religious practices may have been treated as fields of competition, for instance in sponsorship and charity, in displays of a cultured taste, or in intensive relationships with a deity.

Such changes entail institutional developments: options are declared legitimate; voluntary associations help to realise certain options; writing, as is suggested by *bhakti* or *Sufi* poetry, helps to develop notions of individuality; inscriptions on stone, wood or internet pages might help to express it on a larger social scale. The rights of the individual are legally protected against society's demands, culminating in the formulation of individual human rights. As we have seen for the American white middle classes (Madsen 2009, see the general introduction), individuality takes on a normative character: you *have* to be an individual. This relates only to a segment of society. Individualisation as well as socialisation are processes within complex and multi-layered societies, processes that are informed by basic social factors and contingent local and temporal circumstances. They are also informed by potentially globalised discourses, pluralised (as the second section is to emphasise) not only within fields like religion but also with regard to the importance attributed to different fields of the economy, culture, politics or religion – and the 'exchange rates' between the different forms of capital acquired in such fields.

Talking about plurality thus goes beyond (and even questions) the simple acknowledgment of the co-existence of different 'religions'. Religions are usually understood as traditions of religious practices, conceptions, and institutions, in some contexts even fully developed organisations. According to an important strain of sociological thought going back to Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), we are dealing here with social products (Durkheim 1947; also Pickering 2008; Rosati 2009), with groups of people normally living together within a territory, who withhold the central core, the shared orientation of their life together, from the necessity of daily discussion by investing it in forms of religious symbolism. There emerges a system of signs whose immanence is preserved by the performance of rituals and which seeks to explain the world in images, narratives, written texts, or refined dogma and to determine behaviour by the use of ethical imperatives, often by recourse to an effective apparatus of sanctions (for instance, through the power of the state), but sometimes even without that implied threat.

Such a conception of religion already meets its limits when it seeks to explain religious pluralism, the enduring coexistence of different, mutually contradictory conceptions and practices. It is even more limited with regard to the quite distinct relationship of individuals to religion, the aspect with which research into religious individualisation is concerned. This conception of religion has already been attacked for being too closely oriented towards 'western' and, above all, Christian religious and conceptual history and has been criticised for its unquestioned

and unquestioning ‘colonial’ transference to other cultures (Asad 1993; McCutcheon 1997; Masuzawa 2000; 2005). The approach has similar problematic ramifications when we seek to apply it to Euro-Mediterranean antiquity (see Nongbri 2013; Barton, Boyarin 2016; Rüpke 2018b, 1–22). The reason for this also lies in the present. The dissolution of traditional allegiances, a common feature of our time, is seen as religious individualism, the disappearance of religion, or even the displacement of collective religion by individual spirituality (Luckmann 1991; also Dobbelaere 2011, 198; Rüpke 2016). This perspective then becomes associated with the complementary assumption that early societies and their religions must have been characterised by a high level of collectivism. Thus, a problematic assumption in respect of the present day creates a highly distorted picture of the past.

But it is not the notion of religion that needs to be set aside. What is needed instead is a concept of religion that enables us to describe the aforementioned changes regarding the social location and individual significance of religion. This can successfully be achieved by conceiving of religion from the point of view of the individual and his or her social involvement. Here, the notion of ‘lived religion’ is helpful (for the following Rüpke 2012; 2018a). The concept of lived religion was developed in the late 1990s. Instead of analysing expert theologies, dogma, or the institutional setting and history of organised ‘religion’, the lived religion approach focuses on what people actually do. More precisely, it is not interested in inquiring into how individuals reproduce the set of religious practices and intellectual tenets of a ‘faith’. Taking into account the inter-subjective and relational character of the individual (Fuchs, Rüpke 2015; Fuchs 2015), the approach focuses instead on the individual’s ‘usage’ of religion. Religion is, however, not to be seen as existing independently of individual practice. We are not asking how, over the course of their lives, individuals replicate a set of religious practices and beliefs preconfigured by an institutionalised official religion or, conversely, how they opt out of adherence to a tradition. Instead, ‘lived religion’ focuses on the actual everyday experience, on practices, expressions, and interactions that are related to and constitute ‘religion’. Such ‘religion’ is understood as a spectrum of experiences, actions, and beliefs and communications hinging on human communication with super-human or even transcendent agent(s), whether conceptualised as gods, demons, ancestors, or powers. Material symbols, elaborate forms of representation, and ritualisation are called upon for the success of communication with these addressees (Bell 1992; Rüpke 2010b). Of course, such a communication at the same time implies the forging or, at times, the rejection of human alliances. Thus, the existence and importance of culturally stabilised forms of rituals, and of the concepts and people who are invested in developing and defending them, cannot be denied.

In contemporary usage, ‘lived religion’ is in the danger of focusing on what is also addressed by concepts such as ‘everyday religion’ or ‘popular religion’. Orsi

(1999; 2010) and McGuire (2008) focus, respectively, on religious practices on the streets of an Italian neighbourhood in New York and on religion in American living rooms. Focusing on meaning, however, David D. Hall urges ‘breaking with the distinction of high and low’ (Hall 1997; cf. Orsi 1997).

As has been stressed above, individual practices are not entirely subjective. There are religious norms, there are exemplary official practices, and there are control mechanisms. It is precisely such institutions and norms that tend to predominate in the surviving evidence from historical religion. In this biased transmission, what historians of religion are used to read as a norm fully in force is not the result of the validity of the norm but, rather, a communicative strategy on the part of agents in positions of power or in possession of larger means. If we observe religion in the making – as is stressed here –, institutions or beliefs are not simply culturally given, but are themselves aggregates of individual practices – as well as the constraints of these practices.

The concept of ‘appropriation’, as initially developed by Michel de Certeau (2007), is useful to capture the relationship between the individual agent and the cultural and material environment. The specific forms of religion-as-lived are barely comprehensible in the absence of specific modes of individual appropriation of motives and models offered by traditions, up to the extreme of the radical rejection of dominant ways of life, as is the case with asceticism or martyrdom, that is, of walking the edges or even dying on them. For the concrete forms and, above all, for their material survival (and thus being available as ‘evidence’ today), cultural techniques such as the reading, writing, and the interpretation of mythical or philosophical texts, rituals, pilgrimages and prayer, and the various media of representation of deities in and out of sanctuaries, are decisive.

The notion of agency implicit in the idea of appropriation is important. Agency is not concerned with the lonely individual but with the interaction of individuals with structures. And these structures are, again, the result of individual action. In view of the normative tagging of teachings, traditions, narratives, etc. in the field of religion, that is to say in view of the normative claims raised by some of the agents, the question of how ideas are taken up and modified by others (or in other words: the specification of processes of reception) is of particular importance. Talking of lived religion offers a frame for a description of the formative influence of professional providers of law and other legal norms, of philosophical thinking and intellectual reflections in literary or reconstructed oral form, of social networks and socialisation, of lavish performances in public spaces (or performances run by associations) with recourse to individual conduct in rituals and religious context. This valuation and methodological primacy of the individual is more than a radicalisation of modern research strategies that are interested in differentiating the practices of ever smaller defined groups and

communities. Again, institutions are not regarded as ontologically antecedent. Individuals' agency and structure constitute each other (Emirbayer, Mische 1998; Dépelteau 2008; Wang 2008; Campbell 2009; Rüpke 2015). Taking religion as lived religion brings the precarious state of institutions and traditions to the fore and does so without denying the power of such authorities. But above all, these are as much the means of expression and creativity of their inventors and patrons as spaces and material of experience and innovation for their users and clients. Statistically speaking, only in rare instances does such lived religion coalesce into networks and organised systems to resemble what we normally categorise as religions, expressed in written texts that may then develop an enduring autonomous existence of enormous proportions. And yet, they were and are important, or have importance ascribed to them, as several chapters of the fourth part of our publication underline. Without the support of individual choices by institutionalised practices or beliefs, or even by full-grown organisations, explicit religion might become implicit religion, visible religion invisible religion, and vice versa. Processes of individualisation in their different forms are reversible processes, potentially following or being followed by processes of de-individualisation.

There are, however, even more complications involved in these relationships. Periods and regions that could be regarded as characterised by a variety of processes of individualisation can also be seen as seedbeds of religious traditions, even organisations. In short, they can be seen as equivalents to what we are used to call 'religions'. Mediterranean Late Antiquity is the birthplace of what has been called the first autobiography, Augustine of Hippo's 'Confessions' at the end of the fourth century, and of monastic and ascetic *virtuosi* in the preceding century. And yet, Augustine was the powerful head of the Catholic 'church' of Carthage, fighting the widespread Donatist movements. Many ascetics and hermits grouped together as cenobites in monasteries where their 'fathers', the abbots, started to write monastic rules. Similarly, the idea of the loving relationship to a god, called *bhakti*, elaborated from the Puranic period, roughly the third century AD onwards, quickly led to the formation of *sampradayas*, of sects, which focused the religious practices on specific deities. The Central European Reformation of the early 16th century propagated the ideas of individual belief and a personal salvation that is dependent on God's grace in the place of ritual services provided by the Christian Church, but different theologies and alliances still organised themselves into ever closer structures that were also political in nature. The 'new religious movements' in the era of New Age spirituality attest to a broad differentiation of world views and religious practices but they are not only indicators of individual options and choices made. At the same time, they also attest to loose and tight networks, practices of bonding or even the sanctioning of disloyalty. De-traditionalisation and neo-traditionalisation might go hand in hand.

These observations can be generalised. Individual behaviour that might be judged deviant, or at least non-conformist, from the point of view of the majority or the religious mainstream, is precarious and threatened. As a consequence, it is safeguarded and institutionalised in the form of (at least in the beginning) minority groups. From here, the paradox takes its point of departure. A bundle of factors and motifs lead to the encaging of those who group together to defend their religious individuality. In order to define their boundaries, groups dogmatise their norms and denounce outsiders, as well as exclude internally deviant members. Systematisation of belief and the attempt to gain political support produce rigidity or compromises that turn away other members. Professional leaders judge the power of their institution by its influence on the behaviour of the people who judge themselves members or are ascribed membership. The conviction or practice safeguarded by the institution might be rigidly enforced among its members. By the fourth century AD, Christian bishops had achieved juridical power, granted to them by the Roman emperor; ‘heretics’, ‘followers’ of (just another) sect had been banned earlier but could now be sanctioned with public support. Manicheans and heretics had to fear for their careers and even their lives. Even if the question of whether Muhammad’s Islam was just a new heresy or an independent ‘religion’ of its own was discussed by Christian observers far into the Middle Ages, in hindsight we can classify this culmination of individualisation processes as a period of ‘religionification’, of the rise of religions (Rüpke 2010a). In Europe, a comparable process can be observed in the early modern period. Down to the 18th century, the processes of confessionalisation, the development of different ‘confessions’ (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed), sharply defined group limits, formalised standards of belief and behaviour, and assured the internalisation of specific denominational norms leading to lasting habits, social and economic behaviour, and intellectual orientation. Only for a few contemporaries, who were able to leave the habitual social and intellectual context, such confessions offered practically eligible options. Despite the existence of religious pluralism from the bird’s eye view, for any historical individual the exercise of choice was very restricted. In many instances, this stimulated internal differentiation rather than the costly switching of allegiances.

The fourth part of this publication engages with these questions from the three different perspectives already indicated. In all of them, the differences in power, the sometimes dramatic degrees of dependency and hegemony, are taken into account. The first group of articles focuses on processes of de-traditionalisation – identified as a major indicator of processes of individualisation above – as well as re-traditionalisation or, rather, neo-traditionalisation, thus taking the perspectives of those in power. The section opened with *Richard Gordon’s* chapter on religious specialists of low social status in the ancient world and their development of

competence and knowledge in the realm of roots, herbs, and basic ritual practices in the face of anti-magic legislation and the necessity to perform in a market. *Jan Bremmer* tackles the question of the possibility of limiting de-traditionalisation head on by authorities and legal systems by looking into juridical cases in ancient Athens. This is followed by *Avner Ben-Zaken's* chapter on the trans-local and trans-cultural establishment of traditions which cross the boundaries of religion and science in the geographical space of Europe, the Mediterranean, and western Asia. *Kumkum Sagari* focuses likewise on individuals, now Annie Besant and M. K. Gandhi in 20th century India, and their appropriation and reformulation of traditions. For the same period, the tension between individualised and institutionalised religion is discussed with regard to Catholicism in Germany by *Veronika Hoffmann*. *Michael Nijhawan* concludes the section by turning again to a legal system, this time in contemporary Germany, and its construction of membership in a religious tradition for immigrants.

In the second section, processes of pluralisation, another key phenomenon of individualisation, are brought centre-stage. Depending on the character of political or juridical regimes or constellations in which religion is not sharply differentiated against 'non-religion' or 'society', different degrees of group formation (see Eliasoph, Lichterman 2003; Lichterman 2012; Lichterman et al. 2017) and stabilisation of such groupings lead to a pluralisation that might even offer possibilities to 'opt in'. *Angelika Malinar* focuses on textual strategies of religious pluralisation in ancient India, whereas comparable strategies in the form of ritual practices and objects in ancient Mediterranean religion are thematised by *Jörg Rüpke*. *Marion Frenkel* directly engages with processes of institutionalisation that, at first glance, seem to attest singularisation rather than its opposite, but points to neglected practices of individualisation in late ancient circum-Mediterranean Christianity. It is texts that again take centre-stage in *Asaph Ben-Tov's* chapter on an early modern learned man who employed the confrontation with a different linguistic tradition, the Arabic Quran, as a means to add new perspectives to contemporary Protestantism. In the fifth chapter, *Amit Dey* takes the topic of Islam to India and investigates Islamic pluralisation there.

Finally, the focus shifts even more to the individual agents. Emphasis is given to marginal positions and how individuals in such positions were facing societal pressure. *Cristiana Facchini's* protagonists were 'walking the edges' in their interpretation and transformation of prophets in early modern Europe. Going back to the Middle Ages, *Katharina Mersch* inquires into the processes sanctioned and furthered by formal exclusion from the Roman-Catholic church, while *Britta Müller-Schauenburg* looks into the case of a pope who reflected on his own deviance, which was constituted externally by the fact that he was driven out of this very office. The last two chapters, by *Cornelia Haas* and *Vera Höke*, turn to 19th

and 20th century India and attempt to consolidate religious individualisation in teachings and organisation.

Collectively, these essays deny that the available sources, even if normative, judgemental, or straight-forwardly condemnatory texts, provide access only to the exclusive and excluding polemic of those in power. Following Michel de Certeau (1988), one might claim that such texts also provide a view of the highly varied, distorted, hyperbolic, and ‘devious’ ways in which such norms were appropriated by individuals. The norms themselves can be regarded as attempts to represent a complex reality that resisted subjection to such formulations (Rüpke 2016). Thus, the chapters do not solely inquire on constructivist lines into processes such as labelling, exclusion and the creation of otherness, or regulation and the construction of deviance (Perrin 2001; Thio, Calhoun, Conyers 2008, 3). Rather, they allow us to obtain some idea of the breadth of individual religious activity and the positions espoused by minorities, or marginalised by the dominance of the politically dominant groups or elite literary tradition. In short they give us a sense of the scope of the views held by those ‘walking the edges’.

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Section 4.1: **Between hegemony & heterogeneity**

Richard Gordon

Subordinated religious specialism and individuation in the Graeco-Roman world

At any rate on a naive view, the roles of subordinated religious specialists seem an obvious candidate for consideration in an account of the relation between religion and individuation, perhaps even of individualisation, in the Graeco-Roman world.¹ The claim to special ability to control communication with the divine world, the performance of wonders, the notorious moral ambiguity, or rather moral indifference, of the subordinated specialist – the diviner, the thaumaturge, the *pharmakeus/~tris*, the ‘herb-cutter’ – ‘petits entrepreneurs indépendants’ (Bourdieu 1971, 326) – and the claim to special or extraordinary powers typical of such practice – all these mark such small-time specialists as paradigmatic individualists in the religious sphere (cf. Dickie 2001; Piñero 2001; Wendt 2016, 40–73). In this contribution, I focus mainly on the role of different kinds of religious capital in the process of individuation.

I start from Bradford Verter’s refinement of Bourdieu’s concept of religious capital, which distinguishes between embodied, objectified, and institutionalised religious capital (Verter 2003, 159f.).² Institutionalised or dominant religious capital of different degrees was available in the Graeco-Roman world to a wide range of officiants in the religious sphere, whether or not they held priestly offices (Várhelyi 2010, 2–19; Rüpke 2013b, 214–23), not excluding heads of families, responsible for the conduct of lived religion in private households and neighbourhoods (Bodel 2008; van Andringa 2009, 217–69; Rüpke 2016b, 218–69; Flower 2017). But the existence of many different types of petty religious entrepreneurs

1 I use the word ‘individuality’ as a cover-term for analytically distinguishable types of development that contribute to differential processes of individuation, i.e. the notion of individual performative identity, in complex historical societies (Rüpke 2013a, 7; see also Rüpke 2012 and 2016a, and two other edited volumes on individuation and individualisation in antiquity, mainly in the Roman imperial period: Rüpke and Spickermann 2012; Rüpke and Woolf 2013). On the difficulty of maintaining distinctions here, and on the diversity of meanings that have been plausibly attached to the notions of ‘religious individuation’ and ‘~ individualisation’, see recently Otto 2017, 31-7.

2 These are all types of cultural capital in Bourdieu’s scheme. Verter himself prefers the expression ‘spiritual capital’. Although I accept his objections to Bourdieu’s tendency to view religious capital as exclusively institutional, I prefer to retain the term ‘religious capital’ in this context, since ‘spiritual’ seems to me to have misleading connotations in the context of non-Christian religious practice; cf. Grusendorf 2016, 4-7.

claiming their own kind of religious competence (i.e. competence not socially recognised as meaningful religious capital) resulted in a major tension within the religious field, perceptible already in the Classical Greek period (e.g. Stratton 2015, 90–7; Eidinow 2017, 256–60; Pisano 2017) but especially marked in the multi-dimensional field that emerged in the world of increasingly large and diversified ancient agrarian empires of the Mediterranean basin. Sociologically, however, it is useful to view the knowledge-practices of these petty entrepreneurs as forming claims to a limited, unstable yet exploitable form of religious capital we can term ‘embodied’. The insistent depreciation by the possessors of, or spokesmen for, institutionalised or dominant religious capital, especially in its public forms, justifies use of the term ‘subordinated’ for these practitioners.³

As claimants to embodied religious capital trading under the name of ‘competence’, such subordinate specialists were routinely decried as ‘bad individualists’, justifiably subject to obloquy, ridicule and even criminalisation (Stout 2001, 302f.). If we do allow a degree of individuation to such practitioners, within the context of the more general processes in antiquity leading to increased social differentiation, greater specialisation of roles (including religious-entrepreneurial roles), and increased monetarisation and market-orientation, how are we to classify it? What were the modalities of this embodied, provisional, contested religious capital? Can we trace efforts to stabilise it, to lay claim to a more substantial type of religious capital, namely ‘objectified’? And if such roles were so open to obloquy and even criminalisation, why was the risk worth running?

In the light of a recent demand for a more thorough-going historicisation of the term ‘magic’ as applied to the Graeco-Roman world (Otto 2013), a demand that is, however, difficult to satisfy given the extremely partial character of the sources, I concentrate on ‘subordinated religious specialists’, ignoring the images of ‘magicians’ and ‘witches’ conjured up in ancient literature (cf. Stratton 2007, 39–105; Gordon 2009; Spaeth 2014), which usually monopolise the discussion. The category of ‘magicians’ and ‘witches’ is best understood as just one, albeit extremely negative, expression of the enduring competition between institutionalised, i.e. public and formal, religious capital and the embodied form typical of subordinated practitioners (Gordon 1999, 210–43; Frankfurter 2002). Most general discussions of ‘ancient magic’ are of no sociological value, since they tend to take such literary images as in some sense representations of social reality, throwing together a whole variety of distinguishable practices as though they had

³ Bourdieu generally uses the expression ‘spécialiste dominé’ (e.g. 1971, 326). Verter (2003, 155) translates this as ‘subordinated’, which I find more suitable for my purpose. In particular it emphasises the role of social judgement in the articulation of such attributions.

a common essence we can agree to call ‘magic’, or, trapped in the ‘religion vs. magic’ paradigm, focusing solely upon the stereotyped discourse of exclusion. My focus is on practitioners of a wide range of ritual specialisms (here, for space reasons, excluding astrologers, in some ways the most interesting group), not on clients or the socio-political discourse about ‘magic’ in antiquity, though both of these inevitably surface. The notional time-scale is the later Hellenistic and Roman periods up to the early fourth century CE, with very occasional reference to the Greek Classical period.

In what follows, I piece together some remarks on the role of knowledge declared legitimate in justifying depreciation of subordinated religious specialists in Graeco-Roman antiquity (see § 1). I then go on to discuss the claims by such specialists to (contested) religious capital and its modalities, and give an abbreviated account of attempts to construct an ‘objectified’ form of religious capital by establishing a claim to higher-status knowledge (see § 2 and § 3). In the final section I try briefly to identify some of the social factors that played into such apparently risky professional choices, returning at the end to consider the issue of individuation versus religious capital as methodological yard-sticks (see § 4).

1 Legitimate versus prescriptively illegitimate religious knowledge

Every social formation, we might say, develops the religious Others it can best instrumentalise (for Greece, see esp. Parry 1992). The more complex and geographically extensive the social order, above all in the case of culturally-plural large agrarian empires, such as the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire (which, at its largest extent in the early second, and then early third century CE, controlled 5 Megametres² = 50¹⁰ km², cf. Taagepera 1978, 118; 125 table 2), the more ends the images of ‘disorderly’ religious power will serve. In the Graeco-Roman world, for example, we can find subordinated religious specialism, under the rubric of ‘magic’, represented as the social other, as the political other, as affront to the natural order, as absurdity, as fraud, folly or vanity, as prestidigitation, as the power inherent in nature, as the promise of unlimited command, as true religion; as heresy, the demonic, the nightmare. But if we stand back from these imagined personae and try to grasp the agents and their claimed skills and services, to say nothing of their possible individuation, we need some account of the construction of the category of subordinated religious specialism itself.

The justifications alleged by the possessors of institutionalised religious capital for their depreciation of marginal religious specialists mainly focused

on the claims of the latter to possess authority based on effective religious knowledge – that is, in Weberian terms, their religious competence. Religious knowledge is here understood in Bourdieusian spirit as a positional good in a competitive symbolic economy. It goes without saying that the Graeco-Roman gods were not simply ‘there’ (though every medial means was employed to make it appear as though they were natural givens): they, and the means of relating to them, were objects of knowledge, knowledge that was distributed within society in a highly differential manner (Rüpke 2014; 2016b, 182–92). It is not just that claims to possess more than trivial knowledge of the Other World and of its effective ritual management had to be negotiated if they were to become ‘objective’, that is, achieve the status of shared and legitimate knowledge. At a deeper level, the objectivity of legitimate religious knowledge was underpinned by the schemes of perceptions and thoughts which not merely generated appropriate insights and relevant questions but also excluded the kinds of questions that could not be asked and the answers that could not be given (cf. Bourdieu 1971, 310f.; 2003, 139–47). Such schemes are naturally vulnerable to the impact of real-world changes, intended or unintended, upon individuals and groups.

Legitimate religious knowledge in antiquity can be roughly defined in terms of its politico-social location and its ‘investment-index’. We can lay this out as a notional continuum, between the positive, and of course dominant, pole on the one hand, and representations of fully illegitimate, and *ipso facto* subaltern or dominated, religious knowledge on the other (Bourdieu 2003, 148–53). The precise form of the continuum shifted very considerably over the *longue durée* of 1200 years between the early Archaic period in Greece and the complex ‘inherited conglomerate’ of the late-antique Empire. Prior to the advent of Christianities and the invention of ‘heresies’ (Marjanen and Luomanen 2005), representations of fully illegitimate religious knowledge took two quite different forms: denial of the very possibility of religious knowledge itself, that is ‘atheism’, which is neatly defined by Plutarch as ‘imperviousness to the divine’ (*De superst.* 6, 167e7f.) (cf. Whitmarsh 2016, 193–241; also Jan Bremmer’s contribution to this publication), and the (quite imaginary) total inversion of the norms encapsulated in legitimate knowledge, i.e. the spectres of malign sorcery and witchcraft. By definition such knowledge had negative prestige – it was deemed not only to be ‘purely’ individual but also entirely maleficent. A less extreme form of negativity was provided by the studiously baggy category of ‘superstition’ (Gordon 2008; Sfameni Gasparro 2009; Rüpke 2011), which might well be collective but was always notionally defective, if not quite ‘empty’. The dominant forms of religious knowledge, on the other hand, were conceptually ‘full’ and ‘effective’, and were the object of a massive effort of resource-investment, being encoded or inscribed in an enormous variety of forms and media.

The pivot of dominant religious knowledge however was sacrifice, above all blood-sacrifice, whose ‘communicative contract’ stood for all the (shifting) sets of norms governing perceptions and judgements of civilised versus savage life, social order and disorder, membership and exclusion (Detienne and Vernant 1979; Knust and Várhelyi 2011).⁴ The purest model of sacrifice was that performed by magistrates and public priests (in Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire, by the king or the emperor) on grand state occasions. ‘The “great” are those who can least afford to take liberties with the official norms’ (Bourdieu 1977, 193). This was the ideal form reproduced in *necessarily* imperfect form by every individual act of sacrifice performed elsewhere in that social formation, linking households to larger social units.⁵ This reproduction had both a temporal and a topographical significance: the grand state occasions were fixtures in the calendar of public and private festivals (themselves the meeting-point of formal laws or rules of organisation and of aetiological narratives), but also were celebrated at symbolically-charged points in the imagined map of the sacred topography (i.e. the innumerable sacred sites scattered about individual cities, their dependent villages, outlying caves, water-courses, and ‘numinous places’ in mountainous or hilly areas). In all this, philosophical claims to religious knowledge, which generally dismissed sacrifice and sustained a thoroughly moralised representation of divinity, were invariably bracketed as quite irrelevant.

From the Hellenistic period, the notion of political community came to be inflected increasingly by considerations of status and wealth and by command of literacy. The ideal locus of legitimate religious knowledge thus tended to shift away from a community politically defined to one defined in terms of a status-inflected centre-periphery model. This model had two facets. On the one hand, the city came to be contrasted with the country as the unique locus of civilised life. On the other, literacy became a key emblem of full cultural membership or inclusion, its absence correspondingly a token of cultural marginality (Johnson 2000; 2009). On this reading, the social location of subordinated practice shifted to the notional periphery, and could be stylised as current solely among an illiterate country-population – and of these, women and children are particularly credulous: belief in magical powers and effects is more or less confined to such people, and their political analogues, the barbarians. Appealing to subordinated religious practice thus became either a psychologically interesting matter, as in Theocritus’ Second *Idyll* (say 270s BCE), in which the speaker, a woman who has

⁴ Although of course many sacrificial offerings were vegetal, they were conceptually of much less importance than blood-sacrifice.

⁵ On imperfect reproductions of social institutions, in this case marriage, see Bourdieu 1977, 34-5; 52-8.

allowed herself to be seduced by a dashing Lothario, attempts to compel him to return to her by means of ‘incantation and substances’ (ἐπωδαὶ καὶ φάρμακα, the standard Greek expression for our term ‘magic’); or, as often in Latin erotic poetry, a foil for the power of true passion, which is stereotypically stronger than any erotic magic (Gordon 2009, 226).

Subordinated practice could thus be represented as so completely dispersed that it had no effective significance as a threat to dominant meanings, and could thus be dismissed. An alternative spatial model, which emerged already in the late Archaic and early Classical periods, before and after the Persian Wars (490–479 BCE), represented the magician as a literal Outsider, as analogous to the priestly caste of the Persian Empire, the *magoi* (Carastro 2006). Greek claimants to the exercise of symbolic power unrecognised by, or subversive of, dominant or vocal groups were literally foreigners. The legitimacy of the transfer was guaranteed by the Persian priests’ interpretation of dreams and portents, mastery of water and the winds (Otto 2011, 149–56). But whereas the Persian magi represented the dominant symbolic power of the Achaemenid Empire, their Greek analogues kept more doubtful company (Graf 1996, 29–36; Dickie 2001, 27–43; Otto 2011, 156–78). Yet, foreign and ‘empty’ as it might be, this ‘Persian’ magic could, like a virus, worm its way into the Graeco-Roman world, as Pliny the Elder’s potted history of magic claims (*Historia naturalis* 30.1–18), by taking on the outward appearance of legitimate knowledge-practices, namely religion, medicine, and divination. The image of a surreptitious, insidiously intrusive, invader perfectly represents the problem of contested religious capital – shadowy, disturbing, threatening, absurd, ‘empty’ – but...? However, the most common Greek term for practitioners of such ambivalent ritual knowledge – vain indeed but still somehow threatening – was not μάγος (*magos*) but γόης (*goês*), a much older term, never taken over into Latin, which could be used in a wide range of contexts to express anxious contempt for such claims. The late-antique distinction made by the Byzantine lexicon known as the Suda (s.v. μαγεία) between μαγεία (*mageia*), the invocation of beneficent spirits for healing, and γοητεία (*goêteia*), the conjuration of evil spirits at tombs, is quite foreign to the Roman period.

Rather than deal with this threat, whereby subordinated claims to ritual knowledge might turn out to be effective indeed, it was far easier to fall back onto a polarised cosmology, whose negative dynamic took the form of a fantastic image of deviant ritual mastery, familiar in African ethnography as the ‘night witch’, and known to us in the Graeco-Roman world mainly through literary re-presentation:

[Dipsas] knows magic arts and Colchian incantations, and by her art causes rivers to reverse their flow; she knows precisely (*scit bene*) what a herb can do, or the humming iunx, the

power of the slime from a lubricious mare. When she wills, dense clouds cover the sky, when she wills, the sun shines bright. Believe it or no, I have beheld the stars dripping blood – the Moon’s orb was red with blood. I believe she flies at night as an owl, her decrepit body covered in feathers – I believe it, and so rumour has it (*suspitor et fama est*). “Double pupils” flash from her eyes – a light is emitted from her twofold iris [...]

Ovid, *Amores* 1.8.5–16 (late first century BCE)

We can read such a text in several ways. Here I just want to use it ‘ethnographically’ to suggest the type of anxieties provoked by the image of the night-witch: she disposes of an ‘art’, i.e. a knowledge-practice, that aims to undermine or undercut the (implicitly beneficent) order of nature, which is also that of the self-representation of the dominant social order. And this in three areas: by maliciously or at whim controlling natural phenomena (water flows uphill; freak weather conditions); by falsifying the divine sign-system that ‘accurately’ informs humans of symbolic danger (the moon turns blood-red); and by interfering with the ‘(arbitrary) cultural necessity’ of sexual relations (erotic magic). The witch, emblematised by her nightly transformation into a were-owl (Gk.: βρύαξ, *bryas*; Latin: *strix*), is thus the agent of a ‘sacrilegious violence’ that threatens the naturalised norms of agrarian production (‘beneficent nature’), divine-human communication, and stable social life. As such, she is a structurally necessary element, sustained by the circulation of rumour (*et fama est...*), gossip and accusation (Stewart and Strathern 2004), of a folk-cosmology that viewed the world as unsteadily poised between opposed orders, the one beneficent, the other negative and destructive. As such, the figure could never be quite done away with, but remained available to be adapted to new fault-lines revealed by periods of marked historical change, notably in the civil wars of the late Republic, the establishment of autocracy in the early Principate, the crises of imperial authority after 235 CE, and the long, slow imposition of Christianity as the public religion of the Empire (Grodzynski 1974; Fögen 1993; Clerc 1995; Lotz 2005).

2 Establishing competence/embodied religious capital

One of the main difficulties in providing a general account of this process is the sheer range of different levels of skill and knowledge, relative professionalism and self-consciousness within the class of subordinated practitioners. Given the sources at our disposal and the impossibility of finding a personal informant, we must make do with the heuristic device of distinguishing between four ideal types: the village wise woman, the full-time or semi-professional usually male

rhizotomist ('root-cutter'), typically urban ritual specialists – 'prophets', 'diviners', 'purifiers', 'healers', 'thaumaturges' – and, finally, literate advocates of the power of the marvellous, who viewed themselves, or at any rate claimed to view themselves, as working in ancient traditions derived from the Near-Eastern high cultures.

What is certain, however, is that such a scheme is a radical simplification, for the range of roles and styles was in fact extremely large, varying from individual to individual in relation both to levels of competence and to consciousness of working within a tradition. 'Beggar priests' (Gk.: ἀγύρται, *agyrtai*), who in some ways fit perfectly into the general category of subordinated religious specialists, can hardly be classed as a 'group', since they included people who disposed of different kinds of knowledge and exercised many different kinds of skills, and are united solely by the claim that they were itinerant, moving from place to place; since this claim was intended pejoratively and almost invariably linked to the idea of demanding payment for services rendered, we have no idea whether in any given case it was true (Eidinow 2017). Moreover, *topoi* such as '(wise) women know about magical herbs' could be used as narrative material in all kinds of contexts: for example, the mythic history of the early years of the city of Erythrai, on the west coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), told of a Thessalian priestess of Hekate named Chrysamê, who was an expert in herbal lore and by a ruse doped the entire Erythraean army, thus enabling the Ionian Knôpos to seize power and become king (Polyaenus, *Strat.* 8.43). In the early second century CE, the historian Arrian of Bithynia reported a similar story about a famous Thracian 'witch', Krokodikê, who 'knew all about incantations and herbs, and how to cure illnesses and to bring them about' (ap. Jacoby 1926, 864 frgs. 61a-c). In novels, figures such as the 'trusted old attendant' provided endlessly productive narrative material: in Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*, for example, the unscrupulous Kybelê, who knows about (love-)potions, tries to poison the heroine, Charikleia, but drinks the stuff herself by mistake, leading to Charikleia's being accused of murder, and condemned to the stake, from which she is miraculously saved by [...] (Heliodorus, *Aith.* 8.6–10). Much the same applies to female diviners: for a discussion of the ideal ruler, Dio of Prusa (40/50–110/120 CE) created a frame-narrative whereby he happened to lose his way on a walk near Olympia and came across a rather tall old lady near a tumble-down shrine of Herakles, who told him the Mother of the Gods had given her the power of prophecy – and instead of whirling about and rolling her eyes, gave him a mythographic lecture about Herakles as a good king (Dio *Or.* 1.52–6).

Here there is no space to do more than offer thumbnail sketches of each of these groups, which I have arranged roughly in order of their assumed self-consciousness, the value of the claim to restricted knowledge, and the

topographical and social range of their active interventions. To repeat: in each case, in the absence of ethnographic evidence, we have to do with ideal-types, that is, my own selective modelling of the ancient evidence for such activities, partly on the basis of comparative evidence (e.g. Lieban 1967; Tambiah 1970; Peek 1991; Kirkland 1992; Kapferer 1997; Ankarloo and Clark 1999–2002; Wilson 2000, 333–71, 395–420; Skemer 2006; Petropoulos 2008; Harari 2017) and partly by simply ignoring the insistent negative stereotyping that is so characteristic of the ancient representations (e.g. Pliny, *Hist. nat.* 18.4).

- Wise women. The type of the wise woman is the mythical Agamêdê (also Perimêdê) of Elis, grand-daughter of Helios, the Sun, who is mentioned by Homer as ‘knowing all the herbs that the wide earth sustains’ (*Iliad* 11.740f.). Her name, sometimes coupled with that of Medea or Circe, continued to evoke the ambivalence of this type of knowledge, of herbal lore, which could be used for healing, and for the making of ‘potions’ (the association between female gender and poisoning is immemorial), well into the Roman period (e.g. in the passage of Arrian just cited) and the Byzantine scholarly tradition. We should also remember that some knowledge of this kind, as well as of simple divinatory methods, such as knuckle-bones, was widespread among ordinary folk (e.g. Dasen and Schädler 2017).

The most neutral word in Greek for such women, about whose claims and abilities we only possess literary evidence, inevitably tendentious, is μήτηρ, ‘mother’ – a respectful form of address to an older woman of some authority, but which makes no specific reference to such skills (e.g. Heliiodorus, *Aith.* 7.10, in the familiar diminutive μητέριον, *mêterion*); more specific is φαρμακίς, ‘a woman who knows about *pharmaka*, herbs’, which however is often found in a negative sense, ‘witch’. Although a stock of charms (Gk.: ἐπωδή, *epôdê*; Lat.: *cantamen*, *cantio*, *cantus*, *carmen*, *incantamentum*, *incantatio*) and skill in their performance (*murmur*, *susurramen*) was indispensable to their practice, there was no common Greek name for wise women that emphasised this aspect of their knowledge, whereas in Latin we find at least *cantatrix* (Apuleius, *Met.* 2.20, late second century CE) and *incantatrix* (Scholiast on Horace, *Carm.* 1.27.21). *Mater* is also found in Latin (e.g. Nemesianus, *Eclog.* 4.62, late third century CE), but the most neutral Latin word for a wise woman is the rare (*mulier*) *pluscita*, precisely ‘wise (woman)’ (Petron. *Satyr.* 63); more negatively, *saga* and *nocturna* (‘active by night’). The word *saga* (from *sagax*, ‘sharp-witted’) might be glossed as meaning an ‘old woman who claims to know many things’ (Cicero, *De div.* 1.65).

Such women were consulted on all manner of issues: illness (diagnosis and cure), male impotence, infertility in women, interpersonal relations, especially erotic (e.g. Horace, *carm.* 1.27.21f.; Lucian, *Dial. meretr.* 1.2), protec-

tion against attack by witchcraft (e.g. Ovid, *Fasti* 6.105–68), provision of protective amulets e.g. against the evil eye, forecasting future events, warding off storms, hail and frosts (Pliny, *HN* 28.29), protection against malicious gossip (Ovid, *Fasti* 571–84), identifying thieves, and many other problems of ordinary village life, including attacking clients' enemies by witchcraft or by knowing the right ritual to cause them to be generally hated. Thanks to the inherent moral ambiguity of at least some of these undertakings, and the anxiety attending any consultation of a person who claims such powers, a version of this role served as the basis for the 'night witch' figure in antiquity, of which the ghastly Erichtho is the literary paradigm, who blights the harvest with her tread, plucks out the eyeballs of the dead in their sarcophagi, tears the flesh from criminals exposed on the gibbet, and kisses corpses so she can bite off the tongue (Lucan, *Bell. civ.* 6.507–68, mid-first century CE). In the night-witch fantasy the theme of restricted knowledge is intensified exclusively in the direction of world-reversal.

- Full-time or semi-professional, usually male, rhizotomists ('root-cutters'). Although women are the stereotypical folk-practitioners in literary texts, spreading out from the village-context into urban households, it seems likely that most professional or semi-professional herbalists/folk healers were actually male (though we do know the names of one or two female specialists in gynaecology and obstetrics, one of whom even wrote a manual). At any rate, the coinage of masculine agentives such as ῥιζοτόμος (rhizotomos, root-cutter) in Greek and *herbarius* and *medicamentarius* in Latin suggests as much, as do the numerous references to such practitioners in Theophrastus' *Historia plantarum* 9 (late fourth century BCE) and throughout the sixteen books of Pliny's *Historia naturalis* devoted to the properties of plants of all kinds, animal-parts and minerals (17–32), both for direct application and for the manufacture of amulets. Theophrastus (*Hist. pl.* 9.8.5) links root-cutters to φαρμακοπῶλαι (pharmakopôlai, herb-mongers); 'marketing' implies movement of such items from the point of collection to village, urban or temple-markets or shops of one kind or another, and no doubt sometimes a network of suppliers, as in the modern developing-world. Moreover a few such experts were literate and wrote books about their materials, sometimes with illustrations (*rhizotomika*: Pfister 1938); Pliny derives most of his information from such compilations. Some at least specialised in doctoring farm- and work-animals, others operated in towns and cities. Since in the ancient world many adults, especially in rural areas, where anyway the great majority of the population lived, knew a variety of herbal remedies, we must assume that the reputation of professional or semi-professional root-cutters lay in their possession of more extensive knowledge of such matters, as well

as in their ritual expertise. Pliny states as a fact that if root-cutters considered their work had not been adequately remunerated, they would replant part of the herb in question at the very place where they had collected it, so undoing the healing process (*HN* 21.144, 25.174, 26.24).

Once again, we must imagine a wide range of claims to authority, all the way from those typical of wise-folk (e.g. *incantatores*) to individuals who defined themselves exclusively as *medici*, ‘doctors’, just as their remedies were taken up both by temple-medicine, e.g. on the island of Kos, and by school medicine. The implied readership of Pliny’s *Naturalis historia* must have been assumed to be prepared to use at least some of the information ultimately derived from the knowledge of such men – but only insofar as it had been purged of its ‘magical trappings’ and rendered legitimate by being admitted into literate compilations: Pliny misses few opportunities of dismissing ‘root-cutters’ as a group. On the other hand, school doctors such as Galen were prepared to allow that amulets, especially those made of semi-precious stones – items by no means cheap – might be of medical value. Nothing whatever is known about analogous practices outside Greece and Italy (except for Egypt); but already Theophrastus knew a wide variety of plants from the eastern Mediterranean, and some manuscript traditions of Dioscorides’ medicinal herbal (originally first century CE) contain lists of plant-names in a variety of languages, including ‘Marsian’, ‘Celtic’, ‘Hispanic’, ‘Germanic’, ‘Dacian’, ‘Syrian’, ‘Egyptian’, and ‘African’, which perhaps derive from the voluminous late first-century CE work *On herbs* by Pamphilos of Alexandria and might be based (ultimately) upon reports by local root-cutters.

Many, if not most, rhizotomists and wise-folk practised divination of one kind or other – the standard handbooks list nearly one hundred named types of ‘inductive’ divination (i.e. based on the principle of combining a matrix of given meanings with a device for generating chance) known from antiquity, quite apart from many others that had no common name (Gordon 2011; 2017, 123–31). One of the very rare literary accounts of such low-level divination by a *saga* using a lot-oracle deftly evokes a series of questions posed by the enquirer, each of which can be answered positively or negatively. ‘Will he die by poison?’, ‘No’; ‘Will he die by violence?’, ‘No’; ‘Will he die of internal pains?’, ‘No’ [...]; and so on (Horace, *Sat.* 1.9.29–32). Here the engagement of the client in the process of finding a solution under the guidance of the specialist – precisely one of ‘problems’ elite commentators had with such methods, as insufficiently ‘divine’ – is neatly intimated in a mere four lines of verse.

- Typically urban ritual specialists. Divination however was a central element in the practice of many of our third category, ritual specialists who mainly

practised in urban contexts and operated under market conditions. The heavily-adulterated Greek thesaurus of Iulius Pollux (late second century CE) lists over 20 words for such practitioners, covering ‘begging priests’, ‘prophets’, ‘diviners’, ‘interpreters of dreams’, ‘purifiers’, ‘sacrificers’, ‘healers’, ‘initiators’, ‘thaumaturges’ (*Onom.* 7.188f.). Such terms, while hardly indicating ‘professions’,⁶ are the socially-admitted correlates of innumerable individually-constructed roles that aimed at personal ritual mastery in urban contexts. These were partly inspired by copying others (teachers or models), partly by repeated ritualised practice that gives rise to ‘the knowing body’, and partly by the resonance of patients and clients, which insensibly guided and improved the effectivity of performances. Although a few such individuals, such as the Lycian Aristander and the Spartan Kleomantis, the diviners of Alexander the Great (Plutarch, *Vit. Alex.* 50), attained a certain prominence, it is precisely this dynamic relation between subordinated specialist and client, based on intuition, sympathy and ritual competence, that evoked the resentment and hostility of the representatives of other, more heavily institutionalised, ‘mainstream’ providers of services we can broadly term religious. These in turn fuelled the almost univocal denigration and depreciation of these specialists – ‘money-grubbing’, ‘vain’, ‘worthless’, ‘mountebanks’, ‘charlatans’ – that we find in our sources, caricatures that sophisticated authors such as Lucian readily embellish, and which served as ammunition for the proponents of the so-called ‘Great Church’ in denigrating their opponents (Sfameni Gasparro 2002; Denzey Lewis 2017). Some such specialists in the provinces, such as druids (or ‘druids’) and prophetesses in the north-west provinces, were even considered enemies of state. Although exorcism was unknown in the (narrowly-defined) Graeco-Roman world until the establishment of Christianity, the rivalry staged in early Christian (and Rabbinic) sources between ‘our’ miraculous cures and ‘their’ magic reproduces the same conflict in a different idiom (Piñero 2001; Frenschkowski 2016, 223–73).

- Literate advocates of the power of the marvellous. Rather than continue the enumeration of different groups of specialists here, it makes more sense to discuss the fourth group, practitioners who used high-status techniques, above all textuality, under the separate heading of objectified religious capital.

⁶ ‘The *mau song* only diagnoses; in that role he does not cure, either through medicine or supernatural action. His role is *conceptually* distinct. [...] When [he] performs other roles he is called by the appropriate name’ (Tambiah 1970, 272).

3 Striving for objectified religious capital

We can distinguish three major means whereby subordinated practitioners attempted to raise the status of their religious capital from embodied to objectified.⁷ These are ‘thaumatisation’ (i.e. appeal to the marvellous), literate discursification, and *Verfremdung* (strategic alienation). Since there are in fact no pure examples of any of these, inasmuch as such strategies are invariably used in combination, I offer here a few instructive examples.

In themselves marvellous events are of little significance in this context, since this was a world in which marvels were a major means of sustaining the religious field *tout court*. It is rather narratives, rumours and reports of marvels performed by specific individuals, whether in the village, in the city, in the palace, that generated the requisite distinction, generated by the demonstration of one’s ability successfully to appropriate the power inherent in nature, special objects, rarified texts. Those who claimed special powers for themselves relied upon such narratives in establishing their claim: the practitioner’s rôle was as much a function of shared marvellous narratives as of secret, sometimes family, tradition. It is precisely this complicity that makes a sharp distinction between practitioners’ views and outsiders’ views unconvincing. On the one hand, in any given situation the practitioner profits from the uncertainty, the indeterminacy of the limits of the here-and-now possible produced by knowledge of marvellous narratives. On the other, the local stock of such narratives models the image of the transformation of the real that practitioners aimed to realise, within the horizon of expectations set by their own self-image and the micro-tradition they exemplified. Lucian’s comic dialogue *Lover of lies* (late second century CE) seeks to ridicule precisely this type of claim, for example by introducing a famous Egyptian magician Pancrates (‘Mr. Allcan’), who, by a magical utterance or two, would turn door-bars and broom-sticks into magical servants to run errands for him (*Pseud.* 35).

In the literate tradition, however, the ability to achieve marvellous effects tends to be represented as a property of ritual texts – the mastery lies in possession of or access to the relevant knowledge. Thus the Graeco-Egyptian ‘magical papyri’ (Preisendanz 1928–41), which can be taken to exemplify the quantities of receptaries (*grimoires*) that circulated, albeit in very restricted fashion, via personal communication, in the Roman Empire under the Principate, above

7 I use ‘objectified’ here to denote recourse to special objects and texts as well as claims to special powers, mostly derived from non-Greek and Roman sources of knowledge.

all in Egypt, constantly asseverate the extraordinary power of their contents: ‘a marvellous “driver”’; ‘a really marvellous philtre’; ‘Hermes’ marvellous “crusher”’; ‘you will be amazed’; ‘has a marvellous power to induce prophetic dreams’; ‘everyone present will marvel’ (e.g. Gordon 2012, 151f.). This is the typical language of ‘high ritual realism’, a key claim in the establishment of objectified (and institutionalised) religious capital. Moreover, as we would expect of the drive towards the objectification of such symbolic capital, marvellous power might also be claimed as inherent in natural objects, not simply plants or animal parts but above all precious and semi-precious stones. Already in the Classical period, but more especially in the later Hellenistic period, there developed a tradition of marvellous stones, now referred to generically as *Lithika* (‘Stone-books’). Some such lore, while referring to practitioners, say, in Egypt or India, was ascribed to ‘Orpheus’. Other material was appropriated from Babylonian lore translated into Greek in the Hellenistic period (cf. Hopfner 1926). Pseudepigraphic texts of limited circulation purporting to have been written by Zoroaster or Ostanēs, which Pliny refers to generically as ‘the Magi’, acclaimed the powers of certain stones, such as the *chelonīa* (‘tortoise-stone’), which when placed in the mouth at specific times of the day enabled the practitioner to foretell the future. Another type, *chelonis*, which is actually made from tortoise-eyes, enabled him to abate storms by means of incantation; and yet another, with golden speckles, raised storms if one dropped it into hot water together with a scarab (Pliny, *HN* 37.155). The problem with textualisation, however, is that its circulation cannot be controlled: the distinction-value of esoteric goods declines in direct proportion to their availability. Once such texts fell into the hands of someone like Pliny, who was prepared to record all kinds of beliefs and claims quite neutrally, but loses no opportunity to decry what ‘the Magi’ say, efforts to establish objective ritual capital could easily be made to appear merely vainglorious.

The technique of *Verfremdung* is a familiar device whereby cultures assign the ‘most effective’ magical knowledge to neighbouring peoples – a Roman example is the representation of two Italic peoples, the Marsi and the Sabelli, who were supposed to be able to cause snakes to split by means of incantations, as ‘typical’ magicians. Ideologically, the strategy makes it possible both to concede the potentially disruptive power of subordinated knowledge-practices while at the same time trivialising their consumption within the population at large. In antiquity, many of the literary representatives of my first three groups are said to be foreigners: in the Classical Greek world, this meant Thessaly, or Colchis, a mythical land on the east coast of the Black Sea; in the Hellenistic and Roman imperial worlds, Lydia in Asia Minor, say, the homeland of a man who ‘knew about magic and drugs that could bring about paralysis and death’

(Polemon, *De physiog.* 1, page 130^{14–16} [ed. Förster]), or Africa ('Libya'), or Syria – the historian Tacitus twice mentions a Syrian woman named Martina, 'notorious as a potion-mixer', who was alleged to have been involved in the mysterious death in 19 CE of Germanicus, the emperor Tiberius' nephew and designated successor (*Ann.* 2.74.2; 3.7.2). Arabia too was a likely home of such knowledge – Pheroras, the younger brother of Herod the Great, was said to have been poisoned in 5 BCE by means of a drug supplied by an Arabian woman, 'Arabian women being the witchiest of women (φαρμακιστόταται)' (Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* 17.4.1, 62f.); in Lucian's *The Lover of Lies*, it is an Arab who gives the Greek host an iron amulet and teaches him a complicated incantation to protect him from ghosts and revenants (*Pseud.* 17), while another participant in the dialogue tells of a Babylonian with an old book who not only heals a slave who has been bitten by a poisonous snake but by means of a spell drives all the dangerous pests, from horned vipers to toads, into one spot and burns them to cinders – 'quite amazing' (*ibid.* 11f.).

The Graeco-Egyptian 'magical papyri', which in their extant form are mainly late-antique although the very earliest examples date from the late Hellenistic period, are ritual texts, mostly in Greek, some in Demotic Egyptian, a few in Old Coptic or Coptic, claiming to enable the practitioner to achieve a wide variety of desirable ends. These range from low-grade divination to direct visions of godhead (Suárez de la Torre 2002; García Molinos 2017), from assembling amulets to restraining the wrath of the great and powerful, from removing fish-bones stuck in the throat to forcing compliance from objects of erotic desire, from inducing insomnia to obtaining a divine factotum (Gordon 2013; Fraser 2015, 116–23; Pachoumi 2017, 11–33). While the most famous are lengthy compilations of prescriptions ('formularies') for many different procedures, which were found by Egyptian tomb-robbers before 1828, acquired by a Macedonian Greek merchant/dealer named Ioannis Anastasiou (c.1765/70–1860) (Chrysikopoulos 2015, 2148f.), and sold on to European museums in the mid-nineteenth century, the majority are loose-leaf items written (or copied) by individual practitioners working in a tradition loosely associated with the declining fortunes of Egyptian temples. Although the great majority of formulary recipes are anonymous, just like the endorsements that asseverate their efficacy, some are ascribed to pseudo-historical figures such as Pibechis, Pitys, Pnouthis, Astrampsychus, Dardanus, Moses, Pythagoras or Nephôtês, or are stated to have been used by such figures (Suárez de la Torre 2012). More rarely, they might be named after the divinity addressed, such as Egyptian Bes, Serapis, or Selene (the moon), or be claimed to have been copied from *stêlai* ('inscribed slab') in Egyptian temples – indeed the word *stêlê* usually in the formularies means 'an effective *praxis* in this tradition' and has no reference to an actual object made of

stone. The formularies betray no coherent conception of this ritual practice: while a few of the recipes are derived from Greek symposium jokes ('Democritus' tricks'), others are extremely elaborate, display dizzying familiarity with Egyptian theological constructs, myths, and cosmological schemes, incorporate sequences in verse, conventionally called 'hymns', probably taken from Greek sources and edited for their new context (Bortolani 2016), and exhibit a very wide range of phonic and paragraphic devices, as well as drawings and images (Sfameni 2009; Crippa 2010), quite unknown in 'indigenous' Greek or Roman ritual contexts, which hardly go beyond citations of Homeric verses and simple charms (Heim 1892; Önnersfors 1991, 13–33; 54–61). They also incorporate an enormous variety of exotic divine names, mainly Egyptian but also Judaic and even Babylonian. Further evidence of the drive to objectification are the five thousand surviving amuletic intaglios, mainly ring-stones, with 'esoteric' imagery linked to Egyptian ritual lore, mostly deriving from the eastern Mediterranean area but now in western European or US museums (Michel 2004; Faraone 2018).

As will already be clear, the use of written texts was a major strategy in the attempt to develop objective religious capital, especially in the area of divination. Literacy made possible quite new forms of routinisation on the basis of written matrices, such as Homer-oracles or the far more sophisticated 'esoteric' divinatory system ascribed to Astrampsychos (Naether 2010). Use of astrological knowledge, itself unthinkable in the absence of literacy, made it possible to extend and elaborate many other methods of forecasting by specifying stellar or planetary conditions (Gundel 1968). Many divinatory procedures that enjoyed little or no status as mere practices could obtain respectability once reduced to order under separate headings and given specific textual or diagrammatic form. We need only to think of numerous books on oneiromancy (the interpretation of dreams) (del Corno 1969), the dialogue by Hermagoras the Stoic on divination from eggs (Suda s.v. Ἐκχυτρον), or books on physiognomics, chiromancy, and divination by body-scanning (Bonnard et al. 2015; cf. Dasen 2015). The 'magical papyri' contain several schemes, ascribed to 'Democritus' and others, for foretelling a patient's death. Meta-levels of different kinds are represented by books that collected examples of specific kinds of signs, such as that of 'Aristander' on portents connected with trees (Pliny, *HN* 17.241–43), or Hylas' work on signs derived from the behaviour of birds not found in Italy (Pliny, *HN* 10.38), and philosophical or erudite speculation on how 'magic' might work (Graf 2002). In thus eliding distinctions between 'low' and 'honourable' practices, the nexus in the Roman empire between book-culture, intellectual activity and aspiration to social status (Johnson 2000; 2010, 22–31, 200–5) helped affirm practitioners' claims to objectified religious capital.

4 Choosing subordinated religious roles

In social formations in which status and life-chances are very largely ascribed, the field of religion provides, for the suitably talented, a major means of escaping such constraints and achieving at least a modicum of self-determination. Whatever the predisposing factors, such as family-tradition, emotional or mental instability (Crapanzano 1980), social marginality, blindness, or physical deformation, the notions of ‘talent’ and ‘calling’ are crucial. On the one hand, the massive investment by the politico-social élites, central and provincial, of the Hellenistic period and the Roman Empire in the maintenance of religious infrastructure and the calendar of festivals, guaranteed the meaningfulness of specialisation in the religious field. On the other, increasing physical mobility and access to new information formed the conditions necessary to the multiplication of small-time specialist roles. The crucial factors however must have been the movement of village practitioners, primarily male ‘wise-folk’, into urban contexts, and the increased competition to which they were exposed.

The place of the wise woman in a community, though ambivalent, was relatively secure. She, and those who dealt with her, had access to a range of motifs which could if necessary be brought into play: the heritability of special powers, the natural origin of plant and animal remedies, more remotely, figures of local myths and narratives; compensation was voluntary and in kind. One worked on developing an appropriate degree of individuation, balancing experiential knowledge, intuition, and inspiration with a hint of strangeness or ‘deviance’. The embodied religious capital that could thus be acquired was correspondingly limited. In Bourdieusian terms, this was a thin sub-field, where there was a high degree of uniformity of evaluation (Gorski 2013, 346). Much the same applies to (male) root-cutters or ‘wise-men’. In the absence of widespread disaster, there was little stimulus in the mainly agrarian context to innovate, either as regards claims or practices. Such innovation, which we may call ‘de-traditionalisation’, was only possible in the presence of a client-driven market for the management of contingency, and therefore of competition between those who offered such services – that is, in towns, and especially in ‘open’ towns with relatively rapid social change, such as ports, transit- and tourist-towns. Only under these conditions could the habitus of practical mastery be challenged. This pattern is clear in the case of root-cutters who acquired some wealth and social standing, became literate, and actually wrote compendia. Competition brought the subordinated practitioner, along with a sharper social profile, increased opportunities for money, influence and even fame, thus attracting gossip, envy and occasionally fear. Except in extreme situations, however, such as the wave of arrests and executions that followed the trial at Rome of M. Scribonius Libo Drusus in 16 CE, when 45 men and

85 women were put to death (Tacitus, *Ann.* 27; 29–31; Chron. 354 Ann. CCCLIV = Mommsen 1892, 145^{26–28}), envy and fear were outweighed by the utility of such specialists for different social groups in the face of perceived contingencies.

All these factors, the requirement to sell services in a market, the increase in usable information, creative experimentation with new techniques, and the ambivalence of the wider community towards such services, encouraged a degree of innovation. Competition brought varying fortunes, pushing some into the direction of professionalism, others into diversification, yet others into marginality. Increased professionalisation and diversification motivated the processes of turning regularities in procedures into systems and then into theories, such as ‘sympathy’ and ‘antipathy’, belief in distinguishable ‘powers’ in the natural world, or astrologically-warranted ‘moments’, which in turn affected practice. These in turn refined the network of ‘secondary elaborations’, subordinate beliefs that protect primary beliefs or claims. Professional practitioners drew upon the performances of competitors but also needed to define themselves against them, either by decrying their methods, by claiming to have improved them, or by denouncing them as fraudulent. All these moves induced individuals to break with prior models of action (i.e. their habitus) and develop their own standards, aims and techniques.

Both the scope of the transformation of prior strategies and the degree of self-referentiality increased, perhaps considerably, with the gradual emergence of professionalism in subordinated practice, that is, the extent to which such specialists could live off their practice by moving away from payment in naturalia towards monetary reward: the pace of such changes greatly increased in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. I would argue that such professionalism, and the opportunities for shifting away from embodied to objectified religious capital at the preferred level of practice/engagement, despite being contested elsewhere in the religious system, is the key to the intensification of individuation experienced by urban practitioners, or at any rate the most talented and entrepreneurial among them.

If we feel it necessary to specify, I would class this type of individuality as primarily competitive, based on the sense of self-determination and competence acquired through, and reinforced by, the accumulation of intensified embodied, and, in some cases, objectified religious capital. In general, however, it seems to me preferable to view the struggle of subordinated religious specialists not so much in terms of individuation as of competition for acknowledged religious capital. The subordination of these specialists did not simply result in victimisation: under advantageous circumstances it might offer the stimulus to explore new techniques and claims that could be cashed in as symbolic capital, thus forming the basis for the development of religious individuation.

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Jan N. Bremmer

Religion and the limits of individualisation in ancient Athens: Andocides, Socrates, and the fair-breasted Phryne

In a recent path-breaking study of the individual in the religions of the Ancient Mediterranean, classical Greece was almost entirely absent, except for a single contribution on the mystery cults (Waldner 2013). Does this mean that these cults were the only possible areas for the expression of individual ideas and practices in Greek religion? Does the stress on agency and communication in ancient religion help us to discover or recover the process of individualisation or individuality in ancient religion (Rüpke 2015, 2016)? Or should we, rather, pursue a different approach and a different term, such as ‘personal religion’ (Kindt 2015)? Ancient Greece has been a stepchild in previous discussions examining religious individualisation from a historical perspective. Yet Athens, in particular, offers various possibilities for an analysis of the problem of individual choices and their historical locations. The latter is important, as it is only through a comparison of the various historical circumstances that we can acquire a better insight into processes of individualisation.

Julia Kindt (2015, 45) has persuasively claimed that Theophrastus’ ‘Superstitious Man’ ‘illustrates the plurality of religious voices in the ancient Greek city’. This is true. Yet her observation also implies that there evidently existed a fair amount of freedom of expression within ancient Greek religion. If we follow the reasonable assumption that all free Athenians had this freedom, what then does ‘personal religion’ mean exactly? Is it really the right term? And what about the gender aspect? All of Kindt’s examples are of males, if I read her correctly. What neither she nor Jörg Rüpke comments upon are the limits of this personal freedom. Even if there is a spectrum of possibilities for personal agency, there must also be a limit. And this limit is established by the civic community when it accuses a person of *asebeia*, ‘impiety’. Although I agree with recent criticisms of the degree of importance attached to *polis* religion (Bremmer 2010; Rüpke 2011; Versnel 2011, 88–142; Kindt 2012), it remains a fact that the male members of the *polis* eventually determined what was allowed in religion and what not – even if messy margins arose from the process of establishing the limits of religious individuality. Of course, influential individuals were usually members of the higher classes and poorer and dependent persons probably had far fewer possibilities for developing their individuality, constrained as they were by poverty or slavery. Yet we should not deny them individuality either (Thomas 2010, 43).

Even when we accept that Athenians in classical times had a fair amount of religious leeway, there were also people who went too far and who provoked a negative reaction from their fellow citizens. These are the people in whom I am interested in this contribution, as they offer us a lens into personal religious motivations and convictions, a perspective that is almost non-existent in the case of most Athenians. As Arnaldo Momigliano (1987, 197) once observed, ‘we know little of how an individual behaved during his life in relation to the religious community to which he belonged’. Many Athenians may have made personal choices in matters of religion, but the outcome was not interesting or challenging enough to leave any traces in our evidence. This is different in those cases in which our sources report impiety trials. It is for this reason that these cases form the subject of my contribution to this publication.

Unfortunately, Athenian law is no easy matter to deal with and is, appropriately, the domain of true specialists. We do not have a detailed *code civil* or *pénal* to enlighten us as to what was permitted and what was unlawful in ancient Athens. Yet some qualities of that law are clear. The law stated the offence together with procedural consequences and the sentence. However, it fell to the members of the jury to decide whether the accusations brought before them really fitted the category of the offence, such as treason or impiety. This procedure left a free playing field for both the accusers and defenders of the defendant to make their cases in front of a jury of 501 male Athenians over thirty years old, all good men and true.

In my contribution, I will look at three well-known cases in which impiety played a role: the detail-rich trial of Andocides (§ 1), the famous trial of Socrates (§ 2), and the salacious trial of the courtesan Phryne (§ 3).¹ In all these cases, we have some information about the trial but never all the evidence that was once available to the jurors. In the case of Andocides, I discuss his trial in detail to give an idea of what was at stake in a trial for impiety and what arguments the prosecution could produce. Having looked at the trial, we then focus on its background in connection with the theme of individualisation. For the trial of Socrates, we will concentrate on the grounds for the prosecution and condemnation, and for that of Phryne we will try to reconstruct what this famous courtesan actually did in order to be brought to justice. In the conclusion (§ 4) we will tie these cases closer to the subject of religion and individualisation.

¹ For a very full discussion of all Athenian impiety trials, see Filonik 2013 and, from a more narrative perspective, Filonik 2016.

1 The case against Andocides

Usually, when studying trials in classical Athens, we are confronted with a dearth of sources. Rarely do we get a view from both the defence and the prosecution: it is only in the cases of Demosthenes and Aeschines that we have two speeches from the same trial that can both be relied upon, viz. in the Embassy trial of 343 BC and the Crown trial of 330 BC. The prehistory of a case usually has to be reconstructed from the internal evidence of one speech, and often the outcome of the trial remains uncertain, unless it is particularly famous, as in the case of Socrates (see below, § 2). This makes the case we start with all the more interesting, as we do have quite a bit of information about the preceding events, which were nothing less than spectacular. Our main focus will be Lysias 6, a speech for the prosecution of Andocides, one of the great Athenian orators. It was probably in the autumn of 400 BC that our trial took place, but its roots go back to 415 BC (Furley 1996, not always persuasive).

In the summer of that fateful year, the Athenians went off to conquer Sicily with their fleet. The failure of the expedition was the beginning of the end for Athenian hegemony, both politically and, it might be argued, culturally. Yet before the fleet had even set sail, the city was rocked by two great scandals: the profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries and, only shortly before the date of departure, the mutilation of the herms (most recently, Murray 1990; Graf 2000; Todd 2004; Hornblower 2008, 367–72; Osborne 2010, 341–67 [the herms]; Rubel 2000, 2014). Andocides was implicated in both scandals and had to leave the city, although he escaped execution by turning informer. When he finally managed to return after the political amnesty of 403 BC, he was indicted for having transgressed a decree by a certain Isotimides that barred people guilty of impiety from the Agora and the sanctuaries. Andocides was accused of having entered the Eleusinian sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, in violation of this decree. Moreover, some days before the trial, he was additionally accused of having put a suppliant-branch on the altar of the two goddesses, which was forbidden during the time of the performance of the Mysteries, from September the 19th to the 22nd, which gives us the *terminus post quem* after which the trial must have soon taken place. We also have the speech in which Andocides defended himself. However, for our present purposes we will concentrate on the speech of the prosecution, although with half an eye on Andocides' defence.

The speech is not without problems. For the present, we can agree with the conclusion of Stephen Todd after a detailed discussion of all the various suspicious aspects of the speech: 'what we have is in origin and in essence a genuine speech delivered at the trial', with probably a few post-trial revisions and

additions.² Moreover, the speech is not complete and seems to have been considerably longer than what we have now (Todd 2007, 408). The speaker of the speech is not mentioned by name, but there are strong arguments that he was Meletos, one of the accusers of Socrates (Martin 2007, 149–51; Todd 2007, 408–11). As said, we also have the defence speech by Andocides himself and it is clear from his later political career that he won the case; had he lost he would almost certainly have been executed for his impiety.

So, let us now turn to the speech of the prosecution, which starts with an example of impiety. A man gave a horse to a temple, presumably that of Eleusis, but stole it back afterwards. Consequently, he was no longer able to eat and perished from hunger (Lysias 6.1). The prosecutor mentions this event as a story told by the hierophant, the most important priest of the Eleusinian Mysteries. It is unclear from the speech whether it is the currently officiating priest or an earlier one but this detail is unimportant. We are, presumably at the beginning of the speech, already confronted with the grave consequences of a transgression against one of the most holy cults of Athens: the Eleusinian cult of Demeter and Kore. Evidently, sinning against these goddesses was a certain invitation to the most terrible of consequences (Bremmer 2019). It is a fairly natural transition from this anecdote to the speaker suggesting that if Andocides emerges as a free man from his trial he could be elected Basileus, the leading civic official at the Mysteries, who was responsible for ensuring that no impious acts were performed during the Mysteries (4). What impression would that make on those coming to be initiated or simply to have a good time at the fair of the Mysteries (5)?

In fact, it would be impossible both to stick to the ancestral customs and to retain Andocides, the prosecutor continues, and he mentions that only shortly after his return from exile Andocides had charged a certain Archippos with impiety, *nota bene*, against his own ancestral herm, presumably the one in front of his house (11). This was a rather audacious charge given that Andocides himself was implicated in the scandal of the mutilation of the herms in 415. The fact that Archippos could escape the charge by paying some kind of fine (12) seems to suggest a certain amount of guilt but also that there was no appetite for repeating the prosecution of 415 BC when a considerable number of people were executed and/or their goods confiscated.

Subsequently, the prosecutor mentions various objections that could be raised against a condemnation (13–15). Yet if the Athenians ban people from cities in which they have wounded or mutilated others, and execute them should they

² Todd 2007, 407 (quotation). For my translations, I follow Todd, whose commentary has also been very helpful.

return to those cities, how can they let Andocides return to the sanctuaries of the gods whose statues he had mutilated? The objection (15) does not seem to be very strong since Andocides did not enter a sanctuary of Hermes, whose statue he was supposed to have mutilated; in fact, sanctuaries of Hermes did not even exist in Athens (Versnel 2011, 350f.) but strict logic cannot be expected here. And if other cities excluded people from their sanctuaries because of impiety committed in Athens, why should not the Athenians themselves be more careful in this respect (16)? The more so as Andocides is even more impious than the ‘atheist’ Diagoras, who committed words of impiety against rites and festivals not of his own city, whereas the former committed those acts against his own city (17) – an interesting ‘local’ view of Greek religion. Andocides was even so impious as to become a ship-owner who expected to be safe at sea (19), an argument brilliantly used and turned to his own advantage by Andocides in his defence speech (Andocides 1.137–39). The prosecutor concludes this part of his speech by noting that gods do not always punish instantaneously like humans but often let their children pay the price for the crimes of their ancestors (Gagné 2013), if they do not die prematurely themselves (20). In other words, according to the speaker the gods punish criminals during their lives or via their children but not via a post-mortem punishment, as happened to the great mythological sinners Tantalus and Sisyphus. Our speaker may be traditional in his beliefs but he is not terribly religious.

After these ‘religious’ arguments our speaker, somewhat abruptly, continues with a report of Andocides’ life since his release from prison for his participation in the scandal of the herms. This report, the truth of which we cannot verify, consists of a series of crimes Andocides purportedly committed when travelling from one place to the next during his exile (21–29). His constant suffering is clearly meant to be seen as a slow punishment by the gods for his impiety (32).³ Andocides even goes so far as to give advice in religious matters, such as sacrifices and processions (33) – evidently a behaviour that is supposed to make the audience’s blood curdle.

The prosecutor proceeds to outline possible lines of defence to which Andocides may resort and which do not concern us here (35–49) before returning at the end to the crimes Andocides was supposed to have committed in 415 BC: ‘This man put on a robe, imitating the sacred rites, and displayed them to those who were not initiates. He spoke out loud the words which must not be spoken. He mutilated those of the gods whom we worship, and to whom we sacrifice and pray, honouring them and purifying ourselves’ (51). The prosecutor pulls no punches and even conflates the two scandals, the profanation of the Mysteries

3 Todd 2007, 461–62 compares Lysias, fr. 195 Thalheim.

and the mutilation of the herms, although Andocides was only implicated in the latter scandal to some extent and strongly denied any connection with the former. In addition, and he now returns to the actual charge, Andocides had transgressed the law of Athens by sacrificing on altars he was not allowed to and even by entering the Eleusinion and washing himself in its lustral basin – something he, due to the impurities of his previous life, should not have done. By purifying the city of Andocides, the prosecutor suggests, the city would expel a scapegoat, the ritual figure whose ritual expulsion purified the city yearly, even though we cannot be sure if that ritual was still practised around 400 BC (53) (Bremmer 2008, 175–96).

The speech concludes with advice given by the son of a hierophant, that is, once again by somebody associated with the holy Mysteries of Eleusis. This man recommended to always put somebody guilty of impiety on trial so that every juror would individually have to decide what the verdict should be (54). And this is how the jurors should act with Andocides: ‘He will beg and beseech you, but do not have pity. It is not those who die justly, but those who do so unjustly, who deserve your pity’ (55).

There are several problems with this speech, one of which is that the religious content has sometimes been overemphasised: we lack part of the speech and in the surviving part the prosecutor focuses in particular on religion at the beginning and at the end. The missing parts may well have been filled with further accounts of supposed crimes committed by Andocides. Yet it is clear that when religion plays a role, the speaker is at pains to connect Andocides’ misdeeds to the Eleusinian Mysteries, whose most important priestly *genos*, the Eumolpids, he mentions three times (2, 10, 54). This is perhaps not surprising, as we know from Andocides’ own speech that the jury consisted exclusively of citizens who had been initiated into the Mysteries (Andocides 1.29). Moreover, there is a focus on purity. Andocides had polluted the holy water of Eleusis, which means that everybody else using that water would be polluted. However, by being accompanied out of the city as a scapegoat he would make Athens pure again. It is not only in connection to the gods that Andocides is an impious figure but, by implication, he is also somebody who disturbs the civic cohesion (Martin 2007, 148).

The content of this speech makes much of impiety by focusing on religious matters. This should not give the impression that such a focus was normal. On the contrary. It is one of the surprising outcomes of a recent study that religion played a lesser role than we would have expected even in accusations of impiety (Martin 2007). In our case, the prosecutor stressed the role of the Eleusinian Mysteries as perhaps the most prestigious cult of the Athenians. Given that Andocides was accused of having committed an impiety by entering the Eleusinian sanctuary, one must say that the speech is fairly focused. The speaker can hardly have been the main prosecutor, who was a certain Cephisius (Andocides 1.121),

but he will have been one of the supporting cast in the prosecution who focused on one of the aspects of the case. Another of the prosecutors, possibly even the driving force behind the accusations as Andocides claimed (Andocides 1.117–31), was Callias, so well known from Plato's dialogues. Callias belonged to the second priestly *genos* of Eleusis, the Kerykes, and occupied the position of Dadouchos, the second most important office in the Eleusinian Mysteries. As Andocides himself may well have also been a member of the Kerykes, there seems to be an Eleusinian subtext to the trial that escapes us (Todd 2007, 402). In the end, we cannot judge how many acts of impiety were raised against Andocides, as only this speech survives, whereas the main speech, and perhaps others, must have concentrated on other aspects of the charges. One cannot escape the impression that religion was just one of the grounds for accusation. Other speakers most likely also returned to the events of 415 BC.

When we look back at the accusations, we see that they all try to paint Andocides as negatively as possible. This vilification undoubtedly has to be connected with Andocides' implication in the mutilation of the herms scandal of 415 BC. What is interesting to us is that despite the seriousness of the impiety at issue, it was possible for an Athenian to escape condemnation. The outcome of the trial is, therefore, a very interesting testimony to the leeway Athenians had in matters of religion. If levelled at the wrong moment, a charge of impiety could be fatal, while at another more felicitous time one might escape without serious damage (see below § 4).

At the same time, the trial of Andocides took place against the background of the biggest religious scandals Athens had ever known, even though these were already fifteen years in the past: the profanation of the Mysteries and the mutilation of the herms, both of which are referred to by the prosecutor. In the case of the profanation, the actual performance of the Eleusinian Mysteries was parodied. In the case of the herms, the faces of the statues of the god were mutilated, their phalluses lopped off and the statues themselves sometimes knocked over (Hornblower 2008, 372–75). These targets were not just chosen arbitrarily. The Mysteries were the most solemn and prestigious festival of Athens, and Hermes was the god most popular on vase paintings and the only one who was the object of real human affection (Versnel 2011, 335–43). Fritz Graf (2000, 123), followed by Simon Hornblower (2008, 371f.), plays down the identity of Hermes and herm. However, the identity of god and statue was a recurrent feature all through antiquity (Bremmer 2013; Hölscher 2017, 86–102) and vase paintings regularly show the statue of Hermes moving towards or otherwise communicating with the worshipper, the only god to do so regularly (Klöckner, in preparation). Consequently, both religious transgressions struck at the heart of Athenian religion.

In the current discussions, religious individualisation in antiquity is mainly studied in connection with changes in religion or transformations of traditional piety. In these Athenian cases, however, we can see groups of people rejecting traditional piety. The recurring atheistic statements in Euripides' tragedies show that such views formed part of contemporary discourse (Lefkowitz 1987, 1989; Riedweg 1990a, b). Moreover, Euripides' late tragedies problematise the position of the gods: his *Ion* and *Orestes* show the protagonists Creusa and Orestes deserted by the gods, while in his *Helen* and *Iphigeneia in Tauris* gods no longer play a significant role. In Thucydides, the gods are simply absent and the religious factor is almost neglected in his work (Yunis 1988; Fusillo 1992 (with extensive bibliographies); Hornblower 2010, 25–53; Whitmarsh 2015, 97–114), just as the name of a sacrilegious club like the *Kakodaimonistai*, 'Worshippers of bad luck', show to what extent many in the upper classes had become estranged from traditional religion (Murray 2000).

In modern times, voluntary associations proliferated from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, thickening the space of the social and enabling the quick communication of new ideas (Hunt 2014, 85–86). We may well see a similar process at work in antiquity, as the blasphemous acts were perpetrated by members of political clubs, upper-class and often not that old – Andocides was about 25 in 415 BC.⁴ It seems likely that the new ideas about the gods and new lifestyles, such as Orphism,⁵ were discussed in these clubs and thus more rapidly diffused than would otherwise have been the case.

The affairs of 415 BC, then, point to a religious climate in which many of the upper classes may have started to debate about, or even doubt, the gods, but only a few actually went so far as to make fun of them. This approach was clearly the choice of a minority but their exploration of the religious possibilities evidently went too far for most of the population. Precisely this tension also lies at the root of the most famous Athenian trial for impiety, to which we now turn.

2 The trial of Socrates

Around 180 AD, the pagan satirist Lucian published a blistering attack on the pagan philosopher Peregrinus, about whom he noted some interesting details concerning the latter's Christian period. As he observed, in the Christian

⁴ McGlew 1999; Hornblower 2008, 378 and 916–9. Note also the prominence of youths in the oligarchic revolution of 411: Thucydides 9.69.4; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.23.

⁵ Cf. Euripides, *Hipp.* 986–87 where Hippolytus refers to a small group of age-mates.

congregation Peregrinus was only second after Jesus, ‘whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced that new cult into the world’ (*Peregrinus* 11). Why would Lucian think that Jesus was killed because he had introduced a new cult? The answer is perhaps somewhat surprising. In 399 BC, the Athenians had brought Socrates to trial on the following charge of impiety, *graphê asebeias*: ‘Socrates does wrong by not acknowledging the gods the city acknowledges, and introducing other, new powers (*daimonia*). He also does wrong by corrupting the young. The penalty should be death.’⁶ Evidently, many Athenians saw Socrates as somebody who had introduced new divinities (Parker 1996, 199–207; Rubel 2000, 342–63 = 2014, 74–98; Millett 2005; Ober 2011; Versnel 2011, 554–59; Bremmer 2017, 73). This had not escaped Justin Martyr, who noted that Socrates was condemned on the charge of ‘introducing new divinities (*daimonia*)’ and compared him to Jesus: Justin (*I Apol.* 5, cf. Pfäffisch 1908) clearly knew the official Athenian charge. The Christians even called Peregrinus a ‘new Socrates’ (12), just as they occasionally compared Christian martyrs to Socrates. In fact, the Smyranean martyr Pionius, who died under the persecution of the Emperor Decius, compared himself not only to Socrates but also to Aristides and Anaxarchus, other pagan ‘saints’ (*Martyrium Pionii* 12). By relating Jesus and their own martyrs to pagan examples of virtue, the early Christians removed them from the criminal sphere and claimed the moral high ground (Harnack 1906, 17–49, criticised by Geffcken 1908; Benz 1950/51; Döring 1979, 143–61; Dassmann 1993, 39; Baumeister 2009, 22–8). The example shows the longevity of the tradition of the trial of Socrates and what one group of people in antiquity appropriated from that trial. We notice that the Christians focused on only one part of the accusation, but at least they stuck to the original charge.

The preservation of (part of) the original charge was not a given, as becomes clear when we get much closer to the actual event. Only some fifty-five years after Socrates’ execution, the orator Aeschines stated in an attack on his opponent Demosthenes: ‘After all, men of Athens, you did put to death Socrates the Sophist, because he was shown to have been the teacher of Critias, one of the Thirty (Tyrants) who subverted your democracy’ (*Against Timarchos* 173). Interestingly, nothing is mentioned here about the religious charge of introducing new gods; Aeschines refers only to Critias, who might indeed count as an example of a corrupted youth, as he was a follower of Socrates in his younger days (van der Horst 2006; Danzig 2014). And indeed, according to the Attic rhetor Polycrates

⁶ The original wording has been handed down by Favorinus, fr. 34 Barigazzi (*apud* Diogenes Laertius 2.40), tr. R. Parker; note also Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1.1, *Apology* 10; Plato, *Apology* 24b8–c1, *Eutyphron* 3b; Philodemus, *On Piety*, 1696–97 Obbink; Servius on Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.187.

(fragment 8 Sauppe), who wrote a speech for the prosecution, Socrates had been the teacher of another notorious politician, Alcibiades. Since Xenophon notes that one of the speeches for the prosecution mentioned that Socrates had been the teacher of Critias, the most notorious of the Thirty Tyrants whose rule of terror in 404/403 had been responsible for the murder of many wealthy Athenians, it seems reasonable to suppose that Aeschines draws on this same speech (Isocrates 11.5; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.12). When we consider what the collective memory of Athens would have cared to remember about the trial, it seems, perhaps, less strange that they did not choose to focus on the issue of the new gods. The tyranny of the Thirty had been a traumatic experience for Athens, and its many murders and confiscations must have left a much deeper impression on the collective memory than did the charge of introducing new deities.

Although, unfortunately, much less clearly expressed than by Aeschines, the rhetor Hyperides seems to refer to the same charges when he said of the Athenians, only forty years after the trial (around 360 BC when some of the witnesses to the trial would still have been alive), that their ancestors had punished Socrates *epi logois*, ‘for his words’, rather than for his deeds (Hyperides, fr. 59 Sauppe = fr. 65 Jensen). Evidently, in Hyperides’ recounting, it had not been for something Socrates had done that he was put to death but for what he had said. These, admittedly few, words also seem to point towards Socrates’ teaching rather than any undemocratic acts.

We can now see that the official charge did not play the dominant role we might expect from a modern perspective. In fact, although at an Athenian trial a person could be convicted of one crime only, the prosecution could, and often did, produce people who enlarged upon that one charge and even produced new arguments, unrelated to the charge, in order to influence the jury (Hansen 1995, 12–13). Thus Xenophon mentions also the charge that,

Socrates induces those who converse with him to scorn the laws by calling it madness to allow our magistrates to be selected by lot whereas no one would be willing to take a pilot, an architect or even a teacher of music on the same terms. But mistakes in such matters would be far less fatal than errors in what concerns the *polis*. In the young such arguments stir up contempt of the constitution and make them violent.

(Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.9, tr. Hansen)

Here we see a completely different argument altogether, viz. inducement to scorn the laws, in which the young are mentioned at the end. The vulnerable young are certainly important here but they are clearly not the exclusive object of this charge, which went much further and seemingly included all Athenians.

Socrates, on the other hand, seems to have directed his own response to the charge of ‘atheism’. He first denied that he had taken any interest in natural

philosophy, probably in order not to be associated with philosophers such as Anaxagoras, who had denied the moon its divine status and therefore had also been charged with impiety (Parker 1996, 208f.; Whitmarsh 2015, 115–24; Haake 2016). He also countered the charge of atheism by invoking his *daimonion* in order to prove that he believed in the gods. The latter argument can hardly have been very persuasive, given the personal character of his protective spirit (Lännström 2012; Brandt 2017). Finally, he pointed to his own decent behaviour during the trial of the Athenian generals who had been summarily executed in 407 and his refusal to cooperate with the Thirty (Plato, *Apology* 32B-D; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1.18).

In one of the best recent discussions, Mogens Hansen (1995, 26) states that ‘Socrates was sentenced for not sharing the ordinary Athenian’s views about the gods, and probably also for having criticised the democratic institutions’. I am not sure that this is the right way to formulate the problem, as we have very little knowledge of what the ordinary Athenian thought about the gods. When we now look back at the charge against Socrates we can see that it contained three elements: (1) not acknowledging the gods, (2) introducing new ones, and (3) the corruption of youth. Let us briefly consider the modern discussions of these three points.

First, it seems that there was indeed resentment in Athens about the manner in which some philosophers, such as Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia, talked about the gods. Yet ‘in practice, no doubt, the Athenians very rarely moved against verbal impiety’ (Parker 1996, 209). Secondly, it is true, as we will see shortly (below § 3), that in the course of the fourth century people were charged with, and sometimes condemned to death for, introducing new gods. However, by 400 BC we have a century behind us in which Athens had seen the introduction of many new cults and gods, from Bendis to Asclepius and from Adonis to Sabazius. Yet we do not have a single reliable example of anybody being executed for such an introduction (Parker 1996, 152–98 and 2011, 273–77). In fact, Socrates is the first we know of to have been charged in this way.

This leaves us with the third accusation, that Socrates corrupted the young. It is exactly this aspect of the charge that we saw mentioned in references to the trial over the following decades. From Plato’s *Apology* (33 A-B) we can see that Plato thought it necessary for his Socrates to deny that he had been any man’s teacher or that he had asked fees for his teachings, as the sophists were wont to do (Fredal 2008). Evidently, Socrates’ connection with the sophists was the background for the charge of corrupting the young, as Plato also realised. The connection was already a main topic of Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, of which a version from the early 410s has survived (Laks and Saetta Cottone 2013), but in the *Birds* of 414 BC Socrates is also closely associated with Laconising tendencies and his admiration for Sparta must have been well known (Dunbar 1995, 636–37; Laks and Saetta Cottone 2013). In short, Socrates was closely connected not only to

Athens' archenemies but also to politicians such as Alcibiades and Critias who had inflicted so much misery on the city in recent decades.

In the end, we cannot be certain about the motives of the jurors but the evidence we do have points towards a preponderance of political motives rather than religious ones,⁷ as indeed seems to have been the case in several other Athenian trials of that time.⁸ Yet the religious side should not be neglected altogether. Xenophon, who was a contemporary of the trial, relates in his *Apology* (14.3) that a number of jurors felt *phthonos*, 'envy', towards Socrates in response to the special relationship with the divine that he claimed. In the end, we simply cannot be certain of the motives of the jurors, but we do note that the later Greek tradition, with the exception of Christian swriters, hardly paid any attention to the religious issue, a fact that has not been taken into account in recent discussions.

3 The trial of Phryne

After the trial of Socrates, the next most famous Athenian impiety trial, certainly in terms of later interest, is surely that of the famous courtesan Phryne. In modern times, sculptors (Jean-Jacques Pradier, *Phryne*, 1844–45, cf. Lapaire 2010, 331–33), painters,⁹ poets (Ryan 1993), novelists,¹⁰ detectives,¹¹ composers (Camille Saint-Saëns, *Phryné*, 1893; Edmund Eysler, *Phryne*, 1906), and even a modern movie director,¹² have all been inspired by her trial, although rather by the supposed climax than by the accusation of impiety levelled against her. Yet her case is a clear-cut trial for impiety and deserves to be analysed in closer detail.¹³

⁷ This seems at least clear for one of the prosecutors, Anytus, see Sato 2005–2008; Lenfant 2015.

⁸ Cf. Parker 1995, 202: 'It may be that an accusation of impiety was almost never brought before an Athenian court without political anxiety or hatred being in the background'; Todd 2007, 411: 'the political subtext that is common in impiety trials at Athens', cf. his commentary on *Speeches* 5–7 of Lysias.

⁹ Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Phryné devant l'aréopage*, 1861, cf. Vouilloux 2002; more in general, Wittenburg 2007, 210–4; Corpataux 2009; Kepetzi 2011, 301–5.

¹⁰ Nonce Casanova, *Phryné: roman de la Grèce antique* (Paris, ?1900, often reprinted). The name looks like a pseudonym, the more so as nothing seems to be known about the author (b. 1873).

¹¹ The Phryne Fisher historical mysteries by Kerry Greenwood, cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerry_Greenwood (accessed 3-1-2017).

¹² Mario Bonnard, *Frine, cortigiana d'Oriente*, 1953: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frine,_cortigiana_d%27Oriente (accessed 3-1-2017), cf. Cavallini 2008, 214–7; Schrödl 2013.

¹³ For Phryne and her trial, see more recently Bartolini 1977, 116–9 (with previous bibliography); Versnel 1990, 118–19 (several mistakes in his Greek quotations), 127–9; Cooper 1995; Parker 1996, 162–63, 214–17; Gherchanoc 2012; Eidinow 2016, 23–30.

Phryne was born in Boeotian Thespieae and came to Athens as a child, probably around 370 BC, where she lived the rest of her career (all data: Raubitschek 1941). Around 347 or 338 BC, she was accused by a former lover, Euthias,¹⁴ of impiety. A summary of the charges against her have been preserved in a third-century AD anonymous rhetorical treatise, the so-called *Anonymus Seguerianus*, which contains the abbreviated version of an earlier treatise, of which the date is unknown. By all accounts, the source is reasonably early and, it seems, reliable. It reports: ‘Phryne accused of impiety: for she held a procession in the Lykeion, introduced a new god and assembled revel bands of men and women’. The report continues with what is probably the summing up of the prosecutor: ‘So I have demonstrated to you that Phryne is impious: she has led scandalous revels, is the introducer of a new god and assembled unlawful revel bands of men and women’.¹⁵

Phryne was the most beautiful courtesan of her times and many passages from ancient authors testify to the spell of her beauty (Morales 2011). It is evident that this beauty saved her in the end, but our sources are divided regarding the manner in which she achieved this result. Our oldest source, Posidippus, a comic poet of the end of the fourth century – thus not that long after the trial – mentions that: ‘Though she is reputed to have done great harm to lives, she captured the court with regard to her life, and by taking the hand of the jurors one by one – a not unusual gesture in cases of supplication (Boegehold 1999, 19; Naiden 2006, 102; Pedrina 2006) – with her tears she barely saved her life’ (fr. 13 Kassel-Austin). Yet around the same time, we hear of the most famous version, that is, that thinking his case lost Hyperides ripped open the dress of Phryne and showed her breasts to the jurors, who were struck by a superstitious fear that they might kill a priestess of Aphrodite (presumably because of her beauty) and let her off¹⁶; a later version even has Phryne herself ripping open her dress (Alciphron 4.4).

Now, the gesture of baring the breasts was not unknown in cases of supplication and all jurors must have been familiar with the passage of the *Iliad* (22.77–91) in which Hecuba bares a breast in order to persuade Hector not to confront

¹⁴ Hyperides, fr. 172, 176 Jensen; Alciphron 4.3–5; Cooper 1995, 309–10.

¹⁵ *Anonymus Seguerianus* 215: ἀσεβείας κρινομένη ἡ Φρύνη· καὶ γὰρ ἐκώμασεν ἐν Λυκείῳ καὶ καινὸν εἰσήγαγε θεὸν καὶ θιάσους ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν συνήγαγεν· ἐπέδειξα τοῖσιν ὑμῖν ἀσεβῆ Φρύνην, κωμάσασαν ἀναιδῶς, καινοῦ θεοῦ εἰσηγήτριαν, θιάσους ἀνδρῶν ἐκθέσμους καὶ γυναικῶν συναγαγοῦσαν’. Parker 1996, 193 n. 148 notes that the terms συνήγαγεν and συναγαγοῦσαν are technical terms for the recruitment of temporary (Dem. 19.281; *IG* II² 1177.4) or permanent (*IG* II² 1297.4) *thiasoi*, to which the case of Phryne has to be added.

¹⁶ Idomeneus of Lampsacus, *FGrHist* 338 F 14 = Brill New Jacoby 338 F 14A with Cooper *ad loc.*; Hermippus of Smyrna, *FGrH* 1026 F 46 with Bollansée *ad loc.*; Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.15.9; [Plutarch], *X orat.* 849D-E; Athenaeus 13.590D-F; Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 2.4.

Achilles – a maternal gesture also attested of Clytemnaestra and Jocaste.¹⁷ Of a more sexual nature is the case of Helen, who avoided being murdered by Menelaos by showing her, undoubtedly beautiful, breasts.¹⁸ Similar cases of supplication, but also with erotic undertones, are the shedding of their dresses by the young girls Iphigeneia, Polyxena and Makaria at the very moment that they were to be sacrificed.¹⁹ In short, the supplicatory gesture of the baring of the breasts was certainly not unknown, although it is exploited here to great effect. The fact that our earliest source does not mention the baring has raised doubts about the reliability of the anecdote, but the testimony of a comic poet out of context can hardly be considered decisive.²⁰ Given that Phryne was a courtesan, it might have been thought that her naked beauty was well known. However, it is precisely of Phryne that we are told that nobody ever saw her naked, except during her participation in the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Posidonia of Aegina.²¹ The unveiling of her breasts therefore, if it actually happened, must have been a truly sensational moment.

Unfortunately, the speech in her defence by Hyperides has survived only in uninformative fragments (fr. 171–180 Jensen). This is all the more regrettable as the speech was highly admired in antiquity for its grace, *subtilitas*, and ability to invoke pity.²² It seems that all the accusations were related to the introduction of a new god: Isodaïtes. We are poorly informed about this god, and recent discussions have not taken account of the fact that our main information derives from Hyperides' own speech, in which he had the greatest interest in depicting this god as bad and as insignificant as possible. The lexicographers relate the following: 'Isodaïtes, mentioned by Hyperides in his oration for Phryne. Some foreign *daimôn* for whom lower-class women, especially those of little virtue, used to practise mysteries'.²³

17 Euripides, *Phoen.* 1567–9 (Jocaste), *Electra* 1206 and *Orestes* 526–9, 839–43 (Clytemnaestra).

18 Lesches, *Ilias parva*, fr. 17; Euripides, *Andromache* 628–31; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 148–54, 155–56.

19 Iphigeneia: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 239, cf. Harder 2002, 111–12. Polyxena: Euripides, *Hecuba* 558–61. Makaria: Euripides, *Heraclidae* 561. In general: Cohen 1997.

20 For a persuasive defence of the authenticity of the event, see Raubitschek 1941, 906.

21 Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.15.9; Athenaeus 13.590F, cf. the painting by Henryk Siemiradzki, *Phryne at the Poseidonia in Eleusis* (sic), c. 1889. Parker 2011, 175 mistakenly charges Phryne with 'exhibitionism', as he lets Aristippus dally with Phryne on Aegina, whereas the Cynic philosopher did it with the Egyptian courtesan Lais (Athenaeus 13.588E).

22 Dionysius Hal. *De imit.* 5.6; Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.77, 10.5.2, cf. 1.5.61 = Corvinus fr.22 Malcovati; [Longinus] *Subl.* 34.3f.

23 Hyperides, fr. 177 = Harpocration s.v. = Photius ι 224 Theodoridis = Suda ι 648 Adler: Ἴσοδαίτης· Ὑπ. ἐν τῷ ὑπὲρ Φρ. ξενικός τις δαίμων, ᾧ τὰ δημόδη γυναῖκα καὶ μὴ πάνυ σπουδαῖα ἐτέλει.

It seems that little was known about this divinity, whose earthly career surely was finished after the trial. Later authors connect him with Dionysos or Pluto,²⁴ but it is clear that they had no independent information.²⁵ His name, ‘equal divider’, seems to point to symposia, as the term occurs, albeit only once outside reports of Phryne’s trial, in a symposiastic context.²⁶ The other aspects mentioned also seem to fit the context of the symposium, as it was normal to hold a procession after a symposium (Ghiron-Bistagne 1976, 207–97; Pütz 2003). The *thiasoi*, ‘revel bands’, mentioned also fit perfectly with the context of Phryne. Robert Parker (1996, 338–39) has argued that it was a typically third-century term for ‘societies of foreigners gathered round a native god’. Moreover, these societies did not contain citizens as members but mainly foreigners and slaves, who also typically honoured a foreign god. Parker does not mention Phryne in this context, but it seems that this was one of the first cases of such a *thiasos*, which, admittedly, had gathered around a recently invented god rather than a native divinity and, moreover, was constituted of both men and women.

There is a final aspect to Phryne’s innovative rituals that also deserves to be mentioned. I have translated the Greek ἐτέλει in Hyperides’ description of Iso-daites (note 75) as ‘practised mysteries’. This is, of course, not certain as it could also be translated as ‘practised rituals’. Yet Greek *teletê* is often used for mysteries or a mysteries-like ritual (Dunbabin 2008; Schuddeboom 2009; Pirenne-Delforge 2016). Moreover, among the few fragments of Hyperides’ speech we find several references to terms deriving from the Eleusinian Mysteries (Hyperides, fr. 174, 175; Pollux 8.123–24, 141, cf. O’Connell 2013). I take it, therefore, that the cult of Iso-daites contained mysteries-like features, which were contrasted with those of the Eleusinian Mysteries. In fact, we know that also in another contemporaneous trial for impiety, that against the actually executed priestess Nino, remarkably similar accusations were used: ‘assembling *thiasoi*’ (Dem. 39.2, 40.9) and mocking the (surely Eleusinian) mysteries (Scholion on Dem. 19.281) (all evidence: Parker 1996, 163 n. 34; Eidinow 2016, 17–23).

Looking back, we can see, however vaguely, the picture of an enterprising woman who founded a new cult, centred on a god connected to the symposium, with Dionysiac features to the ritual but probably also mysteric aspects. Phryne

²⁴ Plutarch, *Mor.* 389a (Dionysos); Hesychius ι 953 Latte: Ἴσοδαίτης· ὑπ’ ἐνίων ὁ Πλούτων· ὑπὸ δὲ ἄλλων ὁ Πλούτωνος υἱός.

²⁵ As rightly noted by Parker 1996, 163 n. 34. This is overlooked by Versnel 1990, 119, who wants Iso-daites to be a double of Dionysos for his interpretation of Euripides’ *Bacchae*.

²⁶ Lucian, *Sat.* 32: ὁ ἰσοδαίτης τούτου ἕνεκα ἡγεῖται ὑμῖν τῶν συμποσίων, ὡς τὸ ἴσον ἅπαντες ἔχοιεν, Versnel 1990, 119 n. 93 also refers to Euripides, *Bacchae* 421–3: ἴσαν δ’ ἕξ τε τὸν ὄλβιον / τὸν τε χειρῶνα δῶκ’ ἔχειν / οἴνου τέρψιν ἄλυπον.

seems to have made a *bricolage* of various cults and rituals that attracted men and women, whereas normally Dionysiac groups at that time consisted of either men or women. We should not forget that Phryne, as a non-Athenian woman and a courtesan, had no access to the civic cults, with the exception of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and was excluded from the most prestigious Athenian women's festival, the Thesmophoria (Bremmer 2014, 168–77). Demosthenes' oration *Against Neaira* shows how dangerous it could be for a non-Athenian courtesan to try to behave as a citizen woman. It seems reasonable to suppose that Phryne tried to compensate for these social and religious handicaps by constructing her own cult, just as, through the centuries, women have either founded or joined new cults and religions to enable their self-realisation (Bremmer 2017, 33–41).

However, by following this course, Phryne was treading on very dangerous grounds. The Athenians saw *thiasoi* of non-Athenians as revel-bands that were, potentially, centres of crime and social subversion. In the case of the Boeotian Phryne, the prosecutor used this feeling and connected it to the charge of introducing a new god. As Parker (1996, 163) notes, 'the unlicensed god is exposed to suspicion, hostility, contempt, and the threat of actual repressive action'. Two other cases are known from the fourth century in which women were executed on the basis of comparable charges – presumably lacking advocates of the calibre of Hyperides to speak on their behalf (Trampedach 2001; Eidinow 2010). In the case of Phryne, her high visibility as a top courtesan coupled with her non-Athenian status must have made her vulnerable in any case. By infringing on the religious domain, she challenged fate. Her beauty, if not her breasts, did save her, but by all accounts it was a narrow escape.

4 Conclusion

What can we conclude from our cases? The religious norm in Athens was *eusebeia*, commonly translated as 'piety' and connected to a root **seb-*, 'retreat in awe'. In the classical period, however, the element of reverence had come to the fore and was even extended to loving parents and patriotism. An important element of piety was keeping the ancestral customs. As Isocrates (7.39) observed: 'piety consists not in expensive expenditures but in changing nothing of what our ancestors have handed down' (Dover 1974, 246–54; Bruit Zaidman 2001; Beekes 2010, 2, 1315–16). Transgressions of the norm included wrongdoing during a festival, theft of sacred money, temple robbing, harm to sacred olives and, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, impiety, as we would expect the other offences to be included under impiety rather than separated out. Yet its separate mention suggests that

impiety, *asebeia*, was a kind of rest category that evidently had no defined content and no fixed penalty (Parker 2005, 65, cf. Eidinow 2016, 48–62; Naiden 2016).

Moreover, an important problem that remains is the character of the law against impiety: was it procedural or substantive? Although not focusing on impiety, Edwin Harris has argued that the Athenian law was substantive (Harris 2009–2010), whereas others have taken a more procedural view (Todd 1993, 61 n. 14, 64–7) or have even argued that the law on impiety was non-specific (Macdowell 1978, 197–202; Parker 1996, 215). As far as I can see, there is no decisive evidence to decide the case, but the fact that only late sources speak of a formal law against the introduction of new gods (Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.267; Servius on Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.187), makes the latter position much more likely (Cohen 1991, 203–17).

In what is still one of the best studies of Socrates' trial, Moses Finley (1912–1986) has pointed to another problem as well. As he notes, religion was 'thoroughly enmeshed with the family and the state. Impiety was, therefore, a very loose notion'. Consequently, 'the frequency of such charges and trials in Athens depended largely on the state of public opinion at any given moment'. Finley clearly drew here on his own experience during the McCarthy years during which he had to leave the USA in order to continue with his university career (Finley 1968, 58–72 at 64, cf. Jones 2013). Indeed, Finley was one of the first to note the, what we call today, 'embedded' character of Greek religion (Parker 1986, 265, not refuted by Nongbri 2013). The Greeks had no word for our 'religion', which meant that impiety could take many different forms. This situation meant that in every impiety trial the Athenians had to decide whether the charge was persuasive or whether the charged offence constituted an acceptable exception to the norm. For example, the introduction of a new god could be perfectly acceptable at one moment in time, but not at another (so, rightly, Parker 2005, 66). Consequently, as Finley (1968, 71) observed regarding Socrates' trial: 'When impiety – and this is only an example – is a catch basin, no man is safe'.

It is evident that being a woman or a foreigner in this community of male citizens could be a big disadvantage. Unlike in modern Western society, it was also perfectly acceptable for a prosecutor to state that he was an enemy of the charged person or wanted to take revenge (Mitchell and Rhodes 1996; Kucharski 2012). The charge of impiety thus gave plenty of room for people to settle scores, as *eusebeia* was such a generous notion. These circumstances mean that, in the case of an impiety trial, the norm could always be said to have been challenged by somebody. Yet we also know that the Athenians did not condemn in every case. Indeed, they seem to have been fairly reluctant to hand out capital punishments for impiety; pollution, too, was clearly perceived as less of a threat than some prosecutors suggested (Parker 2005, 67–68). Even Socrates could probably have escaped the death penalty if he had shown more humility and less arrogance,

as Finley (1968) persuasively argues. In the end, the norm of *eusebeia* allowed for acceptable exceptions, but every case was decided anew and nobody could be certain of the outcome of his or her trial. It is all too frequently forgotten that even in the case of Socrates, as Plato notes in his *Apology* (36a), it would only have taken some 30 people changing their view to have robbed us of the dramatic outcome of one of the most famous trials in history. We would, of course, love to know who Socrates' opponents on the jury were. Were they all conservatives? Or just opportunists? Or just normal Athenians who thought that Socrates had gone too far for once? We simply do not know. The bias of our sources prevents us from gaining a proper view of the jury's reasoning.

So what do these trials tell us about individualisation? It seems clear that in the last decades of the fifth century Athens saw a real case of de-traditionalisation, witness the contemporary agnostic, atheist and materialist discourses of philosophers and dramatists (Bremmer 2007). We should also not forget that precisely in the last quarter of the fifth century literacy made big advances in Athens. This newish technology was eagerly taken up by the Orphics, and the oldest surviving European book, the Derveni papyrus, is a great example of this development. As noted by Mirjam E. Kotwick (2017, 63), the book also made it possible for the various philosophical, theological, and medical experts, such as the Hippocratics, to spread their expertise.

Moreover, Socrates' claim of a special connection with the divine singled him out to an extent that apparently (see above § 2) made other people envious. His claim surely presupposed a completely untraditional position regarding the gods and must have raised many eyebrows. In that respect, the Orphics were much more cautious, as they promised a special position only in the afterlife, even though their myths were pretty outrageous too (Waldner 2013, 225–7; Bremmer 2016). Yet these discourses did not, so far as we can see, lead to a fundamental change in religious practice. Even Socrates was not charged with breaking traditional ritual. Evidently, the power of traditional religion set a clear limit to religious individualisation in Athens. However, the religious scandals of 415 BC can be seen as the outrageous consequence of these discourses. Yet, by all accounts, it was only a relatively small group of Athenians that dared to profane the Mysteries and to mutilate the herms.

It is virtually impossible for us to see how widely the de-traditionalising discourses were internalised by the Athenians. Our evidence is limited to the upper classes and we have no access to the personal confessions. A number of the scandalmongers of 415 BC were executed and the survivors clearly thought it wise to keep their mouths shut. Socrates did not leave any writings, and the debate about the historical Socrates is as fruitless as that about the historical Jesus. What we can see, though, is that it was the aristocratic youths

who followed Socrates and the sophists. They made personal choices as the traditional order and ideas clearly no longer attracted them. In this respect, we should perhaps note that the emergence of Christianity was notable for its attraction of young people (Bremmer 2017, 23–24, 387, 393, 418). One need not be a convinced follower of the rational choice theory in order to see that the young have less to lose – the hippies of the 1960s and 1970s are another fine example of this phenomenon. Yet we can also observe that after Athens' defeat we hear no more of these anti-traditional discourses. The social, political and intellectual climate had radically changed, and the influence of the sophists had been discredited by their aristocratic followers. Evidently, individualisation is not a linear trend but can, even if perhaps temporarily, be stopped by unfavourable historical circumstances.

Phryne is a different case. The fourth century BC showcases a number of women who tried to improve their position by marrying husbands to whom they were not really entitled, the most famous being, perhaps, Neaira (Glazebrook 2005; Bakewell 2008). If we are looking for female agency, there is plenty to find in the forensic speeches (Eidinow 2016, 312–25). Yet the case of Phryne is different as it is more ambitious. Here we have an outsider woman who tries to make the most of her position, perhaps even trying to leave the profession of courtesan behind her and to improve her social status by the invention of a new cult. Once again, her motivation is unclear and can no longer be recovered. Given the limitations in religious life for non-free women – being a courtesan prevented Phryne from, for example, participating in the prestigious Thesmophoria – it is perhaps not wholly unsurprising that her ambition was to found a new, enduring cult. If we want to see an individualising woman, there could be no better example than Phryne. Unfortunately, our material rarely allows us to gain a good picture of similar women. Still, I hope to have shown that classical Greece should not be neglected in discussions of religious individualisation.

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Avner Ben-Zaken

Traveling with the *Picatrix*: cultural liminalities of science and magic

In his bold *De hominis dignitate (On the Dignity of Man)*, dated 1486, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola claimed that natural magic originated in Persia and India. Zoroaster's magic, Pico continued, was the same divine art conveyed to Persian princes teaching 'how to rule according to the dogma of the world republic'. Toward the end of his oration, Pico discussed the origins of natural magic: Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and Plato, he explained, had acquired magic's secrets in far-off lands. For them, this Eastern philosophy was the most sublime of all arts. From the Persians it had been conveyed to the Greeks and the Arabs, who transferred it to Renaissance intellectuals (della Mirandola 1998, 29).

In recent years scholars have taken up Pico's invitation and started exploring the chain of transmission from the Arab world to European philosophers and practitioners of natural magic during the Renaissance (Boudet, Caiozzo and Weill-Parot 2011; Saif 2015). Important works focusing on the *Picatrix* have shed light on the ways it contributed to the formation of a philosophical framework around ideas derived from magic.¹

Here, however, I would like to probe a complementary perspective and to point out the connection between the multiple receptions of the *Picatrix (Ghāyat*

¹ In the mid-1970s, Vittoria Perrone Compagni forcefully delved into the religious and moral aspects of the *Picatrix*, showing its great effect on various fields of the intellectual life of the Renaissance (see Perrone Compagni 1975; idem 1977). Eugenio Garin stressed the importance of the text as a link between divinatory astrology and natural magic, stating its role in arguing that 'the celestial powers, in fact, come to be caught, and placated or used, by imprisoning them in fictitious material representations, talismans and amulets, capable of absorbing and concentrating astral forces'. Garin held that the *Picatrix* was for this process 'as indispensable as the *Corpus Hermeticum* or the writings of Albumasar for understanding a conspicuous part of the production of the Renaissance, including the figurative arts' (Garin 1983, 47). Paola Zambelli further underscored the importance of the *Picatrix* to the rise of natural magic, brilliantly showing that the text was read and digested even before the rediscovery of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (see Zambelli 2007, 9). Anthony Grafton ingeniously showed that the unacknowledged citation of the *Picatrix* teaches us about methods of note taking and how knowledge was classified in the Renaissance (see Grafton 2004). More recently Bernd-Christian Otto has insightfully pointed out the crucial role cross-cultural and long term exploration of the history of several canonical works, such as the *Picatrix*, have had for the progress of our understanding of the origins and role of magic in Western civilisation (Otto 2016).

al-ḥakīm [literally, ‘the purpose of the sage’])² and the ways in which natural magic challenged the tenets of late medieval philosophy of nature. The implied presence of the work in the writings of three Renaissance philosophers – Marsilio Ficino, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, and Tommaso Campanella – appears in connection to their discussion of natural magic, which aimed at revising the principles of natural philosophy by asserting such notions as action at a distance, natural motion by agency, the centrality of the sun, the linear motion of light rays, and the practical role of the individual, the *magus*, in making philosophy. Such radical physical notions could not appear without the reviving interest in ancient religions and without the rising demand to individualise not only the practices for knowing God but also the practices for knowing nature.

I argue that such assertions indicate the central role the *Picatrix* played in reviving ancient religious practices for knowing nature and combining them with a contemporary philosophy of nature, pointing out that the origins of natural magic are rooted in ancient eastern religions. Thus, the *Picatrix* played a central role in, to use the words of Brian Copenhaver, the ‘rebirth of natural philosophy that encouraged natural magic by grounding it in eclectic Aristotelian thought’ (Copenhaver 2015) and also in providing the impetus towards the first phase of the scientific revolution, as Frances Yates long argued (Yates 1964).

1 The text

Picatrix is a talismanic text from eleventh-century Iberia.³ Although background information about the text and its author are obscure, Maribel Fierro has attributed the work to a tenth-century Andalusian mathematician named Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (Fierro 1996, 105–7). Originally written in Arabic, it was first translated into Hebrew by an unknown translator. Alfonso X, as part of his campaign to turn the Castilian vernacular into an imperial and intellectual language,

² Since Renaissance scholars read the *Picatrix* from complete or incomplete manuscript copies of the Latin translation, there was no single fixed text. Therefore, I am using the printed edition prepared by David Pingree (1986), who meticulously compared the extant manuscripts and excerpts that have survived in European archives. To give a complementary view, I have provided the relevant passages from the Arabic edition published by Hellmut Ritter in Leipzig in 1933. At some points the two versions diverge, indicating that the Latin text had a life of its own.

³ Some scholars question whether the text was originally produced in Spain. Godefroid de Callataÿ argues that the text is rooted in the tradition of the *Ikhwān al-safāʾ*, the great occultist encyclopedia of the Iraqi Brethren of Purity and the Sabeism ḥarrānien, thus stressing that its origins are in the Middle East and not Spain (see Callataÿ 2011).

ordered its translation into Spanish in 1256 (Pingree 1981, 47; Avilés 2011, 95–123). Christian scholars later produced a Latin version, explaining their choice of title by spinning the following yarn: ‘The wise, noble, and honored philosopher Picatrix (perhaps a distortion of Arabic name, perhaps Buqatris [Hypocrates]) compiled it from two hundred different books and many philosophers’.⁴ Practitioners of natural magic copied, read, and circulated the text in Europe between approximately 1450 and 1600, incorporating parts of it into the tenets of scholastic philosophy.⁵ By the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, several key authors who modelled a universe strung along fields of forces, and who evidently had access either to fragments, or the whole manuscript, of the *Picatrix*, appropriated such selective approach to offer significant additions to explain exceptional natural phenomena that were ignored by the traditional philosophy of nature.

The author, or Picatrix as the Latin translation named him, divided the work into four books, each containing about a dozen chapters. A glance at the table of contents reveals the scope of the work, which includes philosophical expositions that provided the necessary grounding, according to the author, for anyone interested in learning about natural magic. Among these doctrines one finds a theory of magic, the role of the *anima mundi* (the soul of the universe) in generating motion, the centrality of the sun in dispersing the *anima mundi*, and the role of the magician in exposing and controlling such physical-spiritual connections through experimentation and the quantification and manipulation of the forces of nature. However, the text does not merely elaborate on the ways bodies act at a distance through the medium of spiritual-physical entities (forces, radiation, heat). It also furnishes its readers with the practices needed to control such entities, including the manipulation of the influences of the heavenly bodies.

The author explains in his preface that he means to shed light on the nature of magic, a secret closely guarded by ancient philosophers. Here was a turning point, a moment when esoteric and scattered pieces of knowledge concerning natural magic are collected into a kind of ‘guide for the perplexed’, making natural magic accessible to the public. In addition to the somewhat vague reference to

4 Citation from the prologue of the Latin translation: ‘Hoc autem opus perfectum fuit anna Domini MCCLVI, Alexandri MDLXVIII. Cesaris MCCXCV, et Arabum DCLV. Sapiens enim philosophus, nobilis et honoratus Picatrix. hunc librum ex CC libris et pluribus philosophie compilavit, quem suo proprio nomine nominavit’ (Magriṭi 1986,1).

5 Nicholas Weill-Parot has argued that scholastics defined the proper use of the *Picatrix* by stressing that talismans reinforce the traditional *similitudo*, correspondence of matter and form, emphasising that the components of talismanic images pertain to the natural characteristics of the planets and by so doing rejecting the ceremonial constituents of the *Picatrix* (Weill-Parot 2011).

‘two hundred books’, Picatrix mentions various specific sources of ancient religions, primarily Indian, Chaldean, and Nabatean texts, as well as Greek works and Egyptian accounts concerning Hermes, showing an impressive mastery of ancient Eastern religious cultures, themselves apparently acting at a distance on this Andalusian writer. Conscious of his position in an idiosyncratic historical moment, the author occasionally stresses that he has been exposed to cultural currents that brought with them pieces of magical knowledge and practices produced with reference to various cultural vantage points, all of which required him to sort them out, standardise them, and collect them into a single book.

The book’s principle is stated at the outset: philosophy was crucial for natural magic not as a metaphysical frame of reference but as the practical means of revealing ‘the causes of reality’, and thus as a guide to manipulating it. The author then defined philosophy of magic as having three substantial characteristics: ‘it develops and does not decline, it is an active exploration and not a passive one, it is ready to be exposed and it does not distance itself [from the true seeker]’. The philosophy of magic also has three utilitarian factors: ‘it teaches, it educates, and it is not ready to be perceived by those who turn their back to it’. Thus, Picatrix prescribes the conditions for the study and the usage of natural magic: ‘whoever desires to explore, ought to acquire a passion for the sciences and thoroughly scrutinise their rules’, so as to utilise such knowledge, the secrets of which ‘have a great purity with which you will be able to help many’.⁶ Natural magic is difficult to understand since it deals with intangible spiritual-physical entities, utilising ‘connections hidden from our senses and sight’. After all, the word *magic* refers ‘to all things hidden from the senses’. The Picatrix states,

You should know that magic is by and large everything that enchants the intellect and that the souls are drawn to it. Thus, the wondering, the attraction, and the praising [in magical acts] are expressions of the actual difficulty the intellect has in grasping and understanding it. The causes (forces of nature) are hidden from the ignorant, and it is a divine force that is being expressed [in natural indications], so that the magus would perceive them. Thus, [natural magic] is the science of perception of the hidden causes [of nature].

⁶ For the Arabic text see Magrīṭī 1933, 5.

وللحكمة خصوصيات ثلاث ذاتيات وهي تنمو ولا تندر، وتشرق ولا تخمل، وتنجلي لينظر إليها ولا تبعد. ولها قوى ثلاث تدبيريات، وهي أنها تزجر وتؤدب، ولا تُفعل على من عنها يرغب، واعلم أن هذه النتيجة التي نحن بسبيل كشفها لم يكن لها وجود لولا وجود الحكمة.

For the equivalent Latin text: ‘Quare scias quod hoc secretum quod in hoc nostro libro intendimus discooperire acquiri non potest nisi prius acquiratur scire. Et qui scire intendit acquirere studere debet in scienciis et eas ordinatim perscrutari quia hoc secretum haberi non potest nisi per sapientem et studentem in sciencia ordinatim. In hoc autem secreto est magna puritas cum qua te multum adiuuare poteris’. Magrīṭī 1986, 4.

Beyond theoretical and linguistic analysis of the notion of *magic*, the *Picatrix* draws a connection between the practice of magic and its disciplinary boundaries within magic:

in practice, the subjects of this science are spirit in spirit and this is in the realm of imagination; spirit in substance, this is the realm of talisman; and substance in substance, this is the realm of alchemy. In short, most of the causes of magic are hidden from the intellect and it is difficult to perceive them.

However, by controlling that which the senses cannot detect, natural magic ‘violates’ the order of things. The original Arabic text stresses that ‘the word talisman is actually the inverse writing of the word *musalit*, to conquer and dominate a substance’, and, therefore, a talisman serves as a ‘violator’: ‘whoever makes an image attempts to dominate the destiny of an object by violence’.⁷ The role of the talisman is to violate and manipulate the order of nature, to expose the things hidden from the senses.

The text goes on to integrate the Aristotelian philosophical tradition with the practice of magic, dividing magic into theoretical (*ilmī*) and practical (*‘amalī*) knowledge.⁸ The theoretical relates to knowing the positions of the stars and the ways their ‘rays project toward the center-earth’, propagate through planetary spheres, and generate motion. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, relates to ‘the combination of natural qualities with the virtue infused by the fixed stars’, particularly elemental heat.⁹ Since the theoretical and the practical are intertwined and mutually conditioned, the art of magic places man in the center, bringing the theoretical down to earthly concerns, and lifting practices up to sublimities.

The seemingly effortless combination of various fields and its essentially unique typology of knowledge gave the text its power of attraction. From Renaissance men such as the Florentine Neo-Platonist philosopher Marsilio Ficino,

7 Magrīṭī 1933, book 1, chap. 2, 7.

وحقيقة الطلسم انه معكوس اسمه وهو المسلط لأنه من جواهر القهر والتسلط

‘Et ymagines sapientes appellant telsam, quod interpretatur violator quia quicquid facit ymago per violenciam facit et pro vincendo facit illud pro quo est composita’. Magrīṭī 1986, book 1, chap. 2.5.

8 Magrīṭī 1933, book 1, chap. 2.8.

إن السحر مقيد في قسمين علمي وعملي

‘Et dico quod nigromancia dividitur in duas partes, scilicet in theoreticam et Practicam’, see Magrīṭī 1986, book 1, chap. 2, 6.

9 Magrīṭī 1933, book 1, chap. 2.8–9.

والعملي هو الوقوف على المولدات الثلاثة وما أثبت فيها من قوى الكواكب السيارّة

‘Practica vero est compositio trium naturarum cum virtute infusionis stellarum fixarum’, see Magrīṭī 1986, book 1, chap. 2.6.

through natural magicians like Cornelius Agrippa, and up to early modern political utopians such as Campanella, radical thinkers started looking for a bottom-up approach to the philosophy of nature. In mixing an Aristotelian philosophy of nature with natural magic that was rooted in individual religious practices from the ancient East, they provided a unified program for the exploration of nature, which included explanations concerning the natural phenomena of action at a distance. Such Renaissance men identified natural magic not only with ancient Greek philosophy but actually with ancient eastern religious cultures.

The morphological readings of the works of Ficino, Agrippa, and Campanella against the background of the *Picatrix* expose direct citations and excavate latent remnants of the Andalusian grimoire, particularly with respect to four ideas central to the connection between natural magic and early modern science – the necessary agency for natural motion; the role of the virtuoso in violating the order of nature, manipulating its laws, and exposing the existence of intangible physical entities, such as forces; the centrality of the sun; and, finally, the linear motion of rays and forces.

2 Philosophising magic: Ficino's animated cosmos

In writing one of the most influential works on magic, *De vita libri tres* (*On the Three Books of Life*), dated 1489, Marsilio Ficino, a senior colleague of Pico's, relied on several sources. Scholars have pointed at a number of potential sources. His Latin translation of the Greek body of Hermetic lore and al-Kindī's *De radiis stellarum* have been seen by some as evidence for the permeation of the theory of rays (Saif 2015). Others suggest that the whole section III in *De vita* was influenced by scholastic sources (Copenhaver 1984, 523f.). A reading of section III in *De vita* against the *Picatrix* reveals that Ficino not only used the *Picatrix* as a source but that it served as a crucial reference for his philosophical framing of astral magic. Ficino applied generic names to the borrowed material, typically labeling it 'Arabian', and sometimes simply reproduced passages from the *Picatrix* without attribution.

Paula Zambelli has shown that Ficino had his reasons for this strategy. Manuscripts of the *Picatrix* circulated widely. Indeed, so wide was their circulation amongst those with philosophical interests in Tuscany that the rector of the University of Pisa, Filippo Valori, asked Ficino to borrow his copy of the text. A student of Ficino, Michele Acciari, replied on his sick teacher's behalf, highlighting the reading and writing strategies of Ficino, who read the *Picatrix* closely

despite dismissing major parts of the text as superstitious. He nevertheless incorporated ‘whatever in it ... was useful and worth reading, copying it into his own book, *De vita libri tres*. The rest – whatever he found vain, ineffectual, or contrary to the Christian religion – he omitted’. Acciari writes of the text that ‘Ficino himself warns you against reading it, because you will have to labour hard [to understand it] but you will find little of any practical use, especially since whatever is in any way useful or important in that work may be read point for point perhaps better and certainly more fully and clearly in his book *De vita libri tres*. If you read the latter thoughtfully and carefully you won’t miss a thing from the famous *Picatrix*’.¹⁰ Zambelli has forcefully concluded that Ficino was interested in highlighting his own works, *De Vita* and the translation of the *Corpus hermeticum*, at the expense of the *Picatrix*, despite this source playing a more central role in his writings than he was willing to admit.

Ficino’s selective reading of the *Picatrix* perhaps also resulted from reading partial versions of the text, which were circulated as incomplete manuscripts or as excerpts in a number of folios. David Pingree has pointed out that Ficino drew almost exclusively on books 3 and 4 of the *Picatrix*, raising the possibility that he read an incomplete manuscript that included only the last two books [3, 4]. Indeed, just such a manuscript is known to have been circulated in his immediate surroundings.¹¹

Book 3 of *De vita libri tres* starts by posing a philosophical problem: if intellect and matter belong to separate spheres, what then creates motion? Is there a philosophical means of ‘taming’ the magical principle of action at a distance? Ficino addresses this central question by trying to define the agency of natural motion. If the universe were made up only of intellect and body, ‘then neither would the intellect be attracted to the body nor would the body be drawn to the intellect’. Agency is required. What permits an ‘attraction’ between bodies, Ficino implies, is the soul that acts between body and intellect, a carrier of secondary qualities. Agency, in the form of the soul, manifests itself as a spiritual-physical entity. Such a soul, Ficino concludes, has to be universal and ought to be understood as

¹⁰ But for all of that enthusiasm, the subject matter appears to have been viewed by others as off limits. When the nephew of ‘Giorgio the doctor’ (Paola Zambelli has identified the latter as Giorgio Anselmi da Parma the Elder) wished to publish his uncle’s treatise on magic, the printers whom he approached steadfastly refused (Zambelli 2007, 9). See also Delcorno Branca 1976, 464–71, esp. 470f.

¹¹ The manuscript is Bodleian Library, *Canonicianus classicus latinus* 500; see Magrīfī 1986, xxii.

‘equally connected with everything, even with those things that are at a distance from one other’.¹²

With this declaration, Ficino framed previous magical or theological attacks on the hegemonic philosophy of nature, not merely in order to topple this philosophy but, rather, to tame practitioners of magic by imposing on them a philosophical framework. This meant harking back to authoritative sources that preceded Aristotle. In contending that ‘the cosmos is animate just like any animate thing’, Ficino alerts his readers to the fact that he has adopted this from the traditional Neo-Platonist philosophy and from ‘Arabic astrologers’ who ‘thoroughly proved it’. They also proved, he explains, that ‘by applying our spirit to the spirit of the cosmos, made possible by physical science, we received celestial goods in our soul and our body’. Just as our bodies need a spirit to function, so the *anima mundi* is essential to the working of the cosmos, acting ‘by way of the rays of the stars upon nature and upon our spirit’.¹³

Ficino’s attributions of passages from the *Picatrix* to ‘an Arabic astrologer’ or ‘Arabic writers’ serve to support current magical arguments about the animated cosmos and to justify the principle of action at a distance. Such assertions played an essential role in his effort to draw counters to a new natural philosophy that would not only break with the teleological explanations for motion but would also establish a new structure of the universe. It was the *Picatrix* that provided him with such a metaphysical framework.

Only the last parts of the *Picatrix* delve into the theoretical tenets of magic, with the author outlining a philosophical framework for natural magic in the last chapter of book 3. He begins by discussing the confusing usage of ‘nature’: ‘nature’ was variously used to refer to the ‘complexion of the elements’, innate heat, ‘forms and figures of the body’, and motion and spirit. Aristotelian natural philosophers, *Picatrix* stresses, used the word even more equivocally, meaning ‘the body and all its properties’, the humors, ‘elements of heaven’, and ‘Godly virtues that cause generation and corruption’. The initial philosophical challenge taken up in the *Picatrix* is to sort out the word’s true meaning, setting it alongside the magician’s fascination with action at a distance. The text stresses that ‘The sages have defined “nature” as *the beginning of motion and rest*’ (my emphasis).

¹² ‘Praeterea cum sit (ut dixi) media rerum, omnia suo in se modo continent et utrinque ratione propinquo; ideoque conciliatur et omnibus, etiam aequaliter illis quae inter se distant, ab ea videlicet non distantibus’ (Ficino 1989, book 3, chap. 1, 244).

¹³ ‘Quem sicut et quodvis animal multoque efficacius animatum esse, non solum Platonicae rationes, sed etiam astrologorum Arabum testimonia comprobant. Ubi etiam probant ex applicatione quadam spiritus nostril ad spiritum mundi per artem physicam affectumque facta, traiici ad animam corpusque nostrum bona coelestia’ (Ibid., book 3, chap. 2, 254).

Such motion is generated through ‘the heavenly mediation between forms and bodies’, a universal agency.¹⁴

Book 4 opens by arguing that the seemingly scattered spiritual-physical agents, the forces of life (*qūat al-ḥayāt*) that rest in bodies, are actually representations of a single entity, the *anima mundi* (*naḥs al-kul*). The *anima mundi* manifests itself as the force that generates motion, as ‘a kind of property apart from material things’, as spiritual phenomena (*ashyāʾ al-rūḥaniyya*), spiritual-physical entities that cause objects to ‘move naturally and not by accident’. This property ‘governs everything’ and exists simultaneously everywhere.¹⁵

If the *anima mundi* is the mediating agent that plays between bodies then it has to be located in the midst of the cosmic order. Book 4 of the *Picatrix* describes the five-tiered structure of the universe, assigning a place to the *anima mundi*:

- 1) First form [*al-ṣūrah*] (the order of things)
- 2) Intellect [*al-ʿaql*] (laws of causality)
- 3) *Anima* [*al-naḥs*] (universal agent)
- 4) Nature [*al-ṭabīʿah*] (motion and rest)
- 5) Elements [*al-ʿanāṣir*] (mixture of matter)¹⁶

The particular location of the *anima mundi* determines its function in the cosmic order. Lodged between the highest and the lowest spheres, the soul of the world plays a mediating role in the universe; as the prime agent of natural change, transforming divine laws into tangible light, it relies on light to set nature into motion. ‘When the soul comes into agreement with the mind’, *Picatrix* explains, ‘it creates light and wisdom and other virtues’. Perpetually in flux, nature shifts

¹⁴ Magrīṭī 1933, book 3, chap. 12, 284f.

لذلك حدها الأوائل بأنها ابتداء حركة وسكون وحدها

‘Qua de causa primi sapientes sic diffiniverunt earn quod est terminus et principium motus et quietudinis’. Magrīṭī 1986, book 3, chap. 12, 172.

¹⁵ Magrīṭī 1933, book 4, chap. 1, 291–92.

هذه الجملة هي العقل الفعال المخرج للأنفس الإنسانية في العلوم العقلية من القوة إلى الفعل وهذه الجملة هي مبادئ الكل بعد المبدأ الأول والمبدأ الأول هو مبدع الكل

‘Et hoc genus est principium in omnibus post primum principium; et principium primum principians omnia’. Magrīṭī 1986, book 4, chap. 1, 177.

¹⁶ Magrīṭī 1933, book 4, chap. 1, 291f.

وهي العالم الأعلى والصورة الأولى وهو العنصر الأول ثم العقل ثم النفس ثم الطبيعة وهي السماء ثم العنصر الجرمي وهو العنصر الجسماني

‘Sapientes vero antiqui in hoc sunt concordati, quod Deus quinque res disposuit et ordinavit per gradus, quarum nobiliorem in summo gradu collocavit – videlicet materiam primam et formam primam, que est tam quam prima minera omnium; secundo sensus sive intellectus, tercio spiritus, quarto natura celorum, quinto elementa et elementata’. Magrīṭī 1986, book 4, chap. 1, 174.

when ‘mind comes into agreement with the soul’.¹⁷ The *anima mundi* thus serves as the glue of the universe, fashioning universal harmony and balance. Towards the end of the first chapter of book 4, the author gives his conclusive definition of ‘nature’, naming as its characteristic trait the ‘perpetual motion’ (*dā’imat al-ḥarakah*) by which corporeal agents are perfected and completed, ‘living their potential through the forces of nature’.¹⁸

Furthermore, the *Picatrix*’s philosophy of nature suggests that man can control the various forms of *anima mundi* and, by doing so, can utilise natural forces to change his destiny and to change his world. Moreover, man can do the same with other parts of nature, shifting their *animae* toward the higher spheres of the ‘first form’ and intellect, or closer to the lowest spheres, nature and elements, changing their properties and setting them in motion.

Ficino adopted this new cosmic order to replace Aristotelian metaphysics, echoing *Picatrix*’s argument that ‘the relation of the *anima mundi* to the universal intellect is like the relation of our soul to the active intellect’.¹⁹ He seems to have projected the intermediary role of a mere *anima*, which was thought to stand between the soul and body, onto the cosmic order, stressing the omnipresence of the *anima mundi*. The relationship between the universal body and the universal soul is equal to [that between] our spirit and our active sense. The soul of every being is the medium, Ficino argued, ‘by which the divine soul may both be present to the crude body and impart life on it’.²⁰ Some of these souls or, as Ficino calls them, ‘spiritual bodies’, possess a physicality; this is clearly implied in his

17 I present the pertinent Arabic and Latin texts. Although in some places a discrepancy between the two texts occurs, all of my translations are made from the Arabic, which is to be considered the original text.

Magrīṭī 1933, book 4, chap. 1, 286f.

وجعل النفس في افق العقل تستمد النور والحكمة والفضائل عنه بقوى منه مشاكلة لها تفيض ذلك عليها, وجعل الطبيعة في افق النفس... ‘Sensum autem et intellectum posuit in primo circulo descendente ab eodem, qui similiter ab eodem lumine descendit; sciencia etenim et nobilitas virtutis sibi convenientes ei vi ab illo emanantur’. Magrīṭī 1986, 174.

18 Magrīṭī 1933, 294.

وبعض الاوائل حدها بانها دائمة الحركة وهي مع ذلك كمال الجسم الفعال الحي بالقوة الطبيعة

‘Et una pars sapientum antiquorum sic determinavit: natura est durabilis motus cum quo est perfectio sive complementum corporis agentis et in potencia viva’. Magrīṭī 1986, 178.

19 Magrīṭī 1933, book 4, chap. 1, 292.

نسبة نفس الكل الى عقل الكل كنسبة انفسنا الى العقل الفعال

‘Et spiritus universi est sensus universi. Idcirco omnes substance incorporee complete in corporibus celestibus moventibus redundant, et hoc propter quietudinem sensus’. Magrīṭī 1986, 177.

20 ‘Que spiritus necessario requiritur tanquam medium, quo anima divina et adsit corpori crasiori et vitam eidem penitus largiatur’. Ficino 1989, book 3, chap. 3, 256f.

statement that ‘besides this worldly body, generally apparent to our senses’, some spiritual forces ‘escape the capacity of our weak senses’.²¹

Ficino’s conclusions regarding the *anima mundi* appear, as in the *Picatrix*, toward the end of his book. He explains that the *anima mundi* is responsible for all natural actions at a distance; standing in for various undetectable physical entities, it causes all motion and rest. ‘The *anima mundi*’, he concludes, ‘generates and moves the forms of natural things by means of seminal forces it has received from the divine’. The magus, then, can play with such seminal reasons, shifting bodies closer to either the upper or the lower sphere, thus changing their properties and setting them in motion.²²

But what are the means by which the virtuoso magus can manipulate the actions of the *anima mundi*? *Picatrix* argues that the heavenly bodies could be manipulated by talismans designed to suit the properties of each planet. Such talismans, made of materials that accord with the properties of the planet, are fashioned to mirror the planet’s qualities. They were used during the periods of the planets’ susceptibility to influence.

I have pointed out one of the structural similarities between *De vita libri tres* and the *Picatrix*. In fact, Ficino broadly adopts the general scheme of the earlier work. In a chapter titled ‘On the Powers of the Rays from Which Images Are Thought to Obtain Their Force’, he outlines the ways by which one can control the heavenly bodies through the use of images to attract heavenly influences. Images can concentrate the power of the rays, since ‘by the rays’ intensity, matter – being dry and far from any moisture – is immediately kindled and, once kindled, is vaporised and dispersed in all directions, blowing out both flames and sulfur’. Not all the physical effects of the rays are detectable, since ‘this fire is very dark and, as it were, a sort of flame without light’.²³ Although al-Kindi’s popular *De radiis stellarum* extensively deals with the role of the sun’s rays, it seems that the *Picatrix* was in fact more readily fitting for his argument, as it points out that as the human body requires a soul to trigger motion so too does a universal soul generate motion at the cosmic level. Both texts stress the mutually dependent connection between heat and light, on the one hand, and motion, on the other:

21 ‘Quamobrem praeter corpus hoc mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum latet in eo spiritus corpus quoddam excedens caduci sensus capacitatem’. Ibid., book 3, chap. 26, 384.

22 ‘Itaque per rationes eiusmodi animam mundi facile se applicare materiis, quas formavit ab initio per easdem’. Ibid., 390.

23 ‘Sed ignem hunc putant valde caliginosum esse et quasi incendium quoddam luminis exers, sicut in coelo extat expers incendii lumen; ignis autem inter coelestem atque infernum lumen cum fervor coniungit’. Ibid., 321.

bodies are endowed with rays and heat only due to their motion. But why were rays so important to Ficino and his contemporaries?

In introducing astrological notions into the philosophy of nature, Florentine philosophers focused on the following question: Does the influence of the planets exist only in detectable and tangible forms (rays and heat), or does it manifest itself also in intangible ways (forces and radiation)? *De vita libri tres* played a central role in these discussions. It appeared just as a controversy regarding the truthfulness of astrology and other occult sciences reached its climax.²⁴ At the two extremes were Ficino and Pico, the foremost philosophers of Florence, starkly disagreeing as to whether the cosmos was ensouled or unsouled.

In his canonical work, *Platonic Theology* (*Theologia platonica*), first published in 1482 and followed by a second edition in 1491, Ficino argued (book iv chap. i) that ‘just as universal nature exists everywhere in the universal body, so a universal soul exists everywhere in that universal nature’.²⁵ Animated nature is connected to man through incorporeal light, he explains in *De vita libri tres*, stressing that the *anima mundi*, which is actually the omnipresent ‘incorporeal light’, links the tangible part of the world to its soul, the world to the nature of man.

Disagreeing, Pico refused to hypothesise intangible properties with an occult character; preferring instead to stress the sensible and placing the rays of the sun at the center of his natural philosophy. In his attack on astrology, *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (*Disputations against Divinatory Astrology*), he reduces the effects of the heavenly bodies to physical properties, thereby detaching man from predetermined cosmic phenomena. Light and heat become the central agents of nature and the angle of the solar ecliptic at different locations is held to be responsible for levels of heat and moisture, which in turn vary living creatures into different species and affect their coming into being and passing away.²⁶ He believed that the planets and stars differ from the sun or moon inasmuch as they have very little influence on us, and perhaps none at all. The fetus, he writes, derives its main characteristics from its constituent human seeds and from the climate surrounding the mother, not from the moon and planets.²⁷

24 For the cultural context of the controversy over the intangible effects of the planets, see ‘Defying Authority, Denying Predestination and Conquering Nature, Florence 1493’ in Ben-Zaken 2011, 65–100.

25 ‘Sicuti se habet natura ad corpus, sic anima ad naturum. Ergo quemadmodum in universo corpore natura universalis est ubique, ita in universa natura ubique universalis est anima’. Ficino 2003, 286.

26 della Mirandola 1946, 1.203.

27 *Ibid.*, 1.269.

In this regard, Pico only selectively echoes book 2 chapter 3 of the *Picatrix*, which mentions sages who argued that ‘the effects of the heavens and their powers in this world are nothing other than the increase and decrease of heat’.²⁸ The *Picatrix* takes a different approach and additionally stresses that these sages ‘did not understand the wonderful occult properties of the planets’, since the increase and decrease of heat convey with them spiritual forces that generate motion. Furthermore, whereas Pico conceives of the manifested effects of the heavenly bodies (the sun and the moon) as heat and light, the *Picatrix* (followed by Ficino) argues that every moving body, even the most distant sphere, the eighth sphere, generates heat, rays, and other undetectable physical-spiritual entities. In this regard, the *Picatrix* explains that the motion of the heavens is the prime cause of accidental heat, which, in turn, gives life to nature. Whereas Pico argues that the heavenly bodies yield only a physical, measurable influence – rays and heat – Ficino relies on the *Picatrix* to argue that the tangible influence was only the tip of the iceberg, conceiving natural motion as the effect of intangible physical-spiritual entities, that will later, in the seventeenth century, be named forces.

By appropriating, in addition to the *Picatrix*’s practical recipes and talismans, the philosophical framework of the text, Ficino philosophically tames the arguments of natural magic, bringing the occult into the light. The occult, for him, does not mean spiritual entities detached from bodies; on the contrary, he believed that all of the acclaimed spiritual entities were actually physical, playing central roles in generating the motion in the universe. Such spiritual-physical entities underlined the necessary agency and causality in the laws of nature, which come into being in the form of forces of attraction, the radiation of rays, and heat. Thus, Ficino appropriated and reworked arguments from the *Picatrix*, presenting a middle ground in *De vita libri tres*. On the one hand, he narrows astrological influences to physical properties, while, on the other, he modifies the arguments of those who rejected astrology by expanding the range of heavenly influence to include intangible physical properties.

The concept of *anima mundi* played a key role in shedding light on what seemed to be occult knowledge and practices, and, thus, in transforming the occult into a subcategory of natural philosophy. However, the emphasis on *anima mundi* and its influence on the universe resulted in a view of man as a passive observer of the ways of the universe. Perhaps because Ficino consulted an incomplete manuscript of the *Picatrix*, referring to it at times as an ‘Arabic miscellany’, he left out a fundamental component of the complete work (especially books 1, 2,

²⁸ Magriṭī 1933, book 2, chap. 3, 63.

and 3 of the *Picatrix*), the practice of natural magic, as well as any discussion of the virtuoso magician who is able to transform his world. As Perrone Compagni has argued, Ficino's selective usage aimed at creating in *De vita* a more purified version of the *Picatrix* that left out materials that might contradict religion.²⁹ The *Picatrix*'s other central theme was the practice of philosophy and magic – the practical aspect of philosophy, the making of philosophy without philosophy, and the aspiration of making and changing the world by practice, which impacted subsequent generations of readers. The next significant station in the circulation of the *Picatrix*, Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, brought that issue to the fore.

3 Legitimising practice: Agrippa's virtuoso

Whereas Ficino was located at the crossroads of Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew texts on natural magic and philosophy, Agrippa moved restlessly from one place to another, gathering sources and knocking over what seemed to him artificial cultural and disciplinary fences. He could have encountered the *Picatrix* in several places: Spain, Italy, or even central Europe.³⁰ Perhaps it was Johann Reuchlin's borrowings from the *Picatrix* (*The Book of Wonderful Word*), presented as a lecture at the University of Dole in 1512, that brought the text to his attention; Vittoria Perrone Compagni has identified in Reuchlin's essay a number of unattributed borrowings from the *Picatrix* (Perrone Compagni 1977, 317f. and 325).

At any rate, Agrippa also had practical reasons to refer to the *Picatrix*. While Ficino used the text to promote his project to philosophise natural magic, Agrippa was out to legitimise the *practice* of natural magic. To that end, he attacked the hegemonic scholastic philosophy of nature for a teleological approach that treated practice as irrelevant to natural philosophy. Taking his convictions into the law court of Metz, he defended a woman from a village named Woippy who was accused of practicing magic, arguing that her work never exceeded the legitimate use of natural forces (Ziegeler 1973, 150–8). At the same time he worked on his alternative program of science, *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (*Three Books of Occult Philosophy*), written in the first decade of the century but only published in 1531–1533. He had good reasons to hesitate, since the work legitimised ritual

²⁹ For the reasons for the selective reading and usage of the *Picatrix* by Ficino, see Perrone Compagni 2011.

³⁰ Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, 362 (630); Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 3317 (Philos. 156); Magriṭi 1986, xvi–xvii.

magic and emphasised the virtues and skills necessary for the would-be magician. Cautious as to when and where he published, Agrippa also wrote dedications that aimed to reduce the danger of ecclesiastical condemnation. Furthermore, to soften the landing of his bold *magnus opus*, he preceded its publication with another book in which he openly promoted natural magic as the prime program for the sciences, transforming the magician into an experimental virtuoso. The *Picatrix* suited such an enterprise.

Whereas the previous generation of natural magicians tried to mix natural magic with scholasticism, Agrippa boldly treated the two bodies of knowledge as conspicuously contradictory. His *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium* (*On the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Sciences and the Arts*), dated 1527, took aim at the hegemonic scholastic philosophy of nature. In the preface he calls the attention of the reader to the tyranny of scholasticism: 'I find', he writes, 'a most detestable custom that has invaded all or most schools of learning to swear their students never to contradict Aristotle, Boetius, Thomas, Albertus or some such school deity: from whom if anybody would even slightly divert, he would be proclaimed heretic, a criminal against the holy sciences deserves only to be consumed in fire and flames'.³¹ Scholasticism, thus, 'captivates the minds of students and authors, depriving them of the liberty of searching after and following the truth',³² turning 'Arts and Sciences' into a destructive force. For Agrippa, traditional study of the sciences entailed working within institutional divisions, specialisation which eventually yielded a narrowed view of science. Natural magic, by contrast, was a multicultural field, an interdisciplinary mixture of theory and practice. As such, enthusiasts such as Agrippa believed that every human being is able to discover and manipulate the hidden secrets of nature.

De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium was written to break through the wall of scholasticism; it drove toward that end by cynically surveying its derivative sciences. In chapters 41, 42, and 43, Agrippa appraises and differentiates magic, natural magic, and mathematical magic, presenting them as the products of intersecting cultural currents that he traces from antiquity up to his own day. The noun *magus*, for instance, came from Persian and

31 'Praeterea in multis ac ferme omnibus gymnasijs peruersus mos, ac damnabilis cosuetudo inoleuit, quod initiandos discipulos iureiurando adigunt Aristoteli aut Boethio, aut Thomae, aut Alberto, seu alio cuius suo scholastico Deosese nunquam repugnaturus: a quibus se quis latu unguem diuersum senserit, hunc haereticum scandalosum, piarum aurium offensiuum, igne flammisque absumedum proclamant'. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1575, *Ad Lectorem*.

32 'Denique quàm impia tyrannis, captiuare ad praefinitos autores studiosorum ingenia, et adimere discipulis libertatem indagandae et sequendae veritatis'. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1575, *Ad Lectorem*.

‘signifies a priest, wise man, or philosopher [who worked with] both natural magic and mathematical magic’.³³ In chapter 42, Agrippa defined natural magic as the ‘highest power of natural science, the active part of natural philosophy, which by means of natural virtues, applied jointly and felicitously, elicits admirable operations’. The Ethiopians and the Indians – the first to use ‘the virtue of herbs, and stones, and other natural things’ – set the standard. They also defined the role of the magic virtuoso, which was to consider ‘the strength and force of natural and celestial beings, and having worked diligently to discover their affections, [render] visible the hidden and concealed powers of nature’. Among these masters Agrippa names Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus, but the only authority whose biography he set down is ‘the author of the book to Alfonsus, written under the name of *Picatrix*, who into natural magic mixes much superstition, as indeed the rest have done’.³⁴

The *Picatrix*, however, argues that the successful natural magician, the virtuoso, had to acquire not only a knowledge of the natural world but also the skills needed to extract such secrets publicly. ‘You should know’, the text stresses, ‘that the practice of magic [*amal, experimenta*] discovers the secrets of sciences; by work and experiments doubts are unfolded’.³⁵ If there is an agency in nature that causes motion and rest, the book indicates, then man carries within himself such agency and, through self-reflection, he discovers the ‘virtue that cares for and governs his body’, employing experiments to extend this insight into the realm of nature.

Agrippa borrowed this line of argumentation and used it to set the foundation for his greatest work, *De occulta philosophia*, affirming natural magic as a

33 ‘Exigit etia hic locus ut de Magia dicamus: nam & ipsa cum Astrologia sic coniuncta, atq; cognate est, ut qui Magia sine Astrologia profiteatur, is nihilagat, sed tota aberret via. Suidas magiam à Magusies & nomen, & originem traxisse putat. Communis opinio est nomen esse Persicum cui adstipulantur Porphyrius, & Apolius, & significare eorum lingua idem quod facerdotem sapiente sive Philosophum. Magia itaque omnem philosophiam physicam, & mathematicam complexa etia vires religionum illis adiungit: hinc Goetiam, & Theurgiam in sequoq; continet. Qua de cosa Magiam plerique bifariam dividunt in naturalem videlicet & caeremonialem’. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1575, chap. 41.

34 ‘Author libri ad Alphonsum, sub picatricis nomine editus, qui tamen una cum naturali magia plurimum superstitiones admiscet quod quidem fecerunt & alii’. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1575, chap. 42.

35 Magrīṭī 1933, book 3, chap. 12, 282.

واعلم أيها الباحث أن العمل يخرج مكنون العلوم وبه تتحل الشكوك فانه عند حصول معرفة المطلوب تتحل الشكوك

‘Illum autem qui in hac sciencia se intromittere intendit scire oportet quod propter opera et experimenta que fiunt in hoc mundo scienciarum profunditates et secreta sciuntur, et ex operibus et experimentis solvuntur dubia’. Magrīṭī 1986, book 3, chap. 12, 170.

science based on firsthand explorations of the secrets of nature. For him, the *Picatrix* offered both lessons in natural magic and the historical and philosophical authority for the primacy of induction in the exploration of nature.

Agrippa mentions the *Picatrix* several times in *De occulta philosophia* and in a few additional places he ascribes its content to ‘Arabs’. For instance, in book 1, chapter 12, titled ‘How Superior Bodies Control Inferior Things, and How the Stars and Signs Control the Bodies, the Actions, and the Dispositions of Men’, Agrippa writes that, ‘according to the doctrine of the Arabs, the Sun rules over the brain, the heart, and the rest of the feeling organs’.³⁶

However, it is when Agrippa offers his description of the virtues and skills possessed by those who practice natural magic that he draws most tellingly on the *Picatrix*. Early in his discourse, Agrippa explains that its purpose is to show ‘how magicians collect virtues from the threefold world’. His decision to divide his treatise in three parallels the structure of the universe, made up as it was of elementary, celestial, and intellectual matter. The role of the natural magician, therefore, is to climb a ladder of philosophy by seeking ‘after the virtues of the elementary world, relying for assistance on natural philosophy in the various combinations of natural things, then the [virtues of the] celestial world via the rays, and their influences thereof, according to the rules of astrologers and doctrines of mathematicians’. By so doing the natural magician is practically ‘joining the celestial ventures to the elementary world’.³⁷

Agrippa subsequently elaborates on the qualifications of the virtuoso. Magic necessarily relies on other disciplines. ‘Whoever wishes to study natural magic’, Agrippa suggests, must be knowledgeable about natural philosophy, ‘wherein are discovered the qualities of things, and in which are found the occult properties of every being’. He also has to be skillful in mathematics, ‘and in the aspects, and figures of the stars, upon which depend the sublime virtue and property of everything’. He has to be learned in theology, ‘wherein are manifested those immaterial substances’. Only after climbing these rungs on the ladder of philosophy will he be ‘able to understand the rationality of magic’. Agrippa concludes that natural magic addresses not only agency in the world but also acts as a mediator between different bodies of knowledge, since ‘there is no world that is the

36 ‘Scias itaque iuxta Arabum traditionem Solem praeesse cerebro et cordi, <femori, medullis, oculo dextro et spiritui vitae>’. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, book 1, chap. 22, 129.

37 ‘Hinc elementalium mundi vires varris rerum naturalium mixtionibus a medicina et naturali philosophia venantur; deinde coelestis mundi radiis et influxibus iuxta astrologorum regulas et mathematicorum disciplinas coelestes virtutes illis connectunt’. Ibid., book 1, chap. 1, 85.

product of magic alone, nor any labor that is exclusively magical, that does not comprehend these three faculties'.³⁸

Agrippa may have drawn from the *Picatrix* the notion of the magus as mixing not only matter but also intellectual disciplines and cultural practices, a view of natural magic as interdisciplinary, while the magus is seen as an agent connecting the upper and lower worlds, the angelic and the celestial worlds to the elementary world. This magical virtuoso brings together distinct bodies of knowledge (pertaining to each world), giving natural magic the crucial role of mediating and connecting the various detached disciplines of arts and sciences. The *Picatrix* stresses that the magus, in the practical process of making images and miracles, 'produces techniques and skills' and is able to understand forms of things in nature by virtue of the exclusive human nature (which includes all other forms in nature): 'the talismans are more powerful than any other optional thing since they were fashioned according to the universal nature. They (talismans) are like miracles since they use the general form and substance of nature, which in turn make miracles and other marvels'. If the talismans include the universal form of nature, then the craftsman, the magus, who created them encapsulates the structure of the universe, since 'the image of man contains of the image of the spirit of the universe'.³⁹ Agrippa counterpoises forms for acquiring knowledge: the medieval scholastic *vita contemplativa* versus the occultist *vita activa*. Since man was created in the form of God, the magus, the individual practitioner, is able through an active exploration of nature to connect to the spirit of the universe.

One finds echoes of the *Picatrix* in other aspects of Agrippa's work too. It appears to have informed his thinking on how the virtuoso connected different worlds and crossed disciplinary boundaries. The magus not only alters the mixture of matter in this world, he also connects matter, bodies, spirits, and forms, to their celestial origins – to the single universal source of the *anima mundi*. He does this by making images and measuring matter.

38 'Nullum enim opus ab ipsa magia perfectum extat nec est aliquod opus vere magicum, quod tres facultates non complectatur'. Ibid., book 1, chap. 2, 86–9.

39 Magrīṭī 1933, book 1, chap. 5, 85.

ان الطلسمات انفذ من الاختيارات لانها مستعملة بطبيعة الكل وهي كالمعجز لاستعمالها الخواص الطبيعية وذلك ان الخواص تفعل العجائب من الافعال

The Latin translation mistakenly marked this paragraph in chapter 6, whereas in the original Arabic text it is the end of chapter 5.

'Operatur industria et arte. et similiter ab aliis industria et arte retrahitur. Et invenit magisteria subtilia et eorum subtilitates, et facit miracula et ymagines mirabiles. et scienciarum formas retinet....Et generalis forma hominis est archa forme spiritus in generali. et spiritus generalis est archa sensus generalis. et sensus generalis est archa luminis unde sensus procedit'. Magrīṭī 1986, book 1, chap. 6, 26f.

In *De occulta philosophia*, the making of images is the most evident trace of Agrippa's reading of the *Picatrix*. He echoes his source at one point, writing, 'The magicians affirm that both by the mixture and application of natural things and by images, seals, rings, glasses, and some other instruments, if [the events take place] opportunely under a specific constellation, a celestial illustration may be made, and some wonderful thing may be received by images'. Since the beams of the celestial bodies are animated, they 'transport marvelous gifts, and a most violent power', and the image can attract and manifest these 'wonderful powers'. In order for the image to become more powerful it has to correspond to the natural properties of the objective heavenly body and also to have its form.⁴⁰

Later on, Agrippa mentions his sources, saying, 'There are besides in the zodiac thirty-six images, according to the number of the faces' of which ancient mathematicians – and later 'the Arabians' – wrote.⁴¹ He further echoes the *Picatrix* in a description of the planets. The image of Saturn, imprinted on a lodestone, shows 'a man the face of a hart and the feet of a camel, seated on a dragon, holding in his right hand a scythe, in his left an arrow'.⁴²

Moreover, the *Picatrix* links the practice of natural magic with the mathematical and quantifying practices that enabled the virtuoso to discover the hidden laws of nature, endowing him with the ability to channel a natural force to the use of man. Quantity is the foundation of this science, for magic is part of the quadrivium. Quantity is divided into two parts, corresponding to geometric and algebraic laws of nature: 'continuous quantity (line, surface, body, time, and place) and discrete quantity (numbers and words)'.⁴³

40 'Coelestium enim corporum radii animati, vivi, sensuales, dotes mirificas potentiamque vehementissimam secum ferentes, etiam repentino momento ac subito tactu mirabiles in imaginibus imprimuntur viresetiam in materia minus apta; efficaciores tamen largiuntur imaginibus virtutes si non ex qualibet, sed certa materia fabricentur, cuius videlicet virtus naturalis cum specifica simul opera conveniat figuraque imagines similis sit figurae coelesti'. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, book 2, chap. 35, 251f.

41 'Post quem scripserunt de illis etiam Arabes'. *Ibid.*, book 2, chap. 37, 354.

42 'Faciebant enim ex operibus Saturni, ipso ascendente, in lapide qui magnes dicitur imaginem hominis cervinum valtum et cameli pedes habentis, super cathedram vel draconem sedentis, in dextra falcem, in sinistra sagittam tenentis; quam quidem imaginem sperabant sibi ad vitae longitudinem futuram'. *Ibid.*, book 2, chap. 38, 358.

43 Magriṭī 1933, book 2, chap. 7, 96.

والكم ايضا كذلك لان الكم كما قيل في التعاليم ينقسم بالقسم الاكبر الى قسمين وهما المتصل والمنفصل والقسم المتصل منهما ينقسم الى خمسة اقسام وهي الخط والسطح والجسم والزمان والمكان. والقسم المنفصل منهما ينقسم الى القول والعدد

'Et similiter quantitas est radix istius sciencie eo quod ipsa in quadrivio operatur. Secundum suam primam divisionem dividitur in duas partes, que quidem partes sunt ipsa quantitas continua et discreta. Quantitas vero continua dividitur in partes quinque. que sunt linea. superficies. corpus.

In the same vein, Agrippa elaborated on the quantification of natural magic, saying that mathematical learning was a ‘necessity’ since all things ‘are governed by number, weight, measure, harmony, motion, and light’.⁴⁴ By combining expertise in natural philosophy and mathematics – by using the laws of arithmetic, music, geometry, optics, and astronomy, together with measuring tools – the magician virtuoso ‘may do many wonderful things’.⁴⁵ He may, for instance, produce ‘images that speak and foretell things to come’. Above all, ‘numbers, that have more of form in them, are effective’ at finding their counterparts in the celestial world, which leads to discovering ‘the effects of good and bad things’. Thus, Agrippa concluded, images and numbers both described the forms of nature.⁴⁶

Agrippa’s and Ficino’s readings of the *Picatrix* converged around one particular image: the sun. Both were drawn in by the idea that talismans functioned as did the sun, and that the sun is the center of influences, the source of all spiritual-physical entities. If one could create an image that encapsulated the sun’s qualities, it would, naturally and ineluctably, possess great practical powers.

The *Picatrix* argues that heavenly bodies influence nature through undetectable spiritual-physical entities that can be captured and used by means of images. It also argues that the sun, the source of those entities, governs the whole universe by its rays. But which natural images, forms not made by man, could

tempus et locus; et quantitas discreta dividitur in duas partes, videlicet numerum et verbum’. Magriñi 1986, book 2, chap. 7, 58.

44 ‘Mathematicae disciplinae ad magiam tam sunt necessariae atque cognatae ut qui hanc absque illis profiteatur, is tota aberret via frustra que labore minimeque desideratum adsequatur effectum. Quae cunq̄ue enim sunt et fiunt in istis inferioribus naturalibus virtutibus, omnia haec ‘numero, pondere, mensura’, harmonia, mootu et lumine fiunt atque reguntur et omnes res, quas videmus in istis inferioribus, habent radicem et fundamentum in illis’. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, book 2, chap. 1, 249.

45 ‘Hinc magus, expertus philosophiae naturalis et matheseos, cognitisque mediis scientiis ex his utrisque existentibus, arithmetica, musica, geometria, optica, astronomia, et quae de ponderibus, mensuris, proportionibus, articulis et iuncturis scientiae sunt, cognitisque etiam mechanicis artibus ex illis resultantibus, quid mirum si supra caeteros homines arte et ingenio praecellens, mirabilia multa operetur, quae etiam prudentissimi quique et scientissimi valde admirentur?’ Ibid., book 2, chap. 1, 250.

46 ‘Loquuntur autem de numero rationali et formali, non de materiali, sensibili sive vocali nuero mercatorum . . . numerum naturalem et formalem et rationalem vocant, ex quo magna sacramenta emanant tam in naturalibus, quam divinis atque coelestibus. Per illum havetur via ad omnia scibilia indaganda et intelligenda; per illum havetur proximus accessus ad prophetiam naturalem: atque ipse abbas loachim in prophetiis suis alia via quam per numeros formales non processit’. Ibid., book 2, chap. 1, 253.

perfectly capture such influences and win universal appreciation from all religions and cultures?

In book 3, chapter 5, the *Picatrix* offers a rather peculiar injunction for a presumably Muslim writer. The author give practical instruction to the magus on the process of preparing talismans: ‘Then we are making seven forms [talismans] on stones, each one in the form of the hour of the planet, [although the forms vary from planet to planet] they all convey the form of the cross, which is the mastery form of all the planets’. The cross holds a spiritual power since it ‘connects to everything similar to its form and resists everything that is dissimilar to its form’, universally affecting all objects in nature. The *Picatrix* tackles a practical consideration – how to transform three-dimensional objects of nature, and their functional relations, into a two dimensional representation on talismans? In coping with this problem the text makes a radical implication – the form of the circle merely describes the location of objects in space whereas only linear forms, like the cross, can describe fractions of rays, their function, power, and influences. The text alleges physical and geometrical considerations: the sun rays are understood in terms of their length and breadth, formal qualities also found in the cross, ‘we drew the form of the cross since every planet carries its [cross] form, since every physical body has a surface, and the surface is made of length, breadth, and the form of breadth and length is actually the cross itself. And for this reason we hold the cross [as a universal form] since the spirits do not resist to it’. Taking this a step further, the *Picatrix* describes the cross as possessing ‘a universal mastery’ in manipulating the influences of the heavenly bodies, ‘we said that there is no person who is not subjected to the rule of the seven planets, and therefore, if the spirits connect to the image of the cross then it gives the man who carries it bravery and power’.⁴⁷ Since light plays a role as an agent between

47 Magriṭī 1933, book 3, chap. 5, 184–185.

...من كل حجر من هذه الاحجار صورة ساعة الكوكب الذي ذلك الحجر من قسمته وتكون هذه السبع الصور حاملة للصليب وانما ذكرنا ان يكون صليبا لانا قد قلنا ان كل شيء يتصل بشكله وينافر غير شكله... فلاجل هذا ما شكلناه بشكل الصليب لان كل ذى جرم واقع تحت شكله لان ظاهر الجسم السطح وهو ما كان له طول وعرض وشكل الطول والعرض هو الصليب فاتخذنا لهذه العلة ليكون شكلا لا تنافره الروحانية وهذا قال من سرائر هذا العلم. ونقول انه لا يخلو من ان يكون كل الناس تحت حكم السبعة كواكب المذكورة فاذا اتصلت الروحانية بهذه الصورة واصابت محمولها كانت له عزة وقوة.

‘Causa vero propter quam dicimus hanc figuram in forma crucis fiendam esse est quemadmodum diximus, scilicet quod omnia in suis viribus colligantur figuris ex sua qualitate existentibus, et fugiant a contrariis. Et nos querimus potencias spirituum planetarum ut sue figure coniungantur, et non cognoscimus figuram spiritus nec ad ipsam attingere possumus experimento nisi per figuram hominis, animalis vel alterius rei. Et ideo concluditur quod omnis virtus predictorum maxi me consistit in figuris. Idcirco, quia videmus omnes figuras et formas arborum et plantarum esse in suis figuris diversas necnon et figuras animalium et similiter minerarum, qua propter

objects in nature, drawing linear lines can describe the functional influential relations between objects and the form of a cross thus utterly encapsulates such relations.

Ficino echoes the *Picatrix*, observing (3.18) that whereas some saw the circle as the fittest symbolic representation of the heavens, ‘the more ancient authorities, as we have read in a certain “Arabic miscellany”, preferred above all other figures the cross’. He emphasises that ‘bodies apply their power as soon as it has diffused to a plane, and a primary plane is best marked out by a cross’. The cross, more than any other image, ‘possesses length and breadth and of all figures it possesses the highest degree of rectilinearity, and it has four right angles’. Since the effects of the celestials appeared most strongly ‘through the perpendicularity of rays and of right angles’, the stars are much more ‘potent when they occupy the sky’s four angles casting their rays upon each other to form a cross’. This was why ‘the ancients said that the cross served as a receptacle for the strength of the stars; it therefore possessed the greatest power among images, receiving the forces and spirits of the planets’.⁴⁸

In *De occulta philosophia* Agrippa adopts a similar line. In one of the few places (2.23) in which he alludes to the *Picatrix*, the cross is presented as the universal figure of natural magic: ‘The Arabs confirmed that the figure of the cross has very great power, that it is the strongest of receptacles for celestial powers and intelligence’. He adds that the cross ‘is strengthened by the straightness of angles and rays; stars are most potent when they stand in the four corners of heaven and the projection of their rays forms a cross’.⁴⁹

nullo modo cognoscere possumus proprie figuras ipsorum spirituum planetarum, ideo sapientes huius artis antique tamquam universalem figuram crucem elegerunt, et hoc propter quod omnia corpora apparent sua superficie et quia superficies figurarum habet longitudinem et latitudinem, et figura longitudinis et latitudinis proprie consistit in cruce. Idcirco hanc figuram tam quam universalem magis tram diximus in talibus operandi et tamquam recepticem virium spirituum planetarum eo quod aliqua figura non divertitur ab ea’. Magriṭi 1986, book 3, chap. 5, 107.

48 ‘Postermi quidem imaginum auctores universam earum formam ad coelisimilitudinem accepere rotundam. Antiquiores autem, quemadmodum in quodam Arabum collegio legimus, figuram cruces conctis anteponebant, quia corpora per virtutem agunt ad superficiem iam diffusam. Crucem ergo veteres figuram esse dicebant tum stellarum fortitudine factam, tum earundem fortitudinis susceptaculum; ideoque habere summam in imaginibus potestatem, ac vires et spiritus suscipere planetarum’. Ficino 1989, book 3, chap. 18, 334.

49 ‘Figuram autem crucis Aegyptii atque Arabes summam potentiam habere confirmabant quodque sit omnium coelestium virium atque intelligentiarum firmissimum receptaculum, quia ipsa sit figura omnium rectissima, continens quatuor angulos rectos sitque prima superficiei descriptio, habens longitudinem et latitudinem; dicebantque eam rectitudinem angulorum atque radiorum resultat; suntque stellae tunc maxime potentes, quando in figura coeli quantuor

Since astronomers focused on the *location* of planets and on the *structure* of the universe, the mathematical language used to describe them ought to be geometry, with the circle as its prime form. Despite this, Picatrix, Ficino, and Agrippa, as well as other thinkers working on natural magic, focused on the *functioning* of the heavenly bodies, the ways in which they linearly influence each others' forces and rays. They thus claim that the proper mathematical language with to describe these bodies and forces ought to be a geometry of fractions of linear lines, with the cross as its prime form.

Uniting the notions of the *anima mundi*, the centrality of the sun, and the role of the virtuoso through the form of the cross, which they made a universal and natural image, Picatrix, Ficino, and Agrippa offered a religious and political symbol under which society could be organised. Thus, the readers of the *Picatrix* went beyond philosophical discussions, laboring to legitimise the theory and practice of natural magic. Furthermore, they laid the foundations for a new discussion in which natural magic could serve as an ideological framework for bottom-up political and scientific utopias, centered around the symbols of the sun and the cross. Such societies had existed, they claimed, in the ancient East.

4 Politicising magic: Campanella's 'Republic of supernal spirits'

Tommaso Campanella never explicitly mentions the *Picatrix* but his familiarity with it can be found in the book's structure, places mentioned, and reference to particular ancient cultural practices. While Ficino lived at the center of the Renaissance circulation of texts, and Agrippa was a wandering 'center of circulation', Campanella lived in a dungeon in Naples; how he came to read *Picatrix* remains a mystery. We have some indications that early in his life, before he was imprisoned, he practiced astrological magic, as is implied in *Atheismus triumphatus* (*Atheism Conquered*), which he wrote from 1606 to 1607. Moreover, since he alludes to the *Picatrix* in *La città del Sole* (*The City of the Sun*), which he wrote in 1601, it seems likely that Campanella encountered one of the circulating manuscripts of the text prior to his imprisonment in 1598, about a century after Ficino first mentioned it in print.

obtinent cardines atque radiorum suorum in si invicem projectione crucem constituunt'. Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, book 2, chap. 23, 319f.

Campanella was perhaps the last Renaissance intellectual who considered notions of natural magic in philosophical terms. He was surely aware of his historical position, reflected in his cautious attitude, and selectively mentions sources that fit with the religious and cultural circumstances of his time. An indication of why Campanella would not have been quick to unveil his debt to the *Picatrix* is found in the title of his work on astrology: *Six Books of Astrological Matters, in Which Astrology, Purged of All the Superstitions of the Arabs and Jews, Is Treated Physiologically, in Accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Doctrine of St. Thomas, Albert, and the Greatest Theologians; So That They May, without Suspicion of Evil, Be Read with Profit in the Church of God*.⁵⁰ To deflect a familiar Christian criticism of astrology, he proleptically attacked the very works on which he drew heavily. Campanella's sources, he explained, would instead be Persian, Egyptian, and Babylonian.

Although the *Picatrix* is not mentioned by name, its implied presence is detectable. In the first chapter of book 4, the *Picatrix* discusses the spirits of objects and their senses, stressing that 'matter is divided into two parts, that is to say, the spiritual and the corporeal',⁵¹ and that *sensus mundi* is substance equally distributed in all bodies, [something] distinct from matter'⁵²; and finally that God 'planted it in those bodies' but it is intangible, though physically manifest in the sun's rays.⁵³ In *De sensu rerum et magia* (*On the Sense of Things and on Magic*), which appeared in 1620, Campanella not only imitated the structure of the *Picatrix* but also reformulated its arguments, particularly those regarding the concept of *sensus mundi* – the intellect, soul, or spirit that resides in matter and is the prime cause of natural motion. Echoing the *Picatrix*, Campanella writes that the Arabs conceive of space as a godly entity sustaining all things. 'Without contradictions he lovingly receives all things, and nothing dies for him, but the body is dead in respect of it'. According to his Arab sources, natural bodies cannot be dead objects but are an extension of the being of God. 'The attraction is the sense of space', thus objects have senses that rely on the *sensus mundi*, namely the visible sun, to connect them to the *anima mundi* and to propagate and receive

50 Campanella 1629.

51 Magriṭī 1933, book 4, chap. 1, 288.

أن الجواهر مع هذا يتقسيم قسمين روحاني وجسماني.

'Sed materia dividitur in duas partes, videlicet in spiritualem et corporalem'. Magriṭī 1986, book 4, chap. 1, 175.

52 'est substancia equali pondere omnibus suis partibus, a materia remota'. Magriṭī 1986, book 4, chap. 1, 177.

53 'et plantavit earn in istis corporibus que sunt secundum lumen Solis, quod est ex eo qui per radios ipsa corpora attingit'. Magriṭī 1986, book 4, chap. 1, 178.

spirits, forces, and other influences, which in turn transform matter and generate motion and rest.⁵⁴

But more than any other work, it is Campanella's *La città del sole* (*The City of the Sun*), his scientific and political utopia, that bears the impress of the *Picatrix*. Here he mingles natural magic, talismanic art, experimental science, and heliocentrism by way of cross-cultural exchanges. He sets the work on the mythical island of Taprobane in the Indian Ocean; there one can find 'Adam's footprint after his fall from grace'. The inhabitants, practitioners of natural magic, had 'come from India, flying from the sword of the magi'. The Solaris, as these people were called, followed Brahma and Pythagoras, and children were inculcated with a social ethic at a tender age, ensuring that the political order arose from the bottom up (Campanella 1995, 6f.).

This very idea occurs in the *Picatrix*. In a pendant to comments on the cross-cultural transmission of natural magic, the author mentions that from the ancient Chaldeans up to his own time and place people had described a utopian city of philosophers, a community of sun worshippers who employed talismans to guarantee political order. The Chaldean magi asserted that, 'Hermes built, in the east of Egypt, a city twelve miles in length, in which he set a citadel that had four gates on its four sides. At the eastern gate he put the image of an eagle, at the western gate the image of a bull, at the southern gate the image of a lion, and at the northern gate he built the image of a dog'. The purpose of these images was to attract 'certain spiritual essences' that would act as gate keepers, 'allowing no one to pass through the portals without their permission'. At the summit of the citadel, Hermes built a tower, which attained a height of thirty cubits, and on the summit of the tower he set a sphere, 'the color of which changed with each of the seven days'. Around the city he placed diverse and changing images, by means of which the inhabitants were made 'virtuous and freed from sin, wickedness, and sloth'. The name of the city was Adocentyn (*madinat al-Ashmūnīn*), and its people were 'deeply learned in the ancient sciences, their profundities and secrets, and in particular in the science of astronomy'.⁵⁵

54 'Ex quo Arabes quidam putarunt spatium esse Deum ipsum, quia omnes sustinet res, nullis contrariatur omnesque recipit benigne, nec unquam moriuntur illi, & perillud, sed hoc corpus & per modo respectu illius corporis mortuum est'. Campanella 1623, 25.

55 Magrīṭī 1933, book 4, chap. 3, 310.

وممن عن بهذا الشأن جبل يسمون القبط وهم اعلم الناس قاطبة بهذا العلوم وهم الذين يقولون ان هرمس الاول بنى بيت تماثيل يعرف بها مقادير النيل عند جبل القمر وعمل للشمس هناك هيكلًا وكان يختفي عن الناس فلا يرونه وهو معهم، وهو الذي بنى المدينة الشرقية من مصر وكان طولها اثني عشر ميلا وجعل فيها حصنا له اربعة ابواب من جهاته الاربع وصنع على الباب اشرفي صورة عقاب وعلى الباب الغربي صورة ثور وعلى الباب الشمالي صورة اسد وعلى الباب الجنوبي صورة كلب وأسكن فيها الروحانيين فكانت تنطق اذا قصدوا القاصد وتسمع لها اصوات مفزعة فلا يجسر احد على الدنو منها الا باذن الموكل بها وغرس فيها شجرة عظيمة تحمل كل صننف من الفاكية وجعل في اعلى القصر منارا طوله ثلاثون ذراعا وعلى رأسه قبة تتلون كل يوم بلون حتى تنقضى سبعة

Adocentyn stood at the crossroads of a number of cultures, as does Campanella's utopian city. The parallels continue: Campanella describes the republican order of the City of the Sun as being constituted through the abstraction of the forces of nature into talismanic images. On the top of a civic dome, 'nothing is seen over the altar but a large sphere, upon which the heavenly bodies are painted, and another globe upon which there is a representation of the earth'. The temple has 'seven golden lamps always burning, and these bear the names of the seven planets.'⁵⁶

The governing power of the sun and its centrality, and the cross as its geometrical representation, led to the notion that the heavenly bodies are the natural republic, harmonically aligning the laws of nature with the laws of religion and society. The perfect earthly republic will, therefore, have to be organised along the same tenets. In the *Picatrix* such a political application of natural magic is clearly

ايام ثم تعود الى اللون الاول وتكسو المدينة من ذلك اللون لونًا جديدًا وجعل حول المانر ماءً كثيرًا ووكد فيه سمكًا وجعل حول المدينة طلاس من كل صنف تدفع عن اهلها المضار وكانت تسمى مدينة الشمونين وهذا مذكور ايضاً في 'اخبار مصر' وهؤلاء القوم اعنى القبط ساكنون بمصر وهم العارفون باخبار البرابي ونقوشاتها وما اودع فيها من العلوم.

'Sunt etenim magi qui in hac sciencia et opere se intromiserunt Caldei; hinamque in hac perfectiores habentur sciencia. Ipsi vero asserunt quod Hermes prinitus quandam domum ymaginum construxit ex quibus quantitatem Nili contra Montem Lune agnoscebat; hic autem domum fecit Solis. Et taliter ab hominibus se abscondebat quod nemo secum existens valebat eum videre. Iste vero fuit qui orientalem Egipti edificavit civitatem cuius longitude duodecim miliariorum consistebat, in qua quidem construxit castrum quod in quatuor eius partibus quatuor habebat portas. In porta vero orientis formam aquile posuit, in porta vero occidentis formam tauri, in meridionali vero formam leonis, et in septentrionali canis formam construxit. In eas quidem spirituales spiritus fecit intrare qui voces proiciendo loquebantur; nec aliquis ipsius portas valebat intrare nisi eorum mandato. Ibi que quasdam arbores plantavit, in quarum medio magna consistebat arbor que generacionem fructuum omnium apportabat. In summitate vero ipsius castrum quondam turrim edificari fecit, que triginta cubitorum longitudinem attingebat, in cuius summitate pomum ordinavit rotundum, cuius color qualibet die usque ad septem dies mutabatur. In fine vero septem dierum priorem quem habuerat recipiebat colorem. Illa autem civitas quotidie ipsius mali cooperiebatur colore, et sic civitas predicta qualibet die refulgebat colore. In turris quidem circuitu abundans erat aqua, in qua quidem plurima genera piscium permanebant. In circuitu vero civitatis ymagines diversas et quarumlibet manerierum ordinavit, quarum virtute virtuosi efficiebantur habitantes ibidem et a turpitudine malisque languoribus nitidi. Predicta vero civitas Adocentyn vocabatur. Hic autem in antiquorum scienciis, earum profunditatibus et secretis atque in astronomie sciencia erant edocti'. Magriṭi 1986, book 4, chap. 3, 188f.

56 'Sopra l'altare non vi è altro ch'un mappa-mondo assai grande, dove tutto il cielo è dipinto, ed un altro dove è la terra. Poi sul cielo della cupola vi stanno tutte le stelle maggiori del cielo, notate coi nomi loro e virtù, c'hanno sopra le cose terrene, con tre versi per una; ci son I poli e I circoli signati non del tutto, perché manca il muro a basso, ma si vendono finiti corrispondenza alli globbi dell'altare. Vi sono sempre accese sette lampade nominate dalli sette pianeti'. Campanella 1995, 3f.

in place. The text states, ‘The Nabatean sages have said that the power and works of the heavens and stars originate in the sun. . . . The fixed stars are the sun’s hand-maidens; they serve, obey, and are humbled by him’.⁵⁷ In *Atheismus triumphatus*, Campanella says of the sun: ‘It is endowed with a vivid and simple beauty; it is the nobler cause of lower things [...] continually benefitting us by pouring out light, heat, and influences, generating, changing, producing all things; on account of all this the pagans could easily be led to think that it is a god’.⁵⁸ He takes the idea a step further in *La città del Sole*, pointing out that the Solaris [just like the Nabateans] worship the Sun and in their morning prayer direct their prayers to the east, calling the Sun ‘our father in heaven’. Further, they ‘honour the Sun and the stars and conceive them as living bodies, icons of God and celestial temples; though, they do not worship the stars, but mostly the Sun. [...] they worship God under the image of the Sun, which is the icon of God and his face and living image, from which comes light and heat to everything. And indeed, they built a temple designed like a lighthouse Sun, in which priests pray to God in the Sun and stars’.⁵⁹ The City of the Sun functions as a republican polity that is ordered through talismanic symbols, magical worship, and education aimed at developing natural talents;

57 Magriṭī 1933, book 3, chap. 8, 229.

واما النبط فانها تزعم ان الفعل كله في العالم للشمس وحدها والكنهم لما علموا ان القمر معين لها على افعالها من غير حاجة منها اليه ولا الى غيره وكذلك ايضا السببة المتحيرة فانها تتبع الشمس في الفعل اتباعا وتطيعها طوعا وتسجد لها وتسبح ليلا ونهارا وهي الدهر دامة في طاعتها ومستمرة في مرضاتها قولاً وفعلًا والافعال كلها للشمس وحدها عندهم وسائر السبعة مشاركة لها في بعض افعالها وكذلك الكواكب الثابتة عبيد لها تسبحون ويسجدون لهم شركة في الافعال دون حاجة اليوم وجعلة صلاتهم للشمس...

‘Neptinorum sapientes dixerunt quod potencie et opera celorum et stellarum sunt Solis simpliciter, et ideo quia vident et intelligunt quod Luna iuvat eum (hoc est, quantum in suis effectibus), non quod Sol indigeat ea nec aliis planetis; et similiter alii quinque planete sequuntur Solem in suis effectibus et obediunt et humiliantur eidem, et secundum dispositiones Solis in predictis effectibus procedunt. Et ideo omnes effectus sunt in Sole secundum eorum opinionem primitus radicati, ceteri vero sex planete iuvat eum in suis effectibus. Et similiter stelle fixe ancille sunt eidem, serviunt, obediunt et humiliantur ei, et in suis effectibus iuvant ipsum, non propter indigenciam quam habet ex eis. Et he gentes Soli hanc oracionem facere solebant’. Magriṭī 1986, book 3, chap. 8, 138.

58 ‘Minore tandem reprebensione dignos deprehendi eos, qui adorant Sidera, Caelum & Solem: quonia in hac portiones Mundi se ostendunt, à corruptione distantes, & pulchritudine vivida, simplicique donatae sunque nobiliores rerum interiorum causae, & in sublimi regione degunt, continuo beneficentes nobis, lucem essundendo, calorem, & influentias: generando, alterando Omnia que producendo: qua ob res magis movere possunt Gentes ad credendum quòd sint Dii’. Campanella 1631, 111.

59 ‘Onorano il sole e le stelle come cose viventi e statue di Dio e tempi celesti; ma non l’adorano, e più onorano il sole. Nulla creatura adorano di latria, altro che Dio, e però a lui servono solo sotto l’insegna del sole, ch’è insegna e volto di Dio, da cui viene la luce e ‘calore ed ogni altra cosa. Però l’altrare è come un sole faro, e li sacerdoti pregano Dio nel sole e nelle stelle’. Campanella 1995, 35f.

its structure mirrors that of the universe. This became an *idée fixe* for Campanella and in his other writings, such as *Astrologia*, he repeats that, ‘I certainly have the faith that the stars are a republic of supernal spirits’,⁶⁰ echoing the *Picatrix*’s (2.10) description of the heavenly bodies as a celestial commonwealth centered around the sun. The talismanic form of the Sun, the *Picatrix* says, is a king,⁶¹ and just like a king it governs from the center its kingdom. The plants and the stars derive in the most efficient way their light, heat, motion and influences from the sun, making the celestial commonwealth a representation of perfect natural order.

The City of the Sun, Campanella’s homage to the political practices of the East, is an attempt to revisit Adocentyn, a cultural alternative to scholastic Europe, a place where natural magic builds up rational, meritocratic, scientific, and state institutions.⁶² In a sense, Campanella follows the *Picatrix*’s description of Adocentyn, which Pico echoes in asserting that the Persian kings trained their

60 ‘Firmissimè credo, quod & gentibus omnibus credibile videtur, teste Philone & Origene, sydera esse Respub. Spirituum supernorum, cum in mundum corporum ex mentali egrediantur. Nam activissima res est ignis lucidissima, sensitivissima, idcirco maximè conveniens spitiibus potestate & sapientia decoratis’. Campanella 1638, III, XI, ix, i, 52.

61 Magrīṭi 1933, book 2, chap. 10, 108.

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‘Forma Solis secundum opinionem Picatricis est forma regis in cathedra sedentis et in eius capite coronam habentis, et formam corvi ante ipsum habentis et sub eius pedibus figuram Solis quam antediximus. Et hec est eius forma’. Magrīṭi 1986, book 2, chap. 10, 66.

62 It was not unheard of for Campanella to use Arabic sources. In his critique of Scholastic science, its culture and practices, and the geocentric ancient universe, he set his eyes on Eastern cultures, which he saw as the bearers of an alternative scheme of science and politics, even latently guarding scriptural remnants of the ancient heliocentric cosmology. Noel Malcolm (2005) has argued that Campanella’s interest in the Near East and the Ottomans went beyond the use of foreign sources, stressing the East as the site of a philosophy, a practice, and a politics that emerged by natural magic. Luigi Amabile’s early reconstruction of the reasons for Campanella’s imprisonment pointed out the connection between his political activity and his intellectual work in natural magic and in politics of apocalypse (see Amabile 1882, vol. 1, 226–28; vol. 3, doc. 7, 15–17). The details of the conspiracy of which Campanella was accused are striking. In June 1599, an Ottoman fleet commanded by Mūrāt Reis was anchored near Reggio Calabria. Mūrāt Reis was actually an Italian, originally Scipione Cicala, captured as a boy and recruited to the *devshirme*, the Ottoman institute for training captive boys as bureaucrats and soldiers. The now successful Mūrāt Reis had stopped at Reggio Calabria merely to see his mother in Messina. But Campanella and his partners visited Mūrāt Reis on his ship, urging him to invade Calabria so as to intensify the apocalyptic process, which, they hoped, would cause the pope to flee to a utopian retreat called *La città del sole*. For Malcolm, the conspiracy shows that Campanella adopted from the Ottomans the political institutions that he later presented in his scientific-political utopia. See Malcolm 2005, 41–67. On the conspiracy and its relation to Campanella’s thought, see Ernst 2010, 67–85.

sons in natural magic so that they could ‘know how to rule according to the dogma of the world republic’.

5 Conclusion

For Renaissance thinkers unfriendly to the establishment, natural magic offered an alternative program for the philosophy of nature. Moreover, these rebels presented natural magic as a scientific practice, a culture deeply grounded in non-European contexts. For Ficino and Pico, natural magic originated in the ancient Near East and was brought to Renaissance Europe through cross-cultural exchanges that involved Kabalistic texts and Arabic works on magic. For Agrippa, natural magic carried a new program for science, as well as new practices and new personas. For him, the magus – the new experimental naturalist – was a figure that first came to life in the ancient East. For Campanella, natural magic offered a bottom-up construction of natural philosophy that also entailed a new organisation of society, in which reason and firsthand experience order both nature and society. In imagining this alternative, they eventually returned their science to its historical point of origin, the East. Ficino, Agrippa, and, in a sense, Campanella, pushed the argument further, laying a foundation for a heliocentric worldview, initiating the search for the hidden forces of nature, and casting the virtuoso magician as the godfather of natural philosophy.

The explicit and implicit presence of the *Picatrix* in the writing of these key figures indicates that the text played a central role in stirring discussions that aimed at turning natural magic into philosophy of nature, transforming the magus into an experimentalist, and converting the practice of natural magic into an institutional system of education.

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Kumkum Sangari

Singular individuals, conflicting authorities: Annie Besant and Mohandas Gandhi

The pluralisation of authority in late 19th /early 20th century colonial India as it was asserted, appropriated, redistributed, reformulated or challenged from below generated conflicting sources of validation – divine, sovereign, patriarchal, knowledge-based. The complexity of this background complicates understandings of the national provenance of religions, as well as of the social, political and ideological semiotics that surround the inclination to faith and position it within comparative frameworks. As I have said elsewhere, ‘What came to be described as legitimated European knowledges were hybrid formations that enfolded and systematised “other” knowledges, other hierarchies. [Indian] “local” knowledge transformed into European knowledge often travelled back into indigenist claims, and performed different functions in European and Indian locales’ (Sangari 1999, xxxiv). The internationalisation of anti-imperialist and anticolonial sentiments not only mediated indigenist claims but created new non-national circuits of solidarity and identity that could amplify the boundaries of a self. A tension between received, recrafted and experiential knowledge, between freely chosen affiliations and determining structures, between authorities and individualisation inhered in colonial and metropolitan circulations and interactions.

At this historical conjuncture, the discursive imbrication of divine, sovereign, and patriarchal power, the intertwined conceptions of the religious, political, social, biological, and domestic in Britain and India make isolating religious individualisation problematic. As is now evident, what were named the national culture of England and civilizational heritage of India were jointly shaped through the institutional apparatus of colonialism and the circulation of colonial and metropolitan actors and/or ideas in ways that cannot be captured in insular vocabularies of autochthonous religions, unified regions or homogenous nations. Annie Besant’s discovery of an ancient ‘Hinduism’ and Mohandas Gandhi’s initial reformulation of ‘his’ Hinduism and Indianness in Britain are in fact signs of a Britain transformed and permeated by empire. What is more, Hinduism, newly defined as a single religion, and Theosophy, a new religion that drew on Buddhism and Hinduism, were in the making across national boundaries.

Hinduism was a construction zone through the 19th century with several competing builders – missionary, colonial, orientalist, Indian reformist and antireformist individuals and organisations – none of these had a monopoly yet many recycled the same prefabricated bricks in pursuit of their goals. Theosophy

too devised a pedagogic and occult version of Hinduism. In these religions in the making, individualisation could take place *through* and *against* an array of authorities – affirming some and critiquing others, and thus simultaneously signifying voices that were normative and resistant, conservative and dissenting, unoriginal and innovative. Individualisation appears to be constellative, conjunctural, and a shifting process (see Fuchs 2015, 15).

Annie Besant could be characterised as a transnational actor who made India her base, adopted Theosophy and Hinduism, deviated from social and familial norms before and after her conversion as well as embraced the ‘other’ via an aggrandised ancient Hinduism. Mohandas Gandhi was a transnational actor whose early conception of Hinduism crystallised in his student years in London and expatriate decades in South Africa. Gandhi evolved into a nationalist and world-historical figure, and through his innovative practices later rejected Hinduism as a boundary-marker. Both crossed cultural boundaries experientially and displayed a remarkable personal openness to syncretic spirituality that did not synchronise with their gendered religio-civilisational imaginaries of ancient India.

This essay does not systematically address their prolific writing, multiple public personae and changing political positions and nor does it map personal interactions and differences – only some aspects are pertinent here. Both spent formative years in London – a metropolitan zone of accumulation, display, dissemination and translation of ‘knowledge’ as well as a milieu that often threw up vexed combinations of imperialist hierarchies, heterodox dissent and anticolonial or anti-imperialist sentiments. India inhabited the Anglo-European archive and the public sphere. Britain brimmed with imperial propaganda, discussion, and representation of colonial rule in political and parliamentary debates while reformist debates on child marriage and the age of consent took place simultaneously in India and Britain. At the same time, a largely middle-class non-conforming fringe was engaged in comparative and critical evaluations of religions including Christianity as well as critiques of British colonisation and patriarchal marriage practices. Within this, there were several overlaps, affinities or intersections between late Victorian heterodoxy and radicalism, often utopian and anticolonial, as well as ‘easily transferable sympathies’ between some Utopian Socialists, Fabians, Secularists, Theosophists and other occultists, Vegetarians, Humanitarians, Irish nationalists, feminists, suffragettes and spiritualists (Anderson 1994, 566; Jayawardena 1995, 107–10, 113–4; Veer 2001, 59–65; L. Gandhi 2006, 77–80, 121–25, 177; Miller 2009, 244, 249; Beaumont 2010, 223–25; Miller 2013, 255–56; Malinar 2018). The Victorian entanglement of the social and spiritual, often infused with Orientalism and ‘eastern’ religions, could bifurcate into progressive and traditional positions on the ‘woman question’ or combine them in a ‘spiritualized feminism’ (Owen 2004, 26–27, 87–88). What is

more, liberal dissent at home by the British did not always preclude support of British imperialism (Viswanathan 1998, 185–87; L. Gandhi 2014, 7–9). With some exceptions, London's liberal, socialist, Fabian and radical anticapitalist dissidents mostly subscribed to racial hierarchy filtered through evolutionary theory (see Viswanathan 1998, 196; Schneer 2001, 164–71). Indeed, a racialised concept of cultural exceptionalism, which matched the racialisation it sought to resist, entered some Indian political demands for self-government.

Besant outgrew Anglican Christianity, traversed a critical constellation of atheism, an individualist Secularism that rejected Christian doctrine, Socialist activism, feminist struggles for women's individual rights to birth control, property and suffrage, demands for trade union protection as well as Home Rule for the Irish. Most of her former political ties and several friendships dissolved after adopting Theosophy. Gandhi interacted with a similar radical fringe in London – Socialists, esoteric Christians, Theosophists, Vegetarians, Union of Ethical Societies, liberals, suffragettes, anti-imperialists, and had feminist, socialist, pacifist and Theosophist interlocutors in South Africa. He moved from an admiring to an uneasy then critical relation to Theosophists and their occult predilections as well as Besant who he first met in London just after her conversion. Besant disengaged from her earlier activism and re-entered serious political activity two decades after she came to India in 1893. Gandhi's stake was already high when he wrote *Hind Swaraj* on a return voyage from Britain to South Africa. Although Gandhi was still a loyalist and Home Rule was the political horizon for him, Besant and other nationalists, he was developing a scalar and synchronic view of the intersecting materiality and contradictions of labour and capitalism in three countries, each in the grip of dislocating transitions and labour struggles. Through the experience of official discrimination, imprisonment, racist physical violence and proto-apartheid, and as witness to the brutal formation of a united white ruling class and a unified nation in South Africa after the Anglo-Boer war, his views on race had become self-contradictory, yet his campaigns maintained a studied distance from native Africans (Hunt 1993, 52; Habib 2011, 3–6; Lelyveld 2012, 59–60; Desai and Vahed 2016, 42–44, 122–23).¹ Initially, South Africa was a site of Indian cultural self-differentiation.

This essay sketches an ensemble of colonial reformism, indigenism, civilisational moralism, rights claims as well as antimodern disclaimers filtered through anticolonial and nationalist projects that pushes against the individualisation

¹ Gandhi campaigned for licenses, rights to mobility and property for migrant Indian traders, and later against taxes on indentured workers; his prejudices too began to change. See Habib 2011, 3–4; Natarajan 2013, 73–78, 83, 91, 102; Skaria 2016, 40–41, 49–51.

of women in Besant's *Hindu Ideals* (1904) and Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909) as well as in some early speeches and writing from the 1910s and 1920s. These texts display startling connections and converging currents as they respond comparatively to colonial England and India. Besant contrasts a materialist, contractual, individualist 'west' with a unified Hinduism committed to a non-contractual regime, sees *varna* (the fourfold caste order) as stabilising social functions and Hindu women as repositories of *dharma*/duty and tradition. Gandhi seems to make a starker civilisational opposition between east and west. Yet, both seek to align notions of a premodern and an antimodern in their definition of rights and duties; both bundle prescriptive, religious and civilisational imaginaries into the concept of marriage; and both elaborate altruism as an agential model which spans the religious, social and political. Gandhi's notable differences from Besant in these years are in the multiple inflections of *dharma*, rights and duty, an ascetic model of womanhood and marriage embedded in a nationalist project, and a multi-religious concept of the nation which inaugurates his later commitment to a supradenominational religious axis.

Despite the selective diversity of Besant's and Gandhi's historical repertoires and intense personalisation of their religious choices, self-making practices, and transnational combinatoires in earlier and later decades, these texts and imaginaries are implicated in the same Indian reformist and transnational Orientalist and Indological circuits that relied on textually predetermined and formulaic knowledge. Hindu or Indian women, a typified collective, are positioned in a prescriptive and repressive enclosure in which normative marriage becomes the site of deindividualisation. For Besant and Gandhi, marriage as a regulatory institution, and the women within it are seen as indispensable for the very *survival* of religion. In this curious inversion, that rebounds on the social and religious individualisation of women, it is not religion that protects marriage but women who protect religion.

The gaps between Besant and Gandhi's practice and prescription (to which I will return in conclusion) are significant. Even as both Britain and India are becoming 'modern', caste, rebirth, duty, *dharma* and Indian/Hindu womanhood are posited as antidotes to 'western' individualism. Paradoxically, Besant's and Gandhi's own individualisation as social and political actors seems to rest on its historical antagonist: a caste-based patriarchal order. The elevation of womanhood and the attraction for upper-caste regulatory marriage override the tenor of their personal disaffections. Besant separated from an oppressive husband who believed in 'a husband's authority and a wife's submission' (1908, 81), and though she did not reject the institution, she had demanded reform of marriage laws and protested the absence of financial, legal and social rights for married women (Owen 2004, 95; Blyth 2009, 122–23, 129). Gandhi carried the resentment

and guilt of a teenage marriage, had spent very few years in the same household as his wife, and, between 1906 and 1909, took a vow of celibacy, turning towards anticapitalism, civil disobedience, and inner spiritual self-reform (*satyagraha*).

1 Framing the antimodern

European Enlightenment can be read as an abstract set of egalitarian values with emancipatory potentials that questioned old hierarchies and were appropriated and radicalised outside Europe as much as inside it to mobilise universal rights in colonial conditions. Alternately, it can be read as a comparative and contrastive project of European self-differentiation that incorporated the ‘discovered’ and conquered world into European knowledge systems, a project that was textual from its inception, drew on travelogues, novels and missionary accounts, and continued to play a shaping role in the late 19th and early 20th century (Conrad 2012, 1009–15; Hulme and Jordanova 1990, 7–8, 12). The contrastive aspect was selectively incorporated as an ideology of capitalism, which was threatened by the political concretisation of egalitarian potentials, and normative hierarchies were devised to justify class, racial and colonial domination (Sangari 1999, xxxv). Whether the counterpoints to forms of Enlightenment universalism are attributed to the ascent of notions of racial/civilisational superiority and evolutionary theory (Veer 2001, 40; Conrad 2012, 1019–20), or seen as a global partitioning of its radical strands (Stoler 2016, 234–35), or understood as a part of its open ‘dialectical history of proliferation and blockage’, Enlightenment ideals were not universalised in Europe and even less so in the colonies (Sangari 1999, xxxv).

In 19th century Europe, romantic organicism and evolutionary theory were the currencies of denial. In the former, ‘the figure of woman serve[d] as a recurring cipher of the premodern within modernity itself’, while models of evolution usually relegated women and people of colour to an archaic or atemporal zone outside the path of historical development and placed them lower on the evolutionary chain (Felski 1995, 40, 55–56, 148). In significant social domains colonial rule took place, ideologically and strategically, under the insignia of anti-Enlightenment tendencies, and was accompanied by assumptions that most Enlightenment ideals could not or must not be imitated, applied, or implemented in India.² Further, colonisation shaped a reformist syntax in which forms of liberal universalism were uneasily

² John Stuart Mill enunciated the ‘principles of exclusion’ from liberty for ‘backward states of society’, and saw ‘despotism [as] a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians’ until their ‘improvement’ was achieved (*On Liberty* 1859, in Veer 2001, 17).

entangled with indigenist invocations of patriarchal practices and Hindu women as governed by religious belief; this became part of a compliant, shared, yet reactive antimodern vocabulary by the end of the 19th century.

The common emphasis on Besant's vaunted cross-cultural hybridity and Gandhi's so-called invocation of premodern solidarities or loyalties for nationalist mobilisation thus may obscure a wider problematic in which they were enmeshed, namely, the centrality and historical significance of the premodern and antimodern in the gendered configurations of religion and modernity. Modernity, as I see it, is not about linear progress or sudden ruptures but is rather a question of specific regional and transnational configurations with ideological valences and political locations. A conjunctural and shifting temporal marker, the term modernity could encode self-transforming individualisation, subversively egalitarian ideas of collectivity and self-determination as well as contrastive patriarchal/imperial discourses of domination. Inherently comparative, 'modernity' was established in relation to that which is not, less or too modern, i.e., as absence and excess.

If, following Jameson, modernity is also understood as 'a narrative category' (2002, 94), then the premodern and antimodern could be seen as contrastive figures of self-differentiation which refer, inconsistently, to the extinct, the residual or the coeval. The very naming of a 'premodern' was and remains an ideological exercise. After over a century of colonisation it would be problematic to simply identify all extant religious and patriarchal practices in India as premodern since some could be continuations from and before the 18th century while others entered different registers or were recast by state policies, laws, and labour markets in a colonial economy. Which features of social life were to be subsumed under the category of the premodern? What was to be selected as representative of a (desirable) premodern from a vast jumble of unchanged and changing patriarchal, religious, caste and other social practices in order to assemble an antimodern that could challenge western modernity? Since many definitions of a premodern were themselves made from an antimodern standpoint, the antimodern became – both formally and substantively – a pre-eminently *modern* staging of the premodern. Against the mystifications of a triumphal capitalist story of progress that obscured the simultaneous emergence of new predatory forms of domination and exploitation, the antimodern unease with capitalism could come armed with *another* set of mystifications – an ascriptive, moralistic discourse of cultural differentiation.

Since the antimodern was contextual, multi-sited and striated by its double lineage in Enlightenment ideals and collaborative indigenisms, it became a discursive space prone to pre-emptive resolutions and invaded by contradictions. Colonialism could be resisted in the name of universalism *and* particularist hierarchies

could be (re)instated in the interests of self-differentiation. In critiques of the effects of capitalist expansion, the exploitation of labour and legal discrimination, Enlightenment ideals could be invoked in the claim to rights as ‘British’ subjects, but the ground of eligibility for rights could be sought in civilisational and gendered hierarchies which undermined universalism, foreclosed class struggle and feminist disturbance. A political modernity sought on the basis of an imagined ancient past and/or extant premodern ideas/practices of entitlement created sharp tensions between the theoretical universalism of rights and entitlement on civilisational grounds – which had gendered, casteist, and racial implications.

The discord between emancipatory Enlightenment universals and caste/racial/civilisational differences was negotiated in several registers. In conservative colonial and indigenist patriarchal anti-western scripts, the antimodern could serve as an ideology of restraint for the colonised. At the same time, interrogation and contention catalysed by the disparity between Enlightenment ideals and the vivid denial of rights, the violent formation of colonial states and economic realities of imperialism could simultaneously reproduce and destabilise antimodern positions. Left and socialist critiques of capitalism and imperialism could also intersect with antimodern positions insofar as the term modernity was a synonym for the effects of the ongoing transitions to capitalism. Other affinities with socialism lay in the search for alternative lifestyles that could synchronise with a largely agrarian subcontinent and/or with communitarian alternatives to bourgeois or ‘western’ individualism.

The simultaneous production of a contrastive modernity and disaffection with the modern brought dissenters in the metropolis and colony into a peculiar proximity, and co-constituted a transnational arena across India and Britain. What were the registers of the antimodern and the qualities of the synthesis and antithesis of east and west in Besant’s and Gandhi’s writing in the early 20th century? The antimodern, with its distinct lineages, and unreconciled invocations of hegemonic and counterhegemonic authorities produced singular combinations and suggests an entry into how its proponents could have intensely agential and individualised religious repertoires, and, in self-contradictory fashion, also deindividualise others.

2 Annie Besant’s project

Like the colonial state, several nationalist projects in India sought to appropriate the moral authority of altruism, reform and regeneration in order to legitimate self-government. Further, the quasi-orientalist diagnosis of India – as repository

of usable 'feudal' modes and as subject of reform, religion and patriarchy as the most ancient and organising principles of Hindu society, religion as providing a compensatory area of 'autonomy', the true enlightenment of Indians lying in their own past traditions, and the special spirituality of women (read special powers for submitting to subjection) – structured such nationalist projects from the late 19th century. In this respect neither Besant nor Gandhi were original. The decline-and-rejuvenation narrative, an effect of textual transmission, was a settled authority supported by a spiritual east/materialist west binary that appeared in reformist tracts and print media; it paraded patriarchal features as marks of distinction from other religions/cultures, invoked an ancient golden age – Hindu, Vedic or Indian – that turned a zone of colonial extraction into a site for the production of symbolic value (Sangari 1999, xviii, xxix; Veer 2001, 49–50, 144).

Annie Besant purveys this old diagnosis through a personal 'rediscovery' of 'Hindu' antiquity and adds a parallel narrative of the decline of British aristocracy that played on contemporary fears of evolutionary regression. Some strands of Theosophy were formed at the crossroads of Indology, European Romanticism and Orientalism – which had in common the production of self-confirming knowledge – and combined the aggrandisement of Hindu or Aryan antiquity with certain Euro-American occultisms. In this syncretic, circulating and rapidly transnationalised religion, the idea of a universal brotherhood became more attractive because it could include women. A religion without a god and human yet spectral Masters (the 'Mahatmas' – native spiritual adepts), it rejected orthodox Christianity, looked to the east for spiritual guidance and had its own roster of 'native' interlocutors.³ Yet it saw itself as modern through the claim to science (Owen 2004, 34–35), and proposed a spiritually progressive evolutionism which made religion amenable to the laws of science. Through Theosophy, Besant channelled revitalising discourses and indigenist characterisations of Hinduism and upper-caste patriarchy into a more comparative and antimodern vocabulary – a vocabulary that aggrandised a regimen of *dharma*, community, altruism and duty as opposed to the modern emphasis on rights, the individual, self-interest and the law.

Hindu Ideals (1904), composed from notes of lectures delivered at the Central Hindu College, Benares, addressed young Hindu male students and belongs to a transitional period, before Besant joined the Indian National Congress, in which she was immersed in occultism and busy smoothing the scandalous frauds and

³ Besant saw the promotion of the study of Aryan and other eastern literatures, religions and sciences as tenets of Theosophy (Beaumont 2010, 226). At this time, the study of oriental faiths was also seen to break down 'the exclusive pretensions of Christian dogma' (J. M. Wheeler, 'Hindu "Song celestial"', *Our Corner*, January 1886, in Miller 2013, 24).

lawsuits left behind by Madame Blavatsky. In these lectures, she brahminised Theosophy and aligned it with a conservative antiwesternism and a notion of reluctant reform that was at once *covertly* assimilationist and *blatantly* revivalist.⁴ And the appeal of her ensemble lay precisely in this combination. She critiqued the ‘west’, concretised the prospect of cultural superiority and offered colonial indigenism as ‘recognised’, ratified and approved by western science and scholarship, extending the type of legitimation earlier offered by Max Müller into a politically programmatic notion of Hinduism.⁵ Like Müller, she endowed ancient Hinduism with a unified metaphysic and a tutelary, inspirational role vis a vis the west. *Hindu Ideals* also rehearsed the enabling dichotomy in the colonial semantics of non-interference: ancient Hinduism had survived in its ‘distinctive polity’, in the still-preserved injunctions of *rishis*, in its women and caste order, but it had also degenerated, needed succour and preservation by non-interventionist rulers (Besant 1904, 141, 143, 154–55).⁶ Further, Hindus were provided with the possibility of a synthesis of ‘east’ and ‘west’ through selective assimilation (ibid. 3–4) that could pose as a restoration of ancient Hindu glory – that is, a type of modernity that could be coded as a mere *return* to native ‘wisdom’, and a type of synthesis by which they could *be* modern, that is, as regenerated Hindus, but could simultaneously denounce modernity. In short, they could have it both ways.

In a schema analogous to J. G. Herder’s romantic restorative ensemble in which each society was an irreducible, unique totality with a national soul and spirit, and the nationalist simply spoke for that spirit, Besant characterised ‘Ideals’ as nationally distinct ‘essentials’ rooted in the nature of a people (ibid. 5–10). However, in a peculiarly Theosophical twist, she gave a transnational itinerary to the soul and orchestrated the cycle of rebirth in relation to ‘individual’ national identities.

4 This section draws on Sangari 2004. Besant later represented the Theosophical Society as third in the great movements for the revival of religion in India after the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj with each marking ‘successive developments of the national self-consciousness’ (1925, 26, 32).

5 For Müller, who never visited the country, India supplied the ‘missing links’ in Europe’s ‘intellectual ancestry’: ‘We all come from the East – all that we value most has come from the East, and in going to the East [...] [a European] ought to feel that he is going to his “old home”, full of memories’ (1882, 6–7).

6 Besant instructed the British that they ‘must learn to rule [India] according to its traditions’ (*Theosophy and Imperialism* 1902, in Anderson 1994, 568) which, ironically, synchronised with Britain’s paternalist phases of selective ‘non-interference’ in ‘native’ customs and religions in the presidencies under direct rule in 19th century India. On these phases, see Sangari 1999: xxvi, 105, 188–89; Veer 2001, 21, 113.

Nations embodied special characteristics, and the Jivas – the souls which are ready to develop these characteristics are guided by karma to take birth in those nations. These characteristics will find their place in the Ideals of those nations. (Besant 1904, 10)

Karma is a causal force for nations while reincarnation is a site for typification. The grouping of souls of one kind has significant implications for the caste order, marriage, and contraception (to which I will return).

Besant's diagrammatic construction of west and east, in practice only Britain and India, instituted a discourse of rights versus duties that sought to displace historical comparativism by a differentialist discourse of civilisational moralism. The modern west nurtured 'the lower mind [...] dealing with concrete objects, the reasoning, questioning, scientific mind'; it had formulated the free, self-reliant, solitary individual bearing rights locked in a (Rousseauvian) social contract for the protection of these rights into a powerful 'Ideal' of liberty and individual strength (ibid. 11–15). This ideal, assisted by a Christian religion 'given to help the western evolution', in turn spawned a host of (imitable) virtues: social service to the needy, charitable institutions, the public spirit of citizenship and patriotism, personal and social qualities ranging from self-respect to justice as well as martial virtues such as will, valour and energy – all of which had enabled England to colonise the world (ibid. 15–17)! Though Besant may not have intended this, the profile that emerges is of a Christianity allied to British nationalism and committed to producing disciplined citizens for an imperial state.

The Indian 'Ideal', 'embodied in one word, Dharma, Duty', flowed out of a religion that taught 'Unity of Existence' and a plan of society formulated by the *rishis*: it envisaged each person as embedded in an interdependent social order, born into obligations rather than freedom, upheld integration and 'the orderly distribution of social functions' through *varnashram dharma* – the different duties prescribed for each of the four castes (ibid. 18–20). While the western ideal stemmed from its history of industrialisation, the Indian ideal of the 'Man Dutiful' typically emerged from ancient religion and was the exact obverse of individualism. However, rights (constellated with western individualism, aggression and separatism) are said to be no different from duties (constellated with *dharma*, peace, unity), because 'each man obtains his rights when all around him discharge their several duties' (ibid. 20). The implication is paradoxical: the standpoint of rights is morally inferior to that of duties but duties encompass rights anyway, and in this Indian antiquity *is* modern and *supersedes* the modern.

In this non-contractual regime where duties double as rights, the absence of social contract not only characterises the relation of the individual to the state but covers all social relations and becomes, curiously, the foundation of obedient citizenship, state power, domestic and caste stability. Ethics proceed from

the individual in the Christian west and from the transpersonal realm of 'social Dharma' in India, a *dharma* which is in accord with *varna*: thus 'the dharma of the shudra was to serve' (ibid. 20). The virtues that spring from the 'Ideal of Dharma' are based on 'a sense of obligation', which is to be discharged even if there is no reciprocity; wrong must be met with right even when the other party (king, husband, wife or son) is unworthy (ibid. 20–1, 23–24). In this non-retaliatory, non-western stance, lay the 'safety' of individual *karma*, the family and the state (ibid. 23–24).

Dharma thus appears, paradoxically, to be a premodern version of social contract that creates non-contractual social relations and frees India from the dangers raised by modern iterations of social contracts in the west. This was, in fact, to become a cardinal tenet of antimodernity which carried not only guarantees for the state but also profound patriarchal assurances. Besant drew on multiple legacies. She leaned on the deist, moderate tendencies within the Enlightenment which either sought to make it compatible with Christianity or were nervous about discarding religion as a guarantor of social stability as well as on conservative reactions to the Enlightenment (see Jacob 1981, 84, 263; Collier 1990, 93). By the end of the 19th century, the discourse of duty had been assimilated into a conservative bourgeois moralism impelled by unsuppressible fears of universal enfranchisement in Britain and in the colonies. Further, Besant's extension of duties to cover rights – rights that could not be claimed but only given to the other through the performance of one's duty (Besant 1904, 20) – and the characterisation of domestic relations as a privileged non-contractual site promised to safeguard patriarchy and suggests two overlapping rationales. These may have trickled down from the classic patriarchalism of European political theory (such as Robert Filmer's defense of patriarchal authority) which argued explicitly for a natural hierarchy of inequality. They may all have been gleaned from new theories of social contract which tacitly upheld patriarchal categories by placing the private-domestic domain outside the public-political and contractual realm. As Pateman shows, the social contract remained sexually ascriptive: social contract theorists saw men as civil equals but still represented the subjection of women as natural by defining women and the private domain in particularist ways (1988, 102, 104–07, 112–13). Besant's address too, in assuring male privilege, pushed against the individualisation of women and feminist attempts, including her own, to renegotiate this social contract through suffrage, married women's rights to property and better divorce laws. However, the address to Hindu men is double-edged since the description of *all* eastern social relations (and not those centred on women and the family alone) as bound by primordial obligations, threatens, ironically, to renew a Eurocentric and generalised feminisation of the east along the line of the internal fracture in the Enlightenment which

had partitioned its egalitarian promise by excluding women.⁷ The spatial split between individual rights and social duties not only played into an imperial cartography of west and east but tended to undermine Besant's own earlier emphasis on the fact that obligations were an integral strand in the modern European discourse of citizenship and rights carried moral imperatives as well as implied correlative duties for individuals and citizens.⁸

In her description of contemporary changes, Besant tried to circumvent such a spatial split by reconnecting eastern duties and western rights; however, she could only do this by invoking different principles – that of a synthetic restoration of antiquity in the east and that of intelligent modernisation in the west. Whereas selflessness derived from *dharma* tends to dissolve the individual into the social body, the selflessness derived from a Christian or humanitarian ethic transcends the individual. The west was now approximating the east since 'modern scientific thought' and the discoveries of evolution had dispensed with the idea of society as 'an artificial contract'; it had learnt to recognise the essential organic unity of humanity and 'a sense of community' had given birth to 'Altruism' (Besant 1904, 25). This altruism, a triumph over selfish individualism, had led to 'co-operation instead of competition', the growth of 'public duty' and 'conscience', provided the poor with protection, social security, free education and services that limited their oppression (ibid. 26). Altruism or the 'Ideal of Duty' now stood higher than rights in the west. Unfortunately, because of 'the decay of spirituality', India was moving in the opposite direction: the 'Ideal of Duty' which once comprised the essential 'Dharma' of India had declined, the 'field of duty' had contracted to the familial (ibid. 27). Unlike the west, where they emerged from the individual who embodies rights, the wellspring of public duty and national unity in the east happened to be spirituality, it followed then that reviving spirituality would revive these as well.

While Besant's version thus retains some 19th century functions of altruism and philanthropy – as legitimising ideologies of the dominant classes in England and the colonial state in India as well as euphemisms for imperial expansion in general,⁹ it carries some materialist concerns from her socialist past. Prior to the

7 Though women were excluded in Enlightenment thought (Landes 1988, 204), the French Revolution was a key point of reference for feminists who saw themselves as 'retrieving the radical kernel within the Enlightenment project' (Felski 1995, 166).

8 Discussing these aspects of citizenship, Freeman notes that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in 1789 emphasised legal and inalienable, but not absolute, rights of individuals and closely associated these with duties of citizens/members of 'a social body' and obedience to the law (Freeman 1990, 172, 176, 178).

9 Altruism and philanthropy structured the entry of British middle-class women into the public domain in England and its colonies and, conditionally, offered a position of imperial dominance while meliorative charity was implicated in managing class antagonisms in Victorian England

adoption of Theosophy, Besant had protested the exploitation of tenant farmers and labourers, organised trade unions and strikes, exposed the self-serving hypocrisy of Christian charity (1908, 304–05), and envisaged an evolutionary schema in which societies ascended from industrialisation to a non-competitive socialism (see Besterman 1934, 110–14, 116–18, 124–26). Now, however, altruism presents itself almost as an achieved socialism that also renders redundant Socialist agendas in Britain.¹⁰ While altruism fills the deficits of modernity in the west, it signifies the antimodern in India, acquires the power to chasten the modernity of the west and bring it nearer to the eastern ideal by joining rights with duties. Antimodernity becomes the vector of western self-reform qua ‘easternisation’ and such an easternised west becomes more fit to govern both its own class society and its colonies. She offers antimodernity to the west as an improved ideology of imperial expansion and as a renewed rationale for non-interference in Indian religions.

In a second and equally interesting move, antimodernity becomes the ideological correlate of India’s passage to modernity with altruism functioning once again as a friendly conduit. The west approximates the ancient east through the discoveries of science, that is, through its very modernity. Antimodernity is thus a natural product of the expansive historical logic of western society and science. However, the east becomes like the contemporary west through rediscovery and restoration of its ancient polity and morals, that is, through a necessary antimodernity. Ideologically, this writes antimodernity into the very terms in which modernity can legitimately be adopted – modernity to the colonised must always come in disguise and disguised as their own earlier self. The accommodation of change whether as innovation, assimilation or imposition can be justified only if modernity is simultaneously disavowed. The very path to modernity is surreptitious and structured by a semantic of concealment while antimodernity becomes the name for screening or suppressing the several modern premises in which it was itself grounded. This also provided a method for recasting similarities between west and east into a discourse of cultural difference. If the west has similar values then it was because it had belatedly but correctly begun to approximate the east, if the east had the same values as the west, then they were its own to start with. Once synthesis was cast as a return, then any open assimilation of the modern because it was different (and *therefore* desirable) could (and still can)

(see Sangari 1999: xliii, xlix, 104, 173–74). In her educational enterprises in India, Besant too was implicated in these agential avenues.

10 Beaumont notes that the confluences between socialism, occultism, especially Theosophy, utopianism and evolutionism could dematerialise socialist discourse and render it ‘half-mystic’. The utopian concept of a universal brotherhood allows Besant’s socialist beliefs to be ‘preserved’ and ‘mummified’ inside her Theosophical faith (2010, 223–28).

be derided as foolish imitation and crude derivation while covert assimilation was given the opportunity to pose as true indigenism. Effectively Besant offered antimodernity to Indians as a dual site of *veiled* collaboration and *proclaimed* autonomy.

The Indian paradigm of altruism that Besant projects as ideologically superior to the western and Christian is extracted from a strictly caste-divided, severely brahminical and patriarchal Hinduism, heavily dependent on the four prescribed *ashramas* or stages of life, sacrificial rituals and ceremonial practices, and extrapolated from the Smritis, Shastras, Ramayana and Mahabharata (1904, 30–33, 38–40, 47–49, 54–55, 58–60, 64–65, 70–72, 159–62). In fact, Besant participated in the scripturalisation and canonisation of the epics, and the colonial aggrandisement of the Manusmriti, a text that now combined the weight of ancient prescription with colonial power (see Sangari 1999, 314–16). In *Hindu Ideals* the prescriptive corpus of the Smritis or Dharmashastras, obsessed with hierarchy and segregation and claiming to draw its authority from the Vedas, is made to stand in a mutually confirmatory relation with the Ramayana, rather than one that is discrepant; both speak in one voice and the epic appears to be merely the popular adjunct and prevailing face of prescription – an illustration of the ideals of marriage and kingship (Besant 1904, 93–95, 125).

Besant had earlier opposed Judeo-Christian patriarchy as the underpinning of disempowering Victorian legal codes.¹¹ She now valorises ancient Hinduism *because* it was patriarchal. *Hindu Ideals* presents the institution of Hindu marriage as the sacred bedrock of the social fabric that was not to be disturbed too much by reformers (ibid. 84), the patriarchal household as an enlightened yet despotic monarchy, the perfect householder as a potentate, a prototype of self-governance and a male mentor par excellence. The householder's own 'obedience to rightful authority' fits him to exercise authority over his domestic 'kingdom'; he orders and controls all in his home and, since he is a 'king', none may order or control him. He enfolds all castes in his person: the many household duties vary with each caste and are most onerous among the upper castes, yet every householder 'plays the part of each caste in his household' – as priest, protector, provider and servant of the household, he is a *brahmin*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *shudra*! He is also the 'spiritual preceptor' of his wife (ibid. 66, 68, 75, 88, 92). The perfect wife – at once a friend and a reverential, obedient subject of her monarch husband – reigns over his household (ibid. 66, 93). The Hindu 'Ideal of

¹¹ Besant attributed British women's legal disadvantage to biblical law and its interpretations which treated women as social and sexual property of fathers and husbands, and denied women 'the inalienable right' over their own persons without giving a wife equivalent property rights over the husband (Blyth 2009, 125, 130–33).

Marriage' was based on the complementarity of sexes proclaimed in the Shastras, a non-antagonist non-competitive relation and not on separate rights of men and women as in the west (ibid. 85–86). In an earlier essay, 'Womanhood', Besant seeks to return Indian women to their own 'ancestral custom' (1900, 272, 278), asserting that anything which 'separates one sex from the other in life or interest or brings them into competition or rivalry' is fatal to the 'progress of the race' and upward evolution.¹²

In contemporary India, Hindu women were a homogenous and exceptional 'type', still naturally innocent, embodied the not-yet-extinct premodern, and had to be protected from the west.¹³ Since men had become 'materialistic', Hindu *dharma* had found its 'refuge in the hearts of its women, a sure temple whence it may never be driven' (ibid. 92–93). While women are guardians of 'Hindu dharma and the Hindu home' (ibid. 110), a *dharma* laden with patriarchal normativity, Hinduism is disconnected from nearly all patriarchal arrangements through familiar exculpatory moves – its own intrinsic superiority, eternal modernity, degradation and fall caused by later textual interpolation and Muslim conquest (ibid. 86–91, 99–100). In Besant's euphemistic interpretation, ancient Hinduism was not misogynist as Christianity was, while Hinduism's superiority to Christianity lay in its refusal to make any distinction between 'the sacred and secular' (ibid. 59).

Besant's antimodern discourse has a transparent class location. Her unease with 'democracy' in the west and eulogy of caste rest on an explicit admiration for hierarchy described as 'Aristocracy or the Rule of the Best' (ibid. 113–14), and a thinly veiled loathing for class mobility in Britain. An 'uncultivated' butcher or salesman who manages by dint of wealth to enter the gentry is described as having a 'Shudra body', 'Shudra manners', a 'Shudra Ego' and unfit to be 'a leader of society' (ibid. 157–58). For her, *varna* unlike class was the foundation of a non-competitive fourfold order, each caste comprising a distinct and immutable 'class' based on hereditary occupation (with *shudras* providing the 'broad basis

12 Here Besant is close to the socialist eugenicist, Karl Pearson who argued in 'The Woman Question' (1885) that scientific arguments about the good of the 'race' must always trump abstract reflections on women's individual rights: 'We have first to settle [...] what would be the effects of women's emancipation on her function of race-reproduction, before we can talk about her "rights", which are, after all, only a vague description of what may be the fittest position for her, the sphere of her maximum usefulness in the developed society of the future' (in Miller 2009, 249). The socialist investment in anti-individualism for a greater collective good could engender antifeminist arguments (see Miller *ibid.*).

13 In lectures given in 1897 and 1903, Besant said 'Leave the Hindu woman untouched by Western thought [...] We [the English] have women enough who are brilliantly intellectual and competent; let us leave unmarred the one type which is the incarnation of spiritual beauty. The world cannot afford to lose the pure, lofty, tender, and yet strong, type of Hindu womanhood' (1942, 546–47).

of the national pyramid'), and a useful restriction on social mobility (ibid. 135). Thus there was no merit in contemporary India 'producing a bad copy of western forms and methods' and sinking into the very 'whirlpool from which the West is endeavouring to escape' (ibid. 137). Even the west was beginning to realise the value of caste – a 'social stability of form answering to the inner stability of spirit' – and of birth as a 'surer and more dignified foundation for social order' than wealth (ibid. 157). Her claim resonated with conservative European interpretations of the caste system (she cites Auguste Comte) as a sensible form of social organisation which had originated in racial division and the beneficent conquest of inferior natives by culturally superior Aryans – the ancestors of both contemporary Hindus and the British.¹⁴

Varnashram dharma as the image of a hierarchical society that was divinely ordained but maintained by law had already come to provide a space where the nostalgias of anti-industrial, romantic and conservative organicisms could effortlessly rationalise, blend or ally with Indian upper-caste conceits and interests.¹⁵ Besant's assimilation of caste to race coincided with the racialisation of caste in turn-of-century India, most infamously in H. H. Risley's anthropometry which fused the social and the biological (Samarendra 2010, 51–58), and defined the caste system as 'a community of race' (L. Gandhi 2014, 68–69). For Besant, caste is a system that fixes the division of labour and generates duties, national essences, and characteristics. What is unusual in *Hindu Ideals* is the conserving function of reincarnation through which the soul climbs on the caste ladder and ensures the reproduction of 'national Ideals'. The 'four stages in the long pilgrimage of the soul [which] are maintained in the four castes, the youth, prime, maturity and old age of the Jivatma' still exist despite foreign conquests: India could only preserve her 'racial characteristics' because of the 'strong barrier of caste' (Besant 1904, 154–55).

In earlier lectures collected in *Ancient Ideals in Modern Life*, Besant nominates the fourfold caste order – non-conflictual, orderly and progressive – as the chief reason for India's stability and explicitly binds it to 'the path to Evolution along which a human soul develops' (1901, 73–78). In successive births, 'the soul passes from one to another [caste], according to the qualities it has developed [and] the actions it has performed' (ibid. 79). The soul may rise or sink in this spiritual neo-Darwinism of individual and collective ascent and descent via reincarnation. Upward mobility increased responsibilities (especially of *brahmins*) since *varna*

¹⁴ On the locations of Indian and British Orientalist Aryanisms, which come together in Besant, see Veer 2001, 76, 143–44.

¹⁵ On the, often Orientalist, European fascination with supposedly 'non-exploitative and non-contradictory hierarchy' obtaining in 'Aryan' India, see Kaiwar 2015, 110–12, 125.

was not ‘a system of rights claimed *by* a caste, but a system of duties imposed *on* a caste; the higher the caste, the heavier the duties’ (ibid. 79). ‘Heredity’ supports status quo by playing a crucial role in ‘providing suitable physical bodies to suit each type of subtle bodies (Sukshma Sharira)’ (ibid. 81). Yet the caste order too has degenerated because it multiplied and subdivided, ‘less evolved souls came into Indian bodies [...] and were no longer able to fulfil the dharma of the caste in which they were born’ (ibid. 84).

The antimodern unfolds as an antidemocratic sign of cohesion, unity, racialised evolution, and restoration of individual (husband) and collective (caste) authority. The upward social mobility, strong workers’ and women’s organisations make Britain an awkward candidate for a paternalist restorative project; India, despite the fall of men, is more opportune because of the vaunted continuity of womanhood and *varna*. Ironically, the Victorianisms Besant reproduces or transmutes into an antimodern vocabulary and transposes to India were already severally mediated by the transactions of empire: as for instance, the anxiety about sources of spiritual and moral authority, the resolutions domestic ideologies offered for conflicts between paternalism and open competition, the domestic world as replicating social order and yet capable of transforming it, the detachment of morality from economic imperatives and women’s economic deprivation as a basis for their especial moral authority as well as the home as a sanctified source of altruistic emotions that could (even should) replace Christian solace.

3 Mohandas Gandhi’s project

As a set of pre-emptive resolutions, the antimodern aligns smoothly with empire in Besant. The contradictions are more evident in Gandhi. In South Africa, his main concerns were the status of Indians as equal citizens of empire and protection against racial discrimination (Habib 2011, 3). Faisal Devji notes that the Indian community in South Africa was ‘shaped entirely by capitalist relations, whether of commerce, service or labour, and had no dealings with premodern forms of possession or production’; therefore, unlike in India, rights could be claimed more directly without invoking the safeguards or privileges of caste and religion (2012, 50). Yet, as Gandhi found, the ‘rights’ promised to ‘Indian subjects’ by Queen Victoria’s proclamation in 1858 were not portable (Lelyveld 2012, 11), its liberal principles were not upheld. Visiting London as an increasingly disillusioned petitioner in deputations on behalf of Indians in South Africa, he wrote: ‘The only possible justification for holding together the different communities of the Empire under the same Sovereignty is the fact of *elementary equality*’ (Gandhi

1958–1982, 9, 516). As he travelled between India, London and South Africa, colonialism seemed at once more dichotomous – a polarity of west and east – and more unified since capitalism was becoming ubiquitous. The colonies as sites of extraction stood in sharp contrast to the metropole as a venue of consumption.

Some strands in *Hind Swaraj* (a dialogue between a persuasive Editor and a Reader) noticeably approximate Besant. Gandhi consciously excludes European dissenters and the many Englishmen who desire Home rule for India from the ‘west’ (Gandhi 2015, 17), but makes a starker opposition between India and ‘modern civilisation’ in England (ibid. 41–42), grants less to the west on the counts of science, morality and religion, and refuses to turn India into ‘*Englistan*’ (ibid. 27). Yet, beneath the hyperbolic polarisation of sovereign and subject, both west and east are subjugated by a subsuming entity, a structuring force that determines the ‘condition’ of England, and *through* it, of India. He blames not the ‘English people’ but a destructive ‘modern civilisation’ not more than half a century old – ‘a civilisation only in name’ – ‘*under* [which] the nations of Europe are becoming degraded’ (ibid. 32, 34). He opposes a mode of conduct (named western civilisation) resting on force, colonial expropriation, and the desire of the British to ‘convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods’ (ibid. 40): the destruction of local industry and expansion of markets, pendant on speed and technological innovations, were impoverishing India. This flat indictment of colonial expansion, industrial capital, the exploitation of wage labour in colonies and metropole, and the obsession with profit is not too distant from Marx’s more dialectical critique of the expansion of markets, the destruction of ‘national industries,’ and forcible introduction to all nations of ‘what it [the bourgeoisie] calls civilisation’, i.e. the ‘bourgeois mode of production’ which makes the ‘East’ dependent on the ‘West’ (Marx and Engels 1978, 476–77). Though Gandhi’s critique is blurred by an overblown antithesis of east and west, clearly Britain is controlled by a modern civilisation much larger and more powerful than itself and India is being restructured by the same modalities. Despite the asymmetry of power, east and west are aligned in that both are governed by the apparatus of capitalism and the drive for accumulation. The English are subject to capitalism and Indians are subject to a subjected nation.

At the same time, a tension between universal rights within empire and the civilisational grounds for claiming them is apparent in *Hind Swaraj*. Gandhi’s campaigns for rights in South Africa were allied to a notion of the special entitlement of Indians as ‘British subjects’, but did not escape the racial and civilisational hierarchies instituted by colonisation, and he limited his constituency by fighting white racism against Indians but not Africans (Gandhi 1958–1982, 1, 281; Gandhi 1958–1982, 6, 213; Skaria 2016, 40; Desai and Vahed 2016, 42–44). In *Hind Swaraj*, however, economic and cultural arguments eclipse the loyalism he had

invoked earlier. Further, the semantic accretion within duties and rights allows these twinned concepts to move *between* role-bound entitlements and a universalist language of rights – both terms straddle ongoing political transitions and acquire subversive connotations.

Many of the east-west antitheses in *Hind Swaraj* rest on morality versus immorality, faith versus irreligion, spiritual laws versus the laws of matter, a non-contractual *dharma* resting on a non-retaliatory ethic versus contractual norms.¹⁶ In contrast to Besant's views, *dharma* has a wider semantic range. As Parel (2015, xxi, lxi, xc, 90), Skaria (2016, 42) and Kumar (2015, 89) show, it can index duty, natural moral law, an injunction to the moral law, the pursuit of the welfare of the soul, religion as ethics, religion as sect (e.g. Hindu and Muslim), *niti* (ethics) and ethical integrity. Or *dharma* can be the opposite of *adharma*, i.e. irreligion (Gandhi 2015, 36). Parel's argument that Gandhi 'redefines the scope of dharma to include notions of citizenship, equality, liberty, fraternity and mutual assistance' and 'a civic humanism' may seem stretched (Parel 2015, xxviii); however, *dharma* is not credal – that is, confined to a single set of religious beliefs – and extracting it from the solely spiritual, Gandhi repositions it in a secular terrain of civic virtue.

Gandhi seems to duplicate Besant's assertion of the superiority of duty over the discourse of rights as well as the equivalence of duty and rights. However, he makes a distinction between duty, *farajj*, and religion, *dharma* (see Parel 2015, 90). Duty (*farajj* in Gujarati, from Urdu *farz*, Persian origin) and rights (*hako* in Gujarati, from Urdu *haq*, Arabic origin) can be 'premodern' and 'modern' signifiers, i.e. they can identify colonial subjecthood with premodern hierarchies as well as indicate the rights of proto-national citizenship. *Farz* denotes a set of concrete familial and social duties and responsibilities ordained by a person's role as well as a religious duty. The Reader's first concern in *Hind Swaraj*, shared by the Editor, is the demand for rights – *hako* – in India and South Africa (Gandhi 2015, 13; see Skaria 2016, 290). *Haq* can be a compressed term for both entitlement and rights. Entitlements flowed from occupational, familial, social and labour relations. Extra-legal as a social and relational term, *haq* becomes a legal term where the horizon of legal rights is the sovereign colonial state. Further, because it also denotes that which is just, *haq* can occupy a non-hierarchical ground of customary reciprocity or work to mitigate social and political hierarchy through the expectation of reciprocity. The kinship or interdependence implied in the two-way flow between *farz* and *haq* in extant northern and western Indian idioms

¹⁶ 'The tendency of Indian civilisation is to elevate the moral being, that of Western civilisation to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God' (Gandhi 2015, 69).

(which were neither peculiarly Hindu nor ancient), is not clear in Gandhi's English version of *Hind Swaraj* since rights and duties have a different linguistic tenor. *Haq* and *farz* flow from a place-bound terrain of specific entitlements for each person and require fulfilment of a role in order to gather its privileges. However, if rights flow from the place-less universalism attributed to a 'liberal' empire, everyone can have the same rights. *Farz* and *haq*, as embedded in familial and social relations, can be owed to those below and above and be claimed vertically or laterally; liberal rights, and even *haq* as rights, are only vertical, addressed to and claimed from the state. Finally, *haq* also means truth – and this range from truth to rights allows for religious, secular and political usages.

In his struggle in South Africa, Gandhi assumed a direct passage from an entitling performance of duty to legal rights for Indians. He believed that if they were loyal and did their 'duty' as British subjects 'rights' would 'follow' (Gandhi 1958–1982, 7, 397 in Desai and Vahed 2016, 125).¹⁷ In *Hind Swaraj*, the foregrounding of passive resistance to British laws redirects the interdependence and sequence of duties and rights towards the state. Passive resistance is defined as 'a method of securing rights by personal suffering [...] the reverse of resistance by arms' (Gandhi 2015, 88), i.e. securing rights from the government by non-violent means also outlines the proper role of a just state. Obedience of unjust laws thus becomes contrary to dharma, which Parel annotates here as ethics (2015, 90–91). The subject/citizen-to-be is duty-bound to be disloyal and disobedient to the laws of an extractive, coercive or evil state (Gandhi 2015, 112, 116), and by performing this duty becomes morally superior to the state. Duty functions as a broad critique of tyranny and sovereignty which applies to contemporary Indian kings and princes as much as to British rule (Gandhi 2015, 74–75, 92–93). In emphasising the duty of rulers, Gandhi attempts to hold the colonial state to its own promises, liberal principles and professed altruism - the self-imposed task of ruling/serving without reward.

[...] real rights are a result of the performance of duty; these rights they [the English] have not obtained. We, therefore have before us in England the farce of everybody wanting and insisting on his rights, nobody thinking of his duty. And, where everybody wants rights, who shall give them to whom? (ibid. 79–80)

If rights flowing from duties are read through *haq* and *farz*, their meaning exceeds mere equivalence. *Farz* and *haq* can only be sutured by a conditional reciprocity and

¹⁷ In 1906, Gandhi justified his organisation of an Indian ambulance corps during the British suppression of the Zulu rebellion on the ground that if Indians 'claimed rights of citizenship, they were bound to take their natural share in the responsibilities that such rights carried with them' (Gandhi 1958–1982, 5, 326). At the same time, he argued that the British Empire could not hold its position by 'unfair treatment of its loyal subjects' (ibid 5,326).

duty may be the *means* of acquiring rights. Further, if rights flow from performed civic and social duties, the power and centrality of the state is partially displaced. The state must do its duty to earn its right to sovereignty: an unjust state not doing its duty can have no rights over its subjects.¹⁸ Loyalty too becomes conditional.

Gandhi, like Besant, castigated imitation of the west and its political institutions, saw *varna* as locus of social stability, a weapon against materialism and ‘life-corroding competition’, and equated ‘moral fibre’ with continuity (Gandhi 2015, 66–67). Although connections between white racism and the practice of untouchability began to emerge in South Africa and he was to modify his views on caste in the 1930s (Lelyveld 2012, 25, 42, 60–61, 132), quasi-Besantian formulations recur over many years. For instance, in 1920 he represented caste and class as simply different modes of social organisation evolved in India and Europe; both had ‘produced certain evils’ but caste had helped more than class ‘to conserve certain social virtues’. The caste system was non-hierarchical and not based on ‘distinctions of wealth and possessions’: it was an ‘extension of the principle of the family’ and similarly ‘governed by blood and heredity’. Even if the ‘western doctrine’ of milieu is accepted, ‘milieu can be preserved and developed more through caste than through class [...] It is the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress’ (Gandhi 2015, 286–87). Like *Hindu Ideals*, *Hind Swaraj* combines transhistorical continuity with restoration: ‘India is still, somehow or other, sound at the foundation’ and modern civilisation has not yet reached all parts of the country (ibid. 64, 68, 70), while its fall is a result of the temptations of modern civilisation that accompany colonisation and are turning Indians away from god as well as from the antimaterialistic tenets of *all* their religions.¹⁹ Here, continuity can also be read to mean that colonial capitalism was not yet singly or fully determining and had not rationalised or homogenised those regions, which had little functional importance for it.

Gandhi’s argument for civilisational superiority, unlike Besant, includes a plurality of religions. He condemns the British policy of divide and rule, distances the anti-Muslim bias encoded in indigenist decline-and-restoration narratives by laying out a mixed older history of conflict and peace as well as rationales for Hindu-Muslim amity (ibid. 50–55), rejects an organic or homogenous view of nationalism, repeatedly refers to India as multi-religious, refuses the idea that any one religion could comprise a nation, and reminds the British of their duty to

¹⁸ Here too Gandhi departs from Besant. In her Indian ‘Ideal of Duty’, ‘duty must be done even to the undutiful’ (1904, 23).

¹⁹ Consumerist industrialisation is said to lack *dharma* and morality; it is ‘Satanic’ according to the teaching of prophet Muhamed and Kaliyug according to Hinduism (Gandhi 2015, 34–7).

protect all faiths.²⁰ Further, neither civilisation nor *satyagraha* (truth-force) follow the laws of evolution. Civilisation understood as ‘good conduct which points out [...] the path of duty’ (ibid. 65) could be transhistorical while Gandhi’s concept of truth-force, being more than moral, belongs to ‘the ontological order of being’ (Kumar 2015, 63).

On Besantian lines, this civilisation too is said to flow from the ‘due deliberation’ of ‘our ancestors’ and ‘forefathers’ with their principled respect for *rishis* and *fakirs*:

They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to [the] *sword of ethics*, and they, therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the Rishis and the Fakirs. A nation with a constitution like this is fitter to teach others than to learn from others.

(Gandhi 2015, 67, my italics)

In *Hindu Ideals*, Besant’s *rishis* were composite characters: at once ‘divine’ and ‘superhuman men’, objects of ritual-centred worship and ‘legislators’ who had built the ‘stately edifice’ of caste as well as India’s ‘social and religious polity’, still efficiently preserved by Hinduism; they enforced righteousness through ‘*danda*’ (punishment) but also ‘transcended humanity in evolution, by long service, by sacrifice, by *tapas* [concentrated spiritual exercise and austere self-denial]’ (Besant 1904, 29, 70, 113, 119–20, 143, 145, 156). In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi’s location of the true Indian tradition as ascetic and renunciatory is partly affiliated to Besant’s foundational *rishi* but diverges in significant ways. First, all religions are based on ethical principles (he objects to British rule because it is unChristian). Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism have in common ‘that religion which underlies all religions’ (2015, 41). Skaria annotates this as ‘the unrepresentable and inexpressible kernel that constitutes the condition of possibility for any religion as well as any conception of the ethical’ i.e. *satyagraha* (2016, 15). As a self-governing country India was to be ethico-religious in spirit but not in the literal sense of representing any particular religious denomination. Second, the Indian ascetic tradition which includes *fakirs* (a term used for Muslim mendicants), signals a non-sectarian view of ancient and medieval ascetics and, potentially, an inclusive *dharma*. Predicated on a personal struggle for self-mastery and linked to the project of self-rule and public service, asceticism fell into a self-sacrificing altruistic schema that functioned as a politically effective source of extra-political authority and legitimation. His invocation of the

²⁰ Gandhi argued that ‘one nationality’ and ‘one religion’ are not synonymous anywhere in the world; Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians ‘who have made India their country’ are ‘fellow countrymen’ and will have to live in unity if only in their own interest (Gandhi 2015, 50–51). Gandhi’s emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity was forged in South Africa (see for instance, Hunt 1993, 51; Lelyveld 2012, 14–15; Natarajan 2013, 164–65).

‘sword of ethics’ diminishes the fear and power of merely political sovereignty (see L. Gandhi 2014, 20). Ascetism becomes a cross-religious resource from which to derive generalisable civic virtues and is intended as a weapon for the social reform of Indians and the British. Third, while as pre-determined by ancestral authority and calculation as Besant’s, Gandhi’s version of ancient civilisation was more programmatically based on anti-materialistic principles and austerity: it had set limits on wants and ‘indulgences’, disciplined passions, proscribed ‘luxuries and pleasures’, restricted technology and urbanisation, reduced competition, kept courts, lawyers and doctors ‘within bounds’, eschewed technological innovation and maintained the moral force of people through manual labour (2015, 66–67). ‘Our ancestors’ can be read as limit, prophecy, injunction, and example. They seem to be precapitalist and presciently anticapitalist, and function as a reminder that industrial capitalism is a chosen and thus reversible trajectory. The ancient limit must be recalled in order to restrain the hubris of a limitless modern. Varna and womanhood become performative, *enacting* – in perpetuity – the constraint of the limit.

Gandhi’s critique of capitalism is bolstered by an inflation of the spiritual register but he diverges from Besant in construing civilisational virtues as *unassimilable* by a capitalist west. Rather the interlocking of anticapitalism and cultural differentiation works to double the claim to an intractability which also redefines nationalist struggle and British presence in India. While Gandhi still retained the Moderate’s faith in British Empire, the project of Indian self-rule had to differ from as well as usurp the moral authority of the colonial state. A relation of mutual benefit with the British could be made if ‘the root’ of this relationship was ‘sunk in religious soil’, for this they must search their own Christian scriptures. Indian civilisation being the superior one, the British must abandon modernity, live in the same manner as Indians, do nothing that was ‘contrary to our religions’ – Hinduism and Islam, and desist from commercial benefit and drain of wealth (*ibid.* 112–13). Reversing the direction of colonial universalising projects, he imagines a moralised, that is, Indianised and non-capitalist British Empire as more fit to govern India (*ibid.* 71).

In some sense then, *Hindu Ideals* and *Hind Swaraj* are imbricated in complex and continuous interchanges within the British Empire, and can be read as related and intersecting texts making distinct correlations between a reformed empire and antimodernity. In *Hind Swaraj* the antimodern is a sign of civilisational longevity, a mode of cultural self-differentiation, an anticapitalist argument for austerity and autonomy from the ‘west’, and a means for accruing nationalist authority. Yet it is an unstable sign since Gandhi’s own, equally compelling, confluences were with liberal, egalitarian and secular tendencies. His notable departures came in the growing and insistent refusal to restrict the centrality of religion to Hinduism by including all religions, the attempt to relocate cultural exceptionalism in good conduct and a multi-religious society rather than in a unique Hinduism.

4 The womanhood project or disentangling the marriage knot

From the late 19th century marriage was a social and symbolic question in Britain and India. The comparative hierarchical ranking of sexual behaviour and marriage practices in colonial anthropology turned monogamous and regulatory/normative marriage into a marker of civilizational status (as is visible in Besant). Regulatory marriage was a recognised site of constraint and deindividuation for women. In British and Indian conservative opinion, it was openly defended as a boundary marker which secured the ground for religion and nationalism, race regeneration and caste (*jati*) endogamy, racial superiority and national reproduction, the stable progress of evolution and empire. Marriage, then, was a matrix for the reproduction of multiple inequalities and *not* merely a compact between two individuals. At the same time, intense critiques of restrictive and oppressive marriage practices were mounted from different positions by British socialists, British and Indian feminists, Indian higher and lower caste reformers, while British libertarian feminists argued for marriage resistance or free love. Even as the limitations of regulatory marriage in Britain and India were under scrutiny, respectable (monogamous) marriage was still seen as a precondition for women claiming a place in the public sphere and/or full citizenship. Further, with proletarianisation and the bonded/indentured labour market, marriage and family structures were in a state of flux which coincided neither with higher caste patriarchal practices in India nor with Victorian ideals of companionate marriage. Women were entering the work force in Britain and India as they industrialised, families were separated through forced migration in the colonial labour economy, indenture was creating non-endogamous marriages and non-marital households, and patriarchal practices were being challenged *and* reformulated in contexts of caste mobility, class formation, or consolidation.

Indian marriages simmered and then erupted as a political issue in South Africa. In 1906 Gandhi had protested against the requirement of separate permits for wives travelling with their husbands and posited Indian couples as a single unit (see Natarajan 2013, 133–34). In 1913 Hindu, Muslim, and Zoroastrian marriages were invalidated in South African law which would from that point, recognise only monogamous weddings performed by judges, state officials, and Christian clerics. This meant that in the eyes of the law all non-Christian Indian wives were living out of wedlock and their children were illegitimate (Lelyveld 2012, 107). Further, the state refused to classify any Hindu or Muslim marriage as monogamous since the rites were performed in India, a country which permitted polygamous marriages (Desai and Vahed 2016, 172–74). Gandhi said that Indian

wives were being ‘treated as concubines’ (Gandhi 1958–1982, 13, 61 in Natarajan 2013, 133). Many Indian women from different regions, religions and castes jointly protested this derecognition of their legal status as wives and the campaign, which fused the claim to rights with cultural or religious self-differentiation, acquired a defensively nationalist tenor.

After Gandhi returned to India, in speeches and writing till the 1920s, womanhood became an embodiment of an indigenist principle that was meant to challenge the very foundations upon which colonial authority, western materialism and degrading indentured labour were seen to be based. The indigenist valorisation of non-competitive, non-contractual social relations that legitimated conventional patriarchal and caste-based divisions of domestic and reproductive labour thus remained more or less intact.²¹ At the same time, within Gandhi’s project, the notion of womanhood became a ground for desired social change including the abolition of indenture, the backbone of *swadeshi* (national self-reliance in manufacture and institutions) as an anticolonial gesture, an anticapitalist move towards economic self-sufficiency, and the space within which women’s public participation was to be determined. The description of womanhood was not a displaced site for the issues of the freedom struggle. The already significant and material question of patriarchal practices was for him also wrapped into spiritual self-purification, agential questions to be resolved in relation to the ‘west’, and was overdetermined by the pursuit of the common essence beneath all religions.

Here I focus on the identification of women and sacralised marriage with social stability and the bedrock of religion through which marriage could become a site of deindividualisation. The non-violence Gandhi attributed to Indian women corresponded to the transhistorical essence of all religions (*ahimsa*, active love and compassion). Yet in the singular civilisational genealogy of womanhood and the epic lineage ascribed to the new companionate model of marriage, Gandhi is close to Besant’s project in *Hindu Ideals*. She had extracted complementarity, a quasi-bourgeois conjugality with its subordinate ‘companions’, from ‘antiquity’, that is, the Shastras and epics. Rama and Sita were ‘shining examples’ of the ‘Hindu Ideal of Marriage’ while Savitri, Damayanti and Shakuntala were lesser examples of wifely fidelity (Besant 1904, 93–96). Gandhi’s model too was premised on antiquity, the same canon, similar notions of intact womanhood and fallen men, and the insistent separation in *Hind Swaraj* of ‘ancient civilisation’ from the ‘defects’ of contemporary marriage practices (Gandhi 2015, 69). This

²¹ Gandhi’s idealisation of women as morally superior subjects, his positions on chastity, sexuality and celibacy and marginal alteration of domestic roles have been thoroughly critiqued. See review in Hardiman 2013, 1715–981.

could tacitly make Indian women coeval with ancient 'Hinduism' since their power, strength and moral courage were said to derive from a unique 'spiritual background', to be 'totally different' from women of other countries and also capable of compensating for the contemporary lack of male altruism (Gandhi 1950, 50; Gandhi 1958–1982, 87, 294). The ideal woman Gandhi wants to create depends on epic exemplars. She will be 'pure, firm and self-controlled' like Sita, Draupadi and Damyanti, and her 'words will have the same authority as the Shastras' and be respected like those of her 'prototypes of yore' (Gandhi 1943, 19). She herself becomes the unwritten and *embodied* text of tradition. However, women are also seen as an inclusive entity and *dharma* as a cross-religious concept that holds a country together:

'I know that in all communities, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and others, it is the women who preserve dharma. The day they forsake dharma, it will be destroyed. Our shastras say that a country in which the king and the women have abandoned dharma perishes.' (Gandhi 1988, 58)

It was the regulatory, more than the explanatory or compensatory capacities of religious systems that had been at stake in the vociferous identification of women with Hinduism by 19th century reformers, and in some respects *dharma* for Gandhi too was a principle of restraint and restriction. Marriage in turn was the posited as the 'fence' that protects religion/*dharma*, analogous to its disciplinary powers, and like *dharma*, rested on 'the law of restraint' and restriction: women thus were 'the apple of discord where the marriage bond' was 'loose' (Gandhi 1943, 155). Yet political self-determination and cultural self-differentiation being intertwined, Gandhi *had* to locate women at once as immutable and plastic, passive and active. He oscillated between seeing women as essential selves and selves that could be refashioned, as fixed repositories and instruments of desired change (Gandhi 1958–1982, 14, 86–87; *ibid.*, 54, 184).

Besant had placed sacramental marriage at the heart of a regulatory, patriarchal, sacrificial, national complex that could be maintained only if the conjugal relation was represented to *women* as spiritual rather than as carnal.²² Marriage was not only situated in a similar complex for Gandhi but locked into altruism, civic and political duty, and a polyvalent ascetism which could be repressive or a

22 'Beware how you undermine in the hearts of Indian women the sacredness of marriage and the glory of the life of sacrifice. High have they held their Ideals through innumerable ages, and cherished love of husband as a spiritual force, and not simply as an earthly joy. Beware how you represent to them carnal pleasures as more alluring than the spiritual, and the life of ease and delight as more attractive than the life of self-obligation and sacrifice. If India is to be saved by her women, it will not be by women whose ideals are lowered' (Besant 1904, 109–10).

vector for individualisation. At one level, this was the corollary of a non-violent reformism in which the suppression and sublimation of sexuality seemed so central to conducting a public and political life of service, social work, passive resistance and dutiful disobedience that he virtually platonised marriage. Since he saw sexuality as a literal and metaphorical emblem of human vulnerability, self-control also became a measure of human aspiration, a part of the process of individual and national self-definition, analogous to *swaraj* (literally rule over one's self) and applied equally to *both* sexes. *Hind Swaraj* classifies sexuality as 'an animal indulgence', recommends chastity as a mental discipline for all men, forbids all but procreative sexuality for married couples, wants perfect chastity for a married man if he is a 'passive resister' but postpones a discussion of the consent or 'rights' of wives (Gandhi 2015, 95). The investment in a curative asceticism led Gandhi to typecast women's nature as a type of asexual purity: she was not 'prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man' and more capable of self-restraint (2010, 105). Since asceticism for him was a largely non-reclusive, non-renunciatory practice of self-control and non-possession, it did not contradict women's domestic roles. The daily domestic sacrifices of women could be made congruent with the sage's *tapasya* (ascetic self-denial) and coincided with the literal identification of household labour with piety in popular prescriptive literature (see Sangari 1999, 344–49).

For Gandhi, marriage also became a pre-eminently public institution; he resisted the domestic enclosure of conjugality, refused to corral marriage into a private sphere or import the shield of privacy that accompanied liberal individualism and bourgeois familial ideologies. The domestic was to be a transparent adjunct of the public. Domestic life and sexuality were to be integrated with and regulated by public duty, and women could regulate male sexuality if they sublimated their own (Gandhi 1943, 15–17). Abstinence could transform marriage into an altruistic institution. The bestowed and claimed virtue of English women had provided a moral right to rule. Gandhi's extended ascription of virtue, moral power, sexual restraint and altruism to Indian women and marriage as part of the claim to self-rule went further. Under nationalist imperatives, altruism overlapped with *ahimsa* in inculcating ideals of public service and finding a principle of unity that would bond diverse groups. It also served as a platform from which to argue for the abbreviation of British rule.

Gandhi's preoccupation with abstinence was not dissimilar from earlier Victorian social purity campaigns and some contemporary middle-class feminists in England who also preferred abstinence over birth control as giving women more control over their sexuality, a degree of sexual autonomy within marriage, and protecting them from the transmission of venereal disease by profligate husbands. For theosophists, however, contraception interrupted the orderly reproduction of

race, and by implication, caste. Madame Blavatsky insisted on self-restraint and celibacy since birth control interfered with the laws of reincarnation by reducing the number of bodies to which reincarnated souls must have access (Viswanathan 1998, 196; Owen 2004, 98–99). After adopting Theosophy, Besant withdrew her writing advocating birth-control. She described sexual love as a source of intellectual slavery and human degradation; argued that self-control and denial in marriage rather than contraception would assist upward movement on the evolutionary ladder of rebirth; and recommended ‘restriction of the sexual relation for the perpetuation of the race’ (Besant 1908, 243; Besterman 1934, 91–94). Later, in the context of child marriage and adolescent sexuality, Gandhi too argued for a restrained procreative sexuality on similar ground: the ‘transgression of those limits imperils womankind, emasculates the race, induces disease’ (2010, 62). Non-procreative sexuality is also addressed as a symptom of western modernity. Gandhi’s notion of celibacy affirmed orthodox ideas of semen preservation while Besant felt that the ‘animal’ sexual passion and cravings of men and women had gone beyond ‘natural limits’ both inside and outside ‘the marital relation’ in ‘civilised countries’ (1908, 242).

The selflessness attributed to Indian women combined with a political will to change could easily arc into the nurturing, selfless Victorian woman reforming both herself and the world – a figure who was at the deep centre of nationalist class consolidations in imperial Britain. However, Gandhi’s notions of full and partial celibacy offered an ideational and everyday form of intractability which moved towards the formation of a new sociality that cut through religious and patriarchal prescription. This resistant sociality, a form of individualisation through creative association, could redefine gender relation within the domestic and public-political arena and make a desexualised and unthreatening space for political participation. It sanctioned non-familial and non-biological kinship and could enlarge the circle of empathy and affection beyond the family. For him, unless marriage was sacralised and desexualised, it could be an impediment to practising universal love (*ahimsa*). Gandhi’s narrow view of kinship, centred on endogamous family-arranged marriage as the guardian of religion and social stability, thus lived alongside a free-wheeling enlargement of kinship through friendships enabled by his celibacy. His chosen lifestyle for non-biological families/households in his South African communes and Indian *ashrams* (residences for spiritual aspirants) suggests that marriage and family may have been personal obstacles. Sunil Khilnani notes that Gandhi was interested in abstinence in order to enjoy the pleasures of disinterested companionship and friendship, ‘a bond devoid of instrumental aspects, purely voluntary, and between equals: compelled neither by legal contract nor instinctual passion’ (2011, 66). Just as Gandhi’s personal ascetism was self-devised and constituted from multiple sources,

uncontrolled by gurus and institutions, this bond could be forged across differences of religion, caste, gender and nationality and transposed celibacy into secular forms of sociality.

5 Towards a conclusion

The difficulty of isolating religious from social individualisation, and extracting it from social, political and ideological constellations is evident. Here it is only possible to speak of individualisation as the singling out of a person within and against a determining context in a specific conjuncture.

The contradiction between prescription and practice as well as the mismatch of gender ideology and social experience in Besant and Gandhi are only partially explained by the gap between powerful, circulating colonial 'knowledges' and their fraught personal navigation of patriarchal marriage in Victorian England and India. In Besant, a quasi-socialist angst over hyper-individualisation, conservative identification with a supposedly cohesive and authoritative religious system as well as anxiety about democracy coagulate into the antimodern and create some temporal confusion. The antimodern invoked to resist the modern calls up a premodern, caste-bound Hindu womanhood perceived as coeval, still extant, as well as located in a past golden age in which the religious and secular were indivisible. An identitarian and pseudo-historical narrative of an anti-individualist ancient Hinduism gives authorial and textual authority to Besant as a self-nominated religious actor, serves to scaffold Theosophy's occult practices, and multiplies the sources of her individual social and political authority. Since an opposition between the modern and antimodern could hardly be stabilised in Britain, she tries to secure it in the seductive longevity, continuity and non-competitive matrices of Hindu womanhood and *varna*. Besant stood at an authorising intersection in which the (rebounding) legitimacy she gained from her double location performed a suppressive and conservative function vis a vis dissident and more radical currents in *both* Britain and India yet allowed her to escape the recommendations she made for Hindu women.

Gandhi excoriates a capitalist west and resists it in part through a quasi-orientalist rendition of a textual and temporally distant 'east' of which womanhood and *varna* become the living remnants. The exaltation of womanhood and marriage participates in an indigenist and conservative anticolonialism. Situating a culturally differential model of Indian womanhood as the archetypal not-yet-extinct premodern could overturn the stereotype of a libidinous orient or the pejorative sexualisation of indentured labour in South Africa and the Caribbean. But asserting its exemplary virtue as emblematic of a sacralised universe fell into

another colonial and reformist stereotype that still coincided with conventional higher caste and new middle class patriarchal interests in India since it could be tied to the interrelated logics of seclusion, domestic labour and control of sexuality.

At one level, *varna* and ancient/contemporary Indian women become the deindividualised and embedded place-bearers against which Besant and Gandhi shaped their relatively unfettered and detraditionalised lives and religious practices. In other words, their individualisation is contrastive and thus the analogue of a modernity that could be secured only by immobilising its opposite: it is modern in structure and antimodern in content. Both tendencies self-consciously resist western individualism yet cement their individuality in part by imagining an ancient, altruistic, sacrificial and repressive social order which, along with some of the alternatives they proposed, was already entangled in transnational characterisations of the modern, premodern, antimodern and western individualism. Further, the softened borders between the premodern and antimodern put the combined weight of ancient prototypes and contemporary regimens on the shoulders of women and subordinate castes. In this early 20th century phase, Besant and Gandhi become singular individuals in their personal, religious, social and political practice through positing *varna* and womanhood as amorphous collectivities. This prescriptive and discursive deindividualisation is performative and could lead in several directions. It was either ignored, appropriated, contested, chastised, ridiculed or rejected by their contemporaries. Here too there was no direct path from ideology to social practice. Whereas the antimodern for Besant and Gandhi could be compensatory, legitimating and enabling, for Gandhi it is repeatedly diverted or disrupted by strong anticapitalist and radical currents or his own creative innovations. He alternates between affirming, destabilising, interrupting and reversing his antimodern positions, positions riddled with the volatile contradictions that he was to struggle with in later years.

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Vasudha Dalmia

Being Hindu in India: culture, religion, and the Gita Press (1950)

The Gita Press has retained its reputation as the premier Hindu religious publishing concern of North India from its inception in 1926 up until the present day. Its Hindi monthly journal *Kalyan* – meaning ‘propitious’, ‘blessed’, ‘beneficiary’ – was conceived at the same time and continues to enjoy an extensive circulation, with 200,000 current subscribers.¹ The Press routinely brings out a substantial annual number of the journal, focusing on a particular issue or religious text. In January 1950, barely three years after independence, the Press published its voluminous special issue on *Hindu Samskriti*, or Hindu culture. This publication constituted a major political and cultural intervention in contemporary discourse that was to help shape the newly formed republic. The volume has had seven print runs since then and is still in print today, testifying to the power it continues to exert over vast sections of the North Indian reading public.² Given the publishing history of the Press, which focuses on Hindu religious texts and moral tracts as drawing upon the authority of these texts, it is remarkable that the choice of focus in this annual issue was not on *Hindu dharma*, or Hindu religion, but on the more comprehensive ‘Hindu culture’. In this chapter, I shall focus on the notion of religion as encased in the broader category of ‘culture’ in this publication. I will also ask what equation Hindu culture is made to seek with the Indian nation as a whole, what social imaginary it works with,³ and what space is found for individualisation within this imaginary.⁴

The Gita Press was founded by two men of the Marwari merchant community. These men were responsible for its general tenor and contents both during their lifetime and after, for their works continued to be reprinted and reissued. The elder of the two, Jaydayal Goyandka (1885–1965), acted as a mentor and sage for

1 The English *Kalyan-Kalpataru*, started in 1934, has 100,000 subscribers.

2 The details provided in this paragraph stem from Mukul (2015), a brilliant, wide-ranging, and comprehensive study that is full of insights. It also carries a six-page account of *Hindu samskriti* (276–82). My paper builds upon the insights of Mukul’s book but asks further questions.

3 ‘Social imaginary’, as Charles Taylor defines it, is the ‘way our contemporaries imagine the societies they inhabit and sustain’ (2004, 6).

4 I base the use of the term ‘individualisation’ on the reflections provided by Martin Fuchs (2016, 105); in particular, I look for the ‘attempt by social actors to fight and overcome conditions that limit or constrict them with regard to their spiritual as also political wants and needs, their search for self realisation’.

the younger, Hanuman Prasad Poddar (1892–1971), who served as editor of *Kalyan*. Together with Goyandka, he shouldered the responsibility for writing key articles for the journal and for the Press's other publications. Poddar was also the editor of *Hindu Samskriti*, along with Chimmanlal Goswami.⁵ There seems little doubt that Poddar and Goswami were instrumental in shaping the volume, although in their explanatory words at the end of the volume, they acknowledge the help of others in the editorial department of the Press. The bulk of the volume consists of concise articles by a range of Hindu thinkers, leaders, and scholars on the ancient merits and achievements of *Hindu samskriti*. It concludes with sections on the main gods of the Hindu pantheon, on the incarnations of these deities, on prominent ancient sages, on ideal devotees, kings, and great men, including modern politicians. It also includes accounts of some ideal Hindu women. The scope of the volume, and its effort to be as comprehensible as possible, to include the new as well as the old, makes it clear that it was a modern enterprise, and one that can claim a place of prominence in the contemporary world.⁶

1 The constitution of India as counter-pole

The timing of the publication of the volume was significant. The Constitution of India, adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November the 26th 1949, came into force in its entirety on January the 26th 1950. At this stage, the republic was defined as both 'sovereign' and 'democratic'. The addition of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' to the Preamble was a later development, brought about through a constitutional amendment in 1976.⁷ However, this was the direction in which Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was already propelling the country.

⁵ He was editor of the English *Kalyan-Kalpataru* and became editor of *Kalyan* after Poddar's death, holding the post until his own demise in 1974.

⁶ Monika Horstman's important essay, 'Towards a Universal Dharma: *Kalyan* and the Tracts of the Gita Press', has made the point that the *sanatana* or eternal *dharma* propagated by the publications of the Press served the function of an ideological umbrella for modern Hinduism. The Press was critical of individual creeds and sects, even as it sought to subsume them within *sanatana dharma*. And finally, though it claimed to represent tradition, it was an entirely modern venture (1995, 298f.).

⁷ As the Preamble reads now: 'We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, and to secure to all its citizens: justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all, fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; in our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this

But this was not the only direction in which the new nation was being pushed. We have to recall that, in the early years of independence, the nation was a project very much in the making and one that stood on unsteady feet. The violence of Partition, which occurred simultaneously with Independence, had torn apart the fabric of the North West and the East of the country. In addition to the countless instances of rape, maiming, and killings that happened on both sides of the border, there were now six million Hindu and Sikh refugees to resettle in India. This group provided a fertile ground for the propagation of grievances with Muslims in general. For them, as for the vast majority of Indians, the fact that Pakistan was an Islamic state seemed to demand that India too should heed its majority and become a constitutionally-backed Hindu state. On the other hand, the large segments of the Muslim population that still remained in India had also to be adequately protected from Hindu and Sikh violence, which could take virulent forms. It was just two years since Nathuram Godse, a right-wing fanatic, had assassinated Mahatma Gandhi at a prayer meeting in Delhi on January 30th 1948. Shortly before this, the Mahatma had insisted that the new Republic pay Pakistan its due share of the common Treasury. This had caused much bitterness among right-wing Hindus, many of whom saw the Mahatma as a partisan of the Muslim cause. His last fast unto death, known today simply as the Delhi Fast, had been undertaken in the days immediately preceding his assassination in order to stop the indiscriminate killing of Muslims, not only in the old city of Delhi but across India as a whole. Godse's act seemed the logical conclusion of the violence expressed against the Mahatma in Hindu quarters.

The Rashtriya Svayam Sevak Sangh (the National Volunteers Corps), although not directly implicated in the act, was active in the propagation of its vision of a Hindu India:

Realizing the Rashtriya Svayam Sevak Sangh's (RSS) adherence to the ideology of communalism and violence and the hatred that it had been spreading against Gandhi and secularism were the real forces behind the assassination – the RSS men had even celebrated it in many places – the government immediately banned the RSS and arrested most of its leaders and functionaries. Nehru, of course, had for some time been characterizing the RSS as a fascist organization. In December 1947 he stated: "We have a great deal of evidence to show that the RSS is an organization which is in the nature of private army and which is definitely proceeding on the strictest Nazi line, even following the technique of organization".

(Chandra et al. 1999, 79)

The ban was lifted in July 1949, once the RSS accepted the conditions laid down by Vallabhbhai Patel, the Home Minister. The conditions were that

Constitution'. Sourced from https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf. Last accessed July the 25th, 2018.

[t]he RSS would adopt a written and published constitution, restrict itself to cultural activities and not meddle with politics, renounce violence and secrecy, profess loyalty to India's flag and Constitution and organize itself along democratic lines.

(Chandra et al. 1999, 79)

'Culture' would become a very loaded word, masquerading for a number of political and social agendas. The experience of Partition strengthened views which pulled society in two opposing directions. At one pole was the vision of a pro-Hindu India, exemplified by groups such as the R.S.S.. The other pole was expressly secular and pluralist, determined to overcome the trauma of partition not through the elevation of one particular group but, rather, through the removal of a state religious identity.

The Committee formed to draft the Constitution was headed by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the icon of Dalit aspirations. It was Ambedkar's concept of the social order, as much as that of Jawaharlal Nehru, that guided the vision of India that was enshrined in the Constitution. As Nehru wrote in the troubled period immediately after Partition, 'I believe in India being a secular state with complete freedom for all religions and cultures and for cooperation between them. I believe that India can only become great if she preserves that composite culture which she had developed through the ages'. And in this expressly secular and pluralist social order, 'I am anxious therefore that the Muslims in India as well as all other religious groups should have the fullest freedom and opportunity to develop themselves. I am entirely hostile to Hindu or any other communalism in India' (Nehru 2003, 173, letter to the Nawab of Bhopal, July 9, 1948). As Sunil Khilnani points out,

A specifically Indian compromise was needed, and he [Nehru] saw strengths in this. That compromise was outlined in the practical adaptation, after 1947, of the state into a distinctive model shaped by Nehru's understanding of the Indian past: a model committed to protecting cultural and religious difference rather than imposing a uniform "Indianness".

(Khilnani 2004, 167)

It was a powerful and mellow vision:

In his imagination, India appeared as a space of ceaseless cultural mixing, its history a celebration of the soiling effects of cultural miscegenation and accretion, "an ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously".

(Khilnani 2004, 169)

It stood to reason, then, that the western model of the nation, with one language and one religion uniting it, could not serve for India.⁸

⁸ As pointed out by Khilnani (2004, 173).

Further, the Constitution envisioned a democratic and egalitarian order with the provision of ‘reservations’ for the lowest castes, the ‘untouchables’, in government offices and educational institutions. This could not but be offensive to the vast majority of those who held the caste order to be sacred. It is against this background that, in January 1950, *Hindu Samskriti* was published in an effort to influence the political and cultural direction of the newly founded republic by insisting on the validity of caste hierarchy and the inherent Hinduness of India.

That the title of the volume spoke of culture rather than religion, though it placed the Hindu religion, as interpreted by it, at its core, speaks for its effort to be as comprehensive as possible. Therewith was posited a pan-Hindu culture which dominated and occupied all of India, for ‘culture’ includes all aspects of the person’s life, aspects that would, on the face of it, fall outside the scope of religion in the narrower sense. This double move, to speak not of religion but of culture as determining the past, present, and future of Hindus, and thus of the Indian republic at large, while at the same time placing religion at the heart of this culture, is a well thought out strategy. It is followed consistently throughout the massive volume: 904 pages in small print in octavo format. It did not foreground Aryans (and we shall see below why), but insisted rather on Hindu and Hinduness. It placed a series of Vedic hymns in the original Sanskrit, with translations into Hindi, at the beginning of the volume followed by short quotations from the *Upanishads*, from the epics – Valmiki’s *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* – and concluded with a brief excerpt from the *Bhagavata Purana*. In thus including the canonical text of the Vaishnavas – one branch of the vast family of faiths now grouped together as ‘Hindu’ – *Hindu Samskriti*, followed a pattern which was sustained throughout the volume. Religion and the social order predicated on it form the core of culture. This will become apparent as we proceed. I shall focus on three articles I consider key to understanding the propositions advanced by the volume as a whole.

The opening salvo is fired by Shankaracharya Brahmanand Saraswati of Jyotirmath, Badrikashrama, in an article entitled simply ‘Hindu-Samskriti’ (23–32). There are five present-day Shankaracharyas, each heading his own monastery in five different corners of India. All five trace their origin to the *Adi*, or Ur-Shankacharya, who is thought to have lived in the ninth century CE.⁹ The

⁹ The *Dakshīāmnāya Sri Sharada Peetham* (main matha) at Sringeri Sharada Peetham in Shringeri, Karnataka. The *Uttarāmnāya matha* (Northern matha) at Jyotir Math in the city of Jyotirmath, also known as Joshimath, Uttarakhand. This is the seat of the Shankaracharya referred to above. The *Pūrvāmnāya matha* (Eastern matha), or the Govardhana matha at Puri, Odisha. The *Paschimāmnāya matha* (Western matha), or the Dwaraka Pitha at Dwarka, Gujarat. Finally, Sarvagna Peetham Kanchi *Moolāmnāya Sri kanchi Kamakoti Peetham* (Sarvjna Peetham), or

successive Shankaracharyas enjoy enormous religious authority in modern India. Depending on his particular bent and personality, a Shankaracharya can become a public figure whose stance on specific issues is given weight and prominence by the media.

The second article I shall consider is by M.S. Golwalkar (1906–1973). Golwalkar's contribution appears immediately after those of the major religious leaders of Hindu India,¹⁰ despite the fact that he was the head of that ostensibly secular force, the R.S.S., founded in 1925, at more or less the same time as the Gita Press.¹¹ Finally, I will discuss the article on – rather than by – Mahatma Gandhi, placed two thirds of the way into the volume. The location of this article has its own significance. The question that I will ask in this chapter is, what do these contributions say about being Hindu and about individualisation in the new republic?

2 Religion as Hindu culture

The substantial discursive part of the volume begins with a vehemently worded article by Shankaracharya Brahmanand Saraswati of Badrikashrama. He launches into his exposition by outlining a definition of the two terms in question: 'Hindu' and '*sanskriti*'. He takes up the term 'Hindu' first, which he sees as a denomination of 'jati'. *Jati* can be translated as 'caste' and I will draw upon this usage elsewhere in the present chapter. However, here it stands rather for 'specific or generic characteristic or distinction'.¹² There are two bases, the Shankaracharya says, for determining the *jati* of a people. They are *desh* or country and *dharmagrantha* or religious texts. The country defines how some peoples are named, thus: Germans, French, Bengalis, and Panjabis. But there is also a

the Kamakoti at Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu. Information sourced from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shankaracharya>. Last accessed July 25, 2018.

10 Eight articles by figures from prominent Hindu religious institutions follow. These are written by the Shankaracharya of Dwarika, Karpatri Maharaj, an anonymous Mahatma, the Head of the Ramanuja Sampradaya, an anonymous Mahatma of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, Madhavanand Maharaj (presumably the head of the Madhva Sampradaya), Aurobindo and the Mother – head of the Aurobindo Ashram in Puducherry. Aurobindo's article is translated from the English and is not written originally for the volume.

11 Anderson and Damle 1987 still remains the most detailed and reliable account of the organisation, its history, and the mode of its functioning. See also Basu et al. 1993 for a critical account of the Hindu Right.

12 Platts, John T: *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* (369): <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/platts/>. Last accessed on July 25, 2018. I refer to Platts throughout for the translations of Sanskrit terms I give.

further determination by reference to the religious texts of a people, thus Christians because of their belief in the Bible or Muslims because of their belief in the Quran. On closer inspection, country proves to be an inadequate base for defining a people. Bengalis, for instance, can be Hindus or Muslims. It is the religious texts, then, that define the ultimate affiliation of a people. *Jati* is thus determined by religious texts rather than country or manners and customs.

Saraswati also notes the belief that there originally existed a single Aryan people who migrated to different countries and, in doing so, acquired different names. If they had all believed in the Vedas and other Shastras, then, regardless of the country in which they settled, they would have remained 'Arya' or 'Hindu'. However, some turned instead to the Bible and the Quran, proving that the primary definition of a people is not their having originally belonged together but, rather, the religious texts to which they now adhere. The Hindus (Arya is now simply dropped) are of one *jati* because they believe in the Vedas and other Shastras; a Hindu bases his (the reference is always male) conduct, in both this- and other-worldly contexts, on actions propagated by the *srutis*, *smritis*, *Puranas*, and the epics. He believes in the *varnashrama* order (23). More on this order below. Being Hindu is, then, based on belief in a given social order drawn from specific religious texts. This first premise makes no political or nationalist claims for being Hindu, although these will follow.

The Shankaracharya then embarks on a lengthy and involved description of *sanskriti*, deriving it from Sanskrit roots to mean '*bhushan bhuta samyak kriti ya cheshta*', that is, ornamented actions and exertions in their entirety. *Sanskriti* enfolds all fields pertaining to cultivated activity. Of all creation, it is human activity alone that qualifies for this definition, not that of other species, for this activity leads to happiness and peace. *Sanskriti* is further based on its philosophical texts. The questions of who I am, where I come from, where I will go, who is the creator of this universe, and so on, are all issues that are resolved by philosophy. In short, its religious and philosophical texts, which ultimately deal with the means of attaining *mukti* or release in this life, are the defining characteristics of a *jati* (25). The Shankaracharya is circling back here to his original proposition regarding the centrality of religious (philosophy is subsumed within this) texts as the defining feature of a people and their culture. The most dynamic form regarding manners and conduct of this culture is the *varnashrama* order, the belief in the division of Hindu society into four *varnas* or castes¹³ and in the four *ashramas* or stages of life (24, 26). This culture is auspicious and beneficiary (*kalyan*) not

13 These are Brahmans or priests and scholars, Kshatriyas or warriors, Vaishyas or merchants and Shudras or servers.

only to Hindus but to the entire universe. Following the *varnashrama* order makes for the most complete development, both personally and socially.

The Shankaracharya then elaborates on the four *ashramas* in conventional terms: *brahmacharya*, or celibacy in student life; *grihastha*, or domesticity in married life; *vanprastha*, or part-retirement from family and social life; and, finally, *samnyasa*, or asceticism towards the end of life. He offers no new insights for the adjustments presumably needed to fit these ancient notions into modern lives. This is also the case with the four-fold *varna* division. In *Hindu samskriti*, a person's *jati*, here meaning caste, and, consequently, his actions and professions, are decided according to birth, and thus accord with the nature with which he is originally endowed. If a person is made to follow a life pattern that differs from the one he has been endowed with, he will have to exert himself all the more, losing unnecessary energy in the process. But if all act in accordance with their place in the given social order, everything will be achieved peacefully and easily, leading naturally to societal progress in which there will be no conflict between old and new. *Varnasamkarta*, or the corrupting mixture of *varnas*, leads to the destruction of society and nation. Here we see the notion of 'nation' creeping in unannounced, for without further discussion, Hindu society has become coeval with the Indian nation at large. In fact, though, this equivalence has been inherent all along, given that it is the Hindu order alone which constitutes the nation (27). The notions of purity-impurity, touchability and untouchability, are a distinctive quality of *Hindu samskriti* (28). It was still politically possible to make such pronouncements in 1950; today they would need to be made more covertly.

The Shankaracharya goes on to exalt the ethical qualities that make *Hindu samskriti* so outstanding: respect for women, respect for the elderly, and so on, there being no space for hatred of any kind in this culture. Ultimately, he emphasises again, it is the societal division into the *varnas* and the stages of life that determines what constitutes *Hindu samskriti*. By making the belief in religious texts the centre of the definition of Hindu, the Shankaracharya explicitly excludes Christians, Muslims, and others from any form of belonging within the social order, which is universalised even as it is extended and made peculiar to all of India. Further, by speaking of the four castes as alone determining this social order, Dalits, referred to as *antyaja*, that is, outside the four-caste order, are placed entirely outside the Hindu social order and with that the nation.

According to the Vedas and other Shastras, temples, and the icons installed in them, are defiled by the entry of the *antyaja*. Ghosts and spirits enter such temples instead of divinities and the worship of these entities strengthens evil tendencies. This results in the prospering of conflict, anger, and hatred, while sickness and natural calamities, such as excessive rain, droughts, earthquakes, etc., make for the destruction of the king and his subjects (31).

Addressing Hindus at large, the Shankaracharya proclaims: yours is the leading culture in the world. There is no worldly or otherworldly goal that you cannot attain. You have withstood the most atrocious attacks over the ages; now you need to stay firm on your path. He then takes on those in charge of the governance of independent India, asking that they oversee the creation of an order in accordance with pure Indian culture, for it is Hindu culture alone which constitutes Indian culture (29). If this does not happen in an independent India, what meaning and value would political independence have? There should be no interference in, or opposition to, the right of Hindus to follow their *varnashramadharmā*. It is not possible to remove this order and try to set up another that is classless and casteless. This is the very least that the Hindus can expect from their own government, that their *svarupa*, or own form, not be attacked as if ruled by a foreign government (30).

The Shankaracharya ends by formulating seven demands of the government: that governance be moulded according to Hindu culture; that there be a law against the lowest castes entering Hindu temples, so that divine wrath not fall on all; that cow slaughter be banned; that the laws of purity and pollution not be eradicated so that the Hindu *jati* should not face decline; that marriage within the *gotra*¹⁴ and outside the *varna*, and divorce, etc., should not be enshrined in law; that a societal order without *varna* and *jati* not be ordained, thus undermining the Hindu order; and, finally, that the Hindu Code Bill and similar legal enactments be entirely dropped.¹⁵ The Shankaracharya closes with a prayer to the lord to save the Hindu *jati*.

The order that is propagated here is entirely Brahminical or as defined by Brahmins, making no concessions to change and with a narrowly defined role for each citizen (always conceived of as male), one entirely derived from *varnashrama*. Man is straitjacketed by it; he has to follow the path laid out for him. He derives the meaning of his social existence entirely from his place in this order. He

¹⁴ A Hindu clan tracing its lineage from a common ancestor, usually a saint or a sage.

¹⁵ See Mukul (2015, 257–66) for an account of the resistance offered by Gita Press and Poddar and Goyandka to the Hindu Code Bill, on the table in the Legislative Assembly from 1944. Gita Press campaigned vociferously against it. When reintroduced in post-independence India, with Dr. Ambedkar as the Law Minister, the bill excited the same violent response. When had equality brought happiness? Inter-caste marriage, the restriction placed on polygamy, the relatively liberal laws of inheritance, adoption, would all play havoc with the system. A Hindu man could marry a low-caste girl, or a Christian, or a Muslim. Hindu women would theoretically be free to marry even Muslim men. The Indian National Congress's landslide win in the first general elections left such arguments behind, and the Hindu Code Bill was finally passed in the form of four separate bills between 1954 and 1956, much watered down but none the less promising men and women much greater flexibility than before.

is not free to change it; he cannot, for instance, marry outside his caste without causing chaos in society.

The article is followed by a five-stanza hymn to Hindu Bharat or Hindu India by someone who calls himself simply 'Ram' (33). The hymn brings out once more what has been ostensible all through the Shankaracharya's expostulations – that Dalits,¹⁶ non-Hindus, most of all Muslims but also Christians, simply do not figure in the new republic. They are accorded no space, no rights.

In her *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), published a year after *Hindu Samskriti*, Hannah Arendt spoke of the German and Slavic pan-movements of the first part of the twentieth century. These movements accorded the individual a new meaning as a member of a cohesive whole and were to merge seamlessly with the agenda of totalitarian governments when the time came. What the Shankaracharya, and the mass of articles in the volume that follow in his footsteps, depicts is not unlike the goals of these pan-movements. In propagating the universal and all-comprehensive reach of Hindi *samskriti*, a pan-Hinduness is being posited, which swamps the rights of all non-Hindus while, at the same time, claiming divine rights for Hindus as a whole. As Arendt pointed out:

The tribalism of the pan-movements with its concept of the "divine origin" of one people owed part of its great appeal to its contempt for liberal individualism, the ideal of mankind and the dignity of man. No human dignity is left if the individual owes his value only to the fact that he happens to be born a German or a Russian; but there is, in its stead, a new coherence, a sense of reliability among all members of the people which indeed was very apt to assuage the rightful apprehension of modern men as to what might happen to them if, isolated individuals in an atomized society, they were not protected by sheer numbers and enforced uniform coherence. (Arendt 1976, 235)

If it robs the caste-Hindu of a sense of individuality, of the freedom to disagree, to evolve his thoughts and pursuits, his sense of the self, outside of the order, it also lends him, as Arendt puts it, a sense of a new coherence, of mutual support from, and belonging among, others of his kind.

16 There are two further articles on untouchability in the volume, one dealing with why Dalits are forbidden to enter temples (214–7) and the other discussing the logic underlying this and other such practices (218). Mukul has discussed Poddar's acrimonious correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi over the latter's fast against the British award of a separate electorate for untouchables. The ideas put forward by Poddar are identical with Shankaracharya's (2015, 53–7).

3 The political-theological grid of the Hindu Right

A different route that leads to the same sense of absolute merger and absolute affiliation is proposed by Madhavrav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the *Sarsanghsamchalak*, or chief executive, of the R.S.S. from 1940 to 1973. Golwalkar's contribution is also entitled '*Hindu samskriti*'.¹⁷ It is just four pages long but it puts forward its propositions boldly and clearly (57–61). Golwalkar is versed in the Sanskrit tradition; his language is also Sanskritic in the extreme. He is regarded as learned by his followers, hence his title 'Guruji'. Here I retrace the moves he makes and the apparent simplicity with which he proceeds to set out his argument. There are many religious paths, he says, for mankind to attain ultimate happiness. They fall into two broad groups: those that try to attain happiness by devotion to *Ishvara* or the lord, understanding him as the essence, and those who believe that what is apparent is the essence of the universe, seeing nothing other than this and trying to obtain the means to satisfy natural needs and desires as easily as possible. Much modern thought has taken this latter direction. However, as time passes, these paths breed dissatisfaction. There are two reasons for this. First, it is impossible to satisfy all sensory needs and it is in pursuit of the fulfilment of such needs that the most fearful wars are fought. Second, man is not without understanding (*nirbuddhi*). In the course of time, he understands that happiness lies not in external things nor in fulfillment of these sensory needs but, rather, in pacifying sensual desires (*vasana*).

It is out of this thinking and these expectations that religious paths are born. But these are paths founded on faith alone, whilst man is not able to forget the joys and sorrows of life. These religious paths seem unable to take care of the joys and sorrows of every-day life as it is lived. Man is thus faced with fearsome irresolution and this leads him to turn towards faith-less materialism. However, man also has *buddhi* (understanding, intellect, discernment). He searches for the ultimate reality and alights upon a range of options. The sages of ancient India have pondered upon all these. These sages understood that happiness is based not in things but, rather, in the self (*atmanishtha*), and that man can attain eternal peace (*chirantan shanti*) without any kind of material plenitude.

It is the *jiva*, the living Self, the vital principle or spirit, that is endowed with happiness (*sukhamaya*). All creation is, thus, endowed with happiness, is the manifest form (*vyakta rupa*) of endless truth. In addition to the *jiva*, the living

¹⁷ As Mukul notes, Golwalkar and Poddar admired and appreciated each others' work; Golwalkar had visited the latter in Gorakhpur (2015, 66, 155f.). On Golwalkar's early life, his induction into the R.S.S., and his general orientation as its leader, see Anderson and Damle (1987, 41–5, 112f.). On his significance in today's India, see Bal 2017.

Self, and the *jagat*, the world, there is a third point, *brahma*, who forms the entire *mandala* of the universe, pervading all while yet being apart from all and entirely independent. Experiencing the presence of this *brahma* is the ultimate happiness. The paths that lead to the attainment of this experience are fourfold: *karma*, action; *bhakti*, devotion; *yoga*; and *jnana*, knowledge. The *jiva* is himself ultimately *brahma*, because it is the all-pervasive *brahma* who manifests in the form of *jiva*. The vaster the *jiva* feels, the more happiness he attains. The ‘I’ and ‘mine’ impose limits on him. He has to abandon the slavery of these limits and become a renouncer. Golwalkar is here merely reproducing in accessible form what is familiar to most educated Hindus, in one form or another, as *advaita*: the monistic/non-dualistic philosophy propagated in various sophisticated schools of philosophical thought in the subcontinent at least since its first fully-fledged articulation by Shankara in the ninth century CE. But the next step Golwalkar takes is surely peculiar to his thinking.

Once renunciation has led to the obliteration of the feeling of limitedness (*samkuchit bhavana*), what first offers itself for consideration is a vaster entity, that is, one’s own society: the nation (*rashtra*). The feeling emerges that the *brahman* who exists in the *jiva*, who says ‘I’, is manifest in a vaster form in this *rashtra*. *Rashtra* or nation is thus raised to a transcendental form. There is no question here of positing a divine origin for the Hindu nation. Much more than this, the nation is *part* of the *brahman*. Golwalkar does not seem to be speaking of nations in general when he propounds this principle but, rather, of the Hindu nation alone.

Let us pause for a moment to consider the significance of the term *rashtra* in Golwalkar’s thinking. In his 1939 treatise, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, which he later disowned,¹⁸ Golwalkar lays out his understanding of *rashtra*¹⁹ in a way

18 After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in January 1948, following which Golwalkar was incarcerated for a time, the work became authorless as Golwalkar and the R.S.S. disowned it. It has recently been reprinted by Shamsul Islam (2006, second edition 2015). Islam discusses the publication history of the work – the last of its four editions came out in 1947 (63) – showing in his introduction that although the treatise became authorless and went out of print, Golwalkar continued to think along the lines laid out therein (13–99). Jaffrelot sees this work as the charter that the R.S.S. had previously lacked (Islam 2005, 68).

19 *We or Our Nationhood Defined* glosses the term *rashtra* as follows: ‘The word *Rashtra*, which expresses the whole of the idea contained in the English word “Nation” is as old as the Vedas and in the ancient works is described in a general way, as being so (*Rashtra* in truth) when it included “Swaraj” – independence, the power of the National Race over the whole land from sea to sea [...]’ (Islam, 187f.). As Mukul has shown, the 1947 annual number of *Kalyan* opened with an extract from a speech by Golwalkar. Entitled ‘*Sachcha Rashtravad*’ or True Nationalism, the piece rails against the following blunder: ‘We accepted India has many nations and like the Americans

that, he maintains, follows the definitions of the ‘learned political thinkers of the world’²⁰:

In fine, the idea contained in the word Nation is a compound of five distinct factors fused into one dissoluble whole [,] the famous five Unities: Geographical (country), Racial (Race), Religious (Religion), cultural (Culture) and linguistic (language).²¹

He then considers these five factors in some detail, first in general terms and then specifically in the Hindu case. In doing so, he fuses religion and culture into one, just as the Shankaracharya had done in the preceding article. As he proclaims: ‘Culture is but a product of our all-comprehensive Religion, a part of its body and not distinguishable from it’ (Islam 2015, 158).²² Religion for him is not an individual question that needs to be kept out of ‘public and political life’. Rather,

agreed to have a federation. This gave rise to a mutilated version of sub-nationalism in India’ that ‘lacks true Bharatiyata (Indianness)’ (2015, 248). In June 1947, *Kalyan* carried another incendiary speech by Golwalkar (ibid., 253).

20 As Jaffrelot has shown, Golwalkar drew inspiration for his definition of what constitutes the nation from German thinkers, amongst others from ‘Bluntsley’, or Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, who defined nations as ‘organic beings’ with a ‘national spirit’ and ‘national will’. The nation was not composed of an arbitrary combination of men but of those rooted in a specific civilization as articulated in the physique of the race and in their language and manners. Golwalkar’s understanding of race differed from the German; it was not obsessed with purity of race but rather with common cultural traits as inherent to the group, collectively inherited from their forefathers (2005, 70–4).

21 Islam 2005, 154.

22 Golwalkar differed in his conceptions of Hindu culture and religion from that other great ideologue of the Hindu Right, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), who was president of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943. His best-known work, *The Essentials of Hindutva* was published in Nagpur in 1928. Excerpts here are from the web edition of the work: <http://www.savarkar.org/en/hindutva-hindu-nationalism/essentials-hindutva>. Last accessed on July 25, 2018. The overarching concept for Savarkar was culture rather than religion, which was subsumed under ‘common fairs and festivals, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments’. His definition of Hindu was threefold, whereby culture was defined, amidst its other attributes, by a common history, common literature, etc., rather than theologically: ‘A Hindu then is he who feels attachment to the land that extends from Sindhu to Sindhu as the land of his forefathers – as his Fatherland; who inherits the blood of the great race whose first and discernible source could be traced from the Himalayan altitudes of the Vedic Saptasindhus and which assimilating all that was incorporated and ennobling all that was assimilated has grown into and come to be known as the Hindu people; and who, as a consequence of the foregoing attributes, has inherited and claims as his own the Hindu Sanskriti, the Hindu civilization, as represented in a common history, common heroes, a common literature, common art, a common law and a common jurisprudence, common fairs and festivals, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments’.

Religion in its essence is that which by regulating society in all its functions, makes room for all individual idiosyncrasies, and provides suitable ways and means for all sorts of mental frames to adopt, and evolve, and which at the same time raises the whole society as such, from material, through the moral to the spiritual plane. (159)

Politics itself becomes a small factor ‘to be considered and followed solely as one of the commands of Religion and in accord with such commands’ (160). He denies the validity of sects, in short the plurality of Hindu belief systems, by proclaiming that they are ‘only parts of religion’ and not a multitude of religions (161). Finally, language, in the Hindu case Sanskrit, is ‘an expression of the Race spirit, a manifestation of the National web of life’ (162).

We can return now to Golwalkar’s article in our volume. After having proclaimed the identity of this ‘I’ with the nation, he proceeds to further develop his proposition.²³ The person becomes vast (*vishal*) following the identification of the individual (*vyakti*), society (*samaj*), and the world-Self (*vishwatma*). Bringing these three together, he experiences a vastness that is difficult to experience in this world. A philosophical-theological edifice is thus restructured to include as an integral part an entirely modern concept, *samaj* or society. This is further equated with *rashtra* or nation, as if it had existed as such since time immemorial and had integrally belonged there. Society and the nation thus acquire metaphysical dimensions.

This identification of man with nation, as Golwalkar goes on to explain it, makes for great happiness and peace in society. The people who constitute this society are of the same kind, have been created out of the same essential principle (*sattattva*), and therefore love one another. Society will be happy, progressive, and best (*shreshtha*) in the same measure as the number of knowledgeable (*jnani*) people who exist in it (59). By this he presumably means those who have attained a higher state and merged with the nation. To dream of ‘Anarchism – withering away of the state’ (English in the original, 60) is possible only in Hindu culture. But while we wait for this situation to come about, Hindu culture seeks

²³ As Damle and Anderson put it, Golwalkar in his *Bunch of Thoughts*, ‘mentions four virtues that characterize the ideal man. The first is “invincible physical strength” [...] referring to the calm resolve needed for commitment to disciplined activity. The second virtue, which Golwalkar called “character”, is a personal resolve to commit oneself to a noble cause. These two virtues must be guided by “intellectual acumen”, the third virtue. Lastly, “fortitude” is a virtue which permits the honorable person to persevere in a virtuous life. To summarize, the virtuous life is, above all, characterized by industriousness combined with a zealous and painstaking adherence to *dharma*’ (1987, 74; the authors have used an earlier edition of Golwalkar’s work, the page numbers they give do not tally with my edition). Golwalkar remains consistent in his thinking. The adherence to *dharma* norms precludes any deviance from them, readying the individual for his merger with the nation.

to regulate matters, to provide a corrective to disorder and misrule. Hindu culture and social order are here made coeval with the state without any further discussion. Non-Hindus are obviously excluded from this order, since the same fellow feeling and love cannot exist outside the religion which fuses them together.

Hindu culture has sought to provide an order to curtail the injustice perpetrated by those with wealth on those without wealth. This is the first and only mention of social inequality; it is immediately countered. For Hindu culture has seen that mutual dependency, mutual cooperation, fellow feeling, and affection are what keep society well ordered. Hindu culture has sought to follow this principle in the constitution of its social order (60).

Golwalkar concludes by reverting to his central thesis: 'In everyday (*vyavaharik*) life, all people should follow the resolve (*dharana*) that this society is the manifest form of the incorporeal Highest Self (*amurta paramatma*)'. This Highest Self is the lord of the world.

The individual, becoming vast, in order to attain this happiness-filled (*sukhamaya*) Highest Self, has the duty to serve this manifest form of the Highest Self by becoming one with it, by renunciation, by selflessness, with his body, mind and speech, by offering it body, mind and wealth. Only by fulfilling this duty with his entire feeling (*sarvabhava*), can he attain success in this life, can attain happiness. (60)

The wise who practice this Hindu culture will see that only this will lead to world peace and they will light the path for those who have forgotten their culture. Golwalkar closes by offering his short article at the feet of the Highest Self in the form of the Hindu nation (61).

This idea of the individual as part of a whole is repeated incessantly in Golwalkar's writings, though elsewhere less explicitly clothed in a theological edifice than in the above formulation. Expressed in more general terms, which are of some significance for our considerations here, he says in the translated version of his writings compiled under the title *Bunch of Thoughts*:

In the same manner, individuals, though imperfect, when merged into a corporate whole, can give rise to a perfect society. And therefore the superficial differences born out of the imperfections of the individuals are only indicative of the diverse manifestations of the one great and perfect and mighty reality – the society. This appreciation of the inherent spark of Truth, of Divinity in every individual, has penetrated into our various components and spheres of life – religious, social, political and economic – and patterned them for a harmonious pattern of mutual goodwill and respect. This catholicity of spirit is an altogether unique contribution of our culture to world thought. (Golwalkar 1980, 51f.)

As Golwalkar puts it a little later in *Bunch of Thoughts*: 'The 'permanent', therefore, is the national life. The 'impermanent' is the individual' (61). This, then, is

a consistent pattern of thinking: national life is identified with the transcendent Highest Self, or Ultimate Reality, and the individual is asked to merge with this national life in order to acquire perfection and permanence.²⁴ Once again, Hannah Arendt provides a crucial insight into the kind of thinking that underlies pan-movements such as this:

The pan-movements preached the divine origin of their own people as against the Jewish-Christian faith in the divine origin of Man. According to them, man, belonging inevitably to some people, received his divine origin only indirectly through membership in a people. The individual, therefore, has his divine value only as long as he belongs to the people singled out for divine origin. He forfeits this whenever he decides to change his nationality, in which case he severs all bonds through which he was endowed with divine origin and falls, as it were, into metaphysical homelessness. The political advantage of this concept was twofold. It made nationality a permanent quality which no longer could be touched by history, no matter what happened to a given people – emigration, conquest, dispersion. Of even more immediate impact, however, was that in the absolute contrast between the divine origin of one's own people and all other nondivine peoples, all differences between the individual members of the people disappeared, whether social or economic or psychological. Divine origin changed the people into a uniform 'chosen' mass of arrogant robots.

(Arendt 1976, 233f.)

Golwalkar takes the hierarchical thinking of the Shankaracharya, and the bulk of the articles in the volume that echo him, to another level of abstraction, in which *varna*, the social status one is born into, is to be considered natural and innate to the person. The ground reality can be whatever it is; he leaves it untouched and uncritiqued. In Golwalkar's thinking it becomes irrelevant. He does not address any notion of social inequality, any question of social injustice. The same is true of all sense of individuality. Difference of personhood is considered superficial, a sign of imperfection. Individuality is regarded as something that needs to be submerged into a greater whole to achieve its potential, into *samaj* or Hindu *rashtra*. This is but one step towards a yet greater whole, *paramatma* or the Highest Self, making the *rashtra* or nation part and parcel of a transcendence that is absolute, unreachable by history.

What of those who are not Hindus? In his 1939 book, the author who then identified himself as Golwalkar maintained roundly that,

all those, who fall outside the five fold limits of the idea [nation], can have no place in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture and language of the Nation and completely merge themselves in the National Race.

(Islam 2015, 181)

²⁴ Jaffrelot also makes this point briefly: 'This ideologically based cohesion coincides with a devaluation of individuality in the R.S.S.; the "new man" must sacrifice his personality to the cause' (2005, 79).

As long as they maintain their difference, they are foreigners and live at the mercy of the national race. They ‘may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen’s rights’ (Islam 2015, 183f.).

As in the view of the Shankaracharya, the social and cultural order proposed by Golwalkar as the base of the Hindu nation is Brahminical in its terminology as much as in its orientation. As Jaffrelot has pointed out, although the R.S.S. was conceived of as egalitarian, the view of its leaders continued to be based in the *varna* system, its *pracharaks* or preachers being drawn overwhelmingly from the Brahmin caste. The appeal to the low castes was surely in part due to the process of Sanskritisation, or the upward social mobility that belonging to this order entailed.²⁵

To return to the Gita Press volume, the universal impact of Hindu culture on other cultures is proclaimed by no less a personage than C. Rajagopalachari (1878–1972), the then Governor-General of India (1948–1950), in his one page article. It is titled ‘*Hindu samskrit hi vishvasamskriti hai*’ or ‘Hindu culture alone is world culture’ (63). As far as Rajagopalachari is concerned, there is no question of mutual interaction with other cultures; the action is entirely one-way. The universalistic claims of Hindu culture are maintained also by two historically sketchy articles in the volume which deal with the influence of Hindu religion and culture on Islam and Sikhism, written, respectively, by a Muslim, Saj Rehmani ‘Firdausi Baba’, and a Sikh, Gyani Santsingh Pritam. These articles are intended as evidence that Rajagopalachari’s proposition is accepted by the followers of these two religions.

In the concluding section of this essay, I turn to the treatment in the volume of Mahatma Gandhi, who identified himself as a believing Hindu through his life and who was arguably the most significant Hindu of his time. Two thirds of the way in, the Gita Press volume contains a five-page article on ‘*Mahatma Gandhi aur hindu samskriti*’, ‘Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu culture’, by Pandit Lakshminarayan Garde, a member of the editorial department of the Press and of the editorial board of our particular volume.²⁶ This article is sandwiched between an article on death rites in Hindu culture and a set of three articles on the place of the cow, and on its protection, in Hindu culture. The Mahatma’s thinking is presented largely in accordance with the general editorial bent of the volume, though his marked deviations from it are impossible to entirely ignore and are

²⁵ Savarkar differed from those who believed in preserving the purity of the caste system. He believed in cross-caste marital unions.

²⁶ Ibid. 598–604. As Mukul has noted, the *Kalyan* did not register the assassination of the Mahatma in its February 1948 issue. In fact, Poddar was actively involved in defending the R.S.S., which, as noted above, had been banned for its alleged role in the killing (2015, 58f.).

partially noted. In the following, I present the main points of the article. I then go on to discuss how the Mahatma's deeply personalised moral vision, his radical reformulation of views he held earlier, is essentially either not realised and registered or is passed over deliberately in this account.

4 Gandhi's vision as second counter-pole

Garde begins by proclaiming that *Hindu samskriti* itself was incarnated in the person of Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma was proud to be a Hindu. He proclaimed himself a *sanatani* or eternal Hindu.²⁷ There was no trace of communalism in his thinking, and Garde draws from this the conclusion that Gandhi was proof of the fact that the Hindu is, in general, not communal; he has love for all in his heart. The Mahatma's universal love manifested itself in his *dharmā* to free India. He showed by his work in South Africa that there was no feeling of enmity in his heart (598). Garde cites an excerpt from an interview with an English journalist at the beginning of 1937 as evidence that the Mahatma had full faith in his god that India would win its independence from the British, a belief that was fulfilled on August 15th 1947. This belief in God is the root base of Hindu culture, from which originates the second base, religion (599). Once again, we see that the wider term 'culture' envelopes the more particular 'religion'.

Garde follows these propositions with a second, partial quotation from the Mahatma. In this very early quotation, from *Young India*, September 29th 1920, Gandhi makes four declarations: that he believes in the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and all Hindu religious texts; that he believes in *varnashrama dharmā*; that he believes in cow protection; and that he does not disbelieve in the worship of *murtis* or icons. Garde adds that the Mahatma did not believe in socialism or communism. His was a belief in religion, in *ishvara*, the lord, and in the traditionalism of Hindu *samskriti*. Having proclaimed this, Garde is forced to make important admissions on the grounds of the Mahatma's later radical qualifications of his early statements, though he treads with great caution while doing so.

27 'Sanatana Dharma' or eternal, perpetual Dharma, to which most mainstream modern Hindus see themselves as belonging, is a nineteenth century creation. It projects itself as monolithic, pan-Hindu, and as enshrined in the oldest texts of the Hindus. As Zavos has pointed out in the context of the Sanatana Dharma Sabhas or Associations that sprang up from the late-nineteenth century in response to reform movements, practice and structure (image worship and caste hierarchies) – as opposed to a theological core – were propounded as the defining features of this dharma (2000, 50–7). The Mahatma, in fact, does not fit into this mould, as we will see. The others represented in *Hindu Samskriti* do.

There were certain things in Gandhism, he explains, that, in the eyes of the *sanatani* Hindus, were not in accordance with the *Shastras*, the institutes of religion. However, despite thus deviating, the Mahatma continued, from his own perspective, to base his views in *Hindu samskriti*. For example, although he believed in the *varna* order, he did not observe the present rules regarding commensality or inter-caste marriage. Nevertheless, he agreed in principle that marriages work best within one's own culture. And although his effort to improve the lot of the lower castes and to promote Hindu-Muslim unity will always remain praiseworthy, if a person knowledgeable in the *Shastras* were to proclaim these beliefs to be outside the realm of these institutes, his saying so would not be out of place. Garde then quotes the Mahatma as saying that the store of *Hindu samskriti* is as overflowing as nowhere else in the world, something that the people do not yet know, as they have been kept far from it and have not yet recognised its virtues. As Garde proclaims, it is thanks to the British that they have forgotten their own cultural wealth (600).

This is followed by general observations on the decentralised economic order that the Mahatma wanted to see established, the dismantling of large industrial units, and his regard for honesty in public transactions, all of which were patently being disregarded in newly independent India. The socialism that was being followed was not in accord with *Hindu samskriti* (601). This was happening because Hindus were turning away from god, from the Mahatma's belief in the *Bhagavadgita*. However, the Mahatma also used the Muslim terms for god – Rahim, Karim, and Allah – to persuade Muslims to acknowledge god, although it was unclear what effect this would have had on them (602). The rest of the article deals at length with the Mahatma's own emphasis on the significance and value of chanting the name of Rama, and the crises from which this chanting had saved him (603). Garde closes with the observation that it was through this belief in the name of Rama that God procured independence for India. This independence should be used today in the cause of Rama. Only then would it be protected and prosper, leading to the spread of the rule of Rama throughout the world. The Hindu religion is then to rule the world as much as the nation.

With the exception of his two equivocations concerning Dalits and Muslims, Garde presents the Mahatma's thinking rather schematically in an effort to contain him. He does not falsify so much as omit or suppress that which does not fit into his generally conservative view of the Mahatma, although he does note where the Mahatma falls entirely out of line with the normal trends of conservative Hindu thought. It is important to see what aspects of the Mahatma's thought he leaves out and ignores in order to make clear what he cannot afford to entertain as worthy of note – the issues which would question the central ideas of the volume as a whole.

The Mahatma's key ideas were evolved over time as part of his active life and they can often seem contradictory when taken out of chronological order. In order to understand his notion of Hinduism, I have mostly relied on the meticulous work of J.T.F. Jordens (2012). Jordens' interpretation, while taking cognisance of key studies of the Mahatma's life and works, relies almost exclusively on the Mahatma's own writings in laying out his views on the most salient aspects of his beliefs. Jordens pays particular attention to the changing of these views over time, for the Mahatma often revised his own earlier opinions. He was not apologetic about this. Jordens cites his proclamation that,

"I have never made a fetish of consistency", and [he] advised the reader to reject his earlier statements for his later ones.

(Jordens 2012, 108, citations from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, henceforth *CW*, vol. 59, 62).

According to Jordens, the two most balanced statements of the Mahatma's views of Hinduism were published in 1921, the first in Gujarati in *Navajivan* under the title 'Who is a Sanatani Hindu?', and the second later in the year in English in *Young India*, under the title 'Hinduism'. The Mahatma affirmed the fundamental tenets of Hinduism; a Hindu was one who believed in the existence of the *atman*, the Self, and the *paramatman*, the Highest Self; who believed that the *atman* did not go through birth and death but passed from existence to existence; and who believed that the *atman* could attain *moksha* or release from this cycle. He also dealt in these writings with the question of revelation. As he wrote in the English article, he had deliberately omitted the words 'divine revelation' with regard to the Vedas as he did not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. The Bible, the Koran, and the Zend Avesta were also divinely inspired. Secondly, not every word and every verse of these texts was divinely inspired. These had to pass the test of reason and morality before they could be accepted as true. And finally, he repudiated the authority, if they claimed it, of the 'present Shankaracharyas and shastris to give a correct interpretation of Hindu scriptures'. People capable of doing so could emerge in the future but, in the meantime, 'we, the common people, may cling to the essentials with a simple faith and live our lives in bhakti to God' (*ibid.*, 88–90; the Mahatma's statements from *CW* 21, 246). This repudiation of the claim of the Vedas to be the sole divine revelation, and of the authority of the Shankaracharyas and other religious leaders to interpret them, contradicts in its entirety all that is represented as *Hindu Samskriti* in article after article of the Gita Press's publication. We should also note that, in his later years, the Mahatma took care to distinguish between religion and culture, as Kumkum Sangari has shown. Regional and professional commonalities, shared

customs and languages, common suffering in the context of colonial domination, and the struggle for independence, all of these undercut religious difference (Sangari 2002, 8f.).

As for the belief in *varna* and *ashrama*, the Mahatma held to their basic validity all his life. But if he had originally claimed that they exercised beneficial restraints for promoting self-control, he later modified his opinion radically with regard to intermarriage and interdining, as Garde had also pointed out. Lack of restraint in these matters, according to the Mahatma, had led to the creation of innumerable *jatis*, which had created chaos. The original *varna* scheme had placed no restriction on intermarriage and interdining, which had now been brought into operation. It was necessary now to revert to the original order:

The law of *varna* has nothing to do with these restrictions. People of different *varnas* may intermarry and interdine...But a Brahmin who marries a Shudra girl or vice-versa commits no offence against the law of *varna*.

(Jordens 2012, citations from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, henceforth *CW*)

By 1931, he had declared that according to his definition of *varna*, ‘there is no *varna* in operation in present day Hinduism’. It had become extinct. By 1933 he was declaring both intermarriage and interdining to be a personal matter.

His writings on the issue of untouchability are voluminous. As he stressed again and again, he was vehemently and expressly opposed to the doctrine and denied that it was sanctioned by scripture:

If I discovered that those scriptures which are known as Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, Smritis, etc. clearly showed that they claimed divine authority for untouchability [...] then nothing on this earth would hold me to Hinduism. I should throw it overboard as I should throw overboard a rotten apple.

(Jordens, 112f., citation from *CW* 57, 7)

Untouchability was contrary to reason; it was a violation of truth and of non-violence. And it was in conflict with the fundamental precepts of Hinduism (*ibid.*, 112f., *CW* 26, 265). We have seen above that the Shankaracharya saw the practice of denying temple entry to Dalits as not only in consonance with *varnashrama dharma* but also in keeping with the natural order of the cosmos, prophesying dire natural disasters if it was transgressed.

In the present context, three further issues warrant a closer, if necessarily brief, look. First, the Mahatma’s insistence in his last years that religion was a personal rather than a political matter, that it could never be a state concern: ‘Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics’ (Sangari 2002, 4; citation

CW 76, 402, from the Mahatma's paper, *Harijan*, 9 August 1942). As he specified in another context:

I do not believe in State religion even though the whole community has one religion. State interference will probably always be unwelcome. Religion is purely a personal matter. There are in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind has a different conception of God from that of another.

(*ibid.*, 6, citation from *Harijan*, 16 March 1947, CW not specified)

Secondly, we need to take note of the intensely personal nature of his moral vision. As Jordens points out, 'in the final instance the supreme authority in matters religious is vested in the individual conscience. This primacy has been given the name of "the inner voice" by Gandhi' (Jordens 2012, 152, citation CW 26, 140). To safeguard against capricious use of it, the Mahatma at various times specified under what conditions it could be held to be valid:

We should listen to everybody's advice, but do only what our conscience tells us. And in order that our conscience may speak, we should observe the yama-niyamas [rules and regulations for the spiritual aspirant similar to the Ten Commandments]. Everybody cannot hear the inner voice. We need divine ears to hear it.

(Jordens 2012, 153, citation CW 49, 311)

In speaking of the decision to embark on his 1932 Poona fast in his fight against the communal award of separate electorates to Dalits in response to hearing the inner voice, he spoke once again of the preparation needed in order to hear it:

Realist things are only relatively so. For me the Voice was more real than my own existence. It has never failed me, and for that matter, anyone else. And everyone who will can hear the Voice. It is within everyone. But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparations.

(Jordens 2012, 144)

The point to be made here is the radical individuality of his moral vision. It stands in sharp contradiction to the primacy given to the authority of texts as propagated by the Shankaracharya and the other contributors to the volume.

Finally, it will be worth considering the Mahatma's ideas on pluralism, which he put forward in his later years, modifying his earlier views about the supremacy of Hinduism over other religious systems. Jordens once more: 'in his writings after 1930 no single statement can be found affirming or even suggesting the superiority of Hinduism, which he had repeatedly referred to before that date' (Jordens 2012, 166). The change was deliberate and, according to Jordens, can be dated to a letter written to Narandas Gandhi on the 23rd of September 1930:

Equality of Religions. This is the new name we have given to the Ashram observance which we know as "Tolerance" [...] I did not like the word but could not think of a better one.

Kakasaheb, too, did not like the word. He suggested “Respect for all religions”. I did not like that phrase either. Tolerance may imply a gratuitous assumption of inferiority of other faiths to one’s own and respect suggests a sense of patronising, whereas ahimsa teaches us to entertain the same respect for the religious faith of others as we accord to our own, thus admitting the imperfection of the latter. (ibid., 165; citation *CW* 44, 166)

It has been necessary to devote considerable space to the Mahatma’s views in order to set into sharper relief the views expressed in the two leading articles of our Gita Press volume, which the mass of other articles in, and contributions to, the special issue on *Hindu samskriti* follow and confirm in their own ways. The Mahatma differed in all key aspects from them: in the matter of religion and culture being one, in acknowledging the absolute authority of the Vedic corpus or the authority of religious leaders as sole interpreters of it, in the belief in the inviolability of the *varna* order and in the legitimacy of untouchability. He regarded religion as a personal matter: there were as many religions as minds, it was certainly not a political concern, and there could be no legitimate state religion. And, finally, he differed from them in his belief in pluralism. These views and beliefs the Gita Press volume obliterated entirely in its effort to offer an authoritative and cohesive view of Hindu culture, compounded as it was of a range of similar positions. The Shankaracharya and Golwalkar held identical views on the superiority of the all-pervasive culture of Hindus in India, rooted in their religion and philosophy, as laid down in their canonical texts in Sanskrit. Being Hindu meant adhering to these texts. Their mental make up as part of the *varna* order, their common culture and religion, bound all Hindus together; there could be no difference amongst them. They alone constituted the nation. There could be no space for individual Hindus to form themselves meaningfully outside this scheme of things. Neo-traditionalisation had won the day.

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Veronika Hoffmann

Individualised versus institutional religion: Is there a mediating position?

The significance of religious individualisation is broadly accepted by scholars focusing on Western Europe in the twentieth century. For the most part, however, analyses have focused on the dichotomy of individualised versus institutionalised religion. Individualised religion usually tends to ignore, rather than reject outright, the authority and truth claims raised by institutional religion, whereas institutional religion tends to be critical of the completely subjective nature of individualised religion. This paper asks if academic theology can play a mediating role between the two extremes. The present paper sketches a possible approach, limiting its perspective to contemporary Christianity in Germany and using this as a case study. It starts from the assumption that faith and doubt are intimately connected with the shaping and reshaping of personal identity. Religious beliefs and practices have to “resonate” with the individual, but claims of intersubjective rationality and the possibility for truth can still be maintained.

1 Religious individualisation in contemporary German Christianity – *again?*

If there is any field of study in the sociology of religion in which individualisation is broadly undisputed and probably overanalysed, it is to be found in the contemporary Christianity of Western Europe. However, as shall be argued in this paper, in the case of Christianity in contemporary Germany, a model that contrasts individualised religion with institutional religion is too simple. There is a possible mediating position that is the result of special circumstances: the practice of academic Christian theology. Academic theology occupies a special place as a scholarly form of religious self-reflection that is at the same time situated in the university and based on a specific religious creed (Hoffmann et al. 2012; Wissenschaftsrat 2010). This special (and sometimes uneasy) place also means, as I argue, that academic theology is not solely an aspect of either individualised religion or institutional religion. It is for this reason that it may be able to play a mediating role in adequately conceptualising, and thereby alleviating a specific tension between, individualised and institutional religion in German Christianity.

The following is a case study that draws on the specific situation of the two mainstream churches in Germany. While a comparison with other settings, such as free churches in countries without the particularities of the German state-church law or state churches in Northern Europe, is outside of the scope of this article, it hopes to serve as a preliminary work for such a comparison.¹ What follows can be read on two different levels at least:

1. On a theological level, this chapter reflects on academic theology in the context of the tensions between institutional and individual religion and on the role of truth claims, individual religious identity, and doubt.
2. The chapter can also be read on a purely descriptive level. From this perspective, it serves as a case study of a religious phenomenon that belongs neither in the category of ‘institutional’ religion nor in that of ‘individual religion’. A stale dichotomy can be avoided and more complex relationships may come to light by showing a possible third category.

First, we must clarify what ‘religious individualisation’ means in this context. It is not possible to discuss here in full the ongoing debate on this topic (Rüpke and Fuchs 2015; Fuchs 2015; with regard to Christianity in Germany: Gabriel 1996a; Rieger 2009; Wilke 2013). Instead, I will restrict myself to a brief sketch of how religious individualisation will be understood in this paper.

Following Karl Gabriel, I take it that the main feature of religious individualisation is the ‘attribution of religion to an individual and his or her biography’ (Gabriel 1996b, 12). This definition leads to the following conclusions:

1. Individualised religion is not necessarily religion outside of institutional contexts. Research shows that, in Germany, individualised forms of religion are found *within* rather than outside of the churches (Bertelsmann 2008; Wilke 2013). Individualised religion is not necessarily a form of religion that abolishes the affiliation to any religious community; rather, it is a certain way that ‘individuals interact with religious ideas and institutions’ (Rüpke and Fuchs 2015, 324).
2. Individualised religion *can* be described as ‘deviant’ religion with respect to the doctrines of the institution, but this is not a necessity or requirement. Quantitative surveys tend to pinpoint religious individualisation in this area, probably because the data can easily be collected – for example, the percentage of members of Christian churches who believe in reincarnation

¹ The paper will also refrain from any attempt to predict future developments of the religious field in Germany. Some substantial changes in the course of the next decades are fairly likely. But, in my view, the situation is far too volatile to be in any way predictable.

(Krüggeler 1993). Deviance from the official creed of the institution is an indication of individualised religion but not a necessary feature.

3. The crucial point lies neither in a disaffiliation from religious institutions nor in individual deviance from official doctrine. The important point is rather the *attribution* of religion to the individual: understanding the individual (and the individual understanding him- or herself) as his or her *own religious authority*. The individual may well belong to one of the main churches and even be in complete agreement with that church's teachings. But the ultimate *reason* for a certain religious form of life is not a social context that imposes it on the individual. Nor is it the sense of obedience to a religious authority nor even a compliance with what universal reason has recognised as 'natural religion' in the spirit of the Enlightenment. The reason lies in the individual and his or her biography – more specifically, the reason is the perceived 'fit' between the individual's self-understanding, his or her personal identity, his or her outlook on the world, and certain religious convictions and practices.
4. This does not necessarily lead to a 'consciously chosen' individual religion, as Peter Berger's 'heretical imperative' suggests (Berger 1979). As Hans Joas, Charles Taylor, and others have noted, there are many factors at play when it comes to the formation and transformation of religious beliefs and practices, not the least of which are experiences that the individual will perceive as 'given' rather than 'made' (Joas 2014; Taylor 2007, 833). Individual religion is not about choice per se, as a conscious act of selecting something from a menu of religions or compiling one's own 'religion à la carte'. The point is that whatever an individual's religious beliefs and practices may be, they are his or her *own* in an emphatic sense of the word. They are not based on what religious authorities, the shared positions of a community, or academic consensus tell someone, but on who the person is: on their experiences, their values, and so forth. There is a need for 'personal resonance' (Taylor 2003, 89), as Charles Taylor puts it. This includes the possibility that the individual may *not* choose at all in matters of religion because religion is just not that important to him or her. And although religious institutions may qualify individual religious positions as 'orthodox' or 'deviant', these are not key questions or categories from the point of view of the individual. When it comes to mixing Christian and non-Christian elements of religion, for example, '[t]hese alternative elements [to Christian religion, V.H.] are not perceived as contrary to the Christian self-understanding but as good and helpful. Authenticity, personal experience and consistency with one's biography are the social place of this form of religion, not some religious creed' (Wilke 2013, 40; Gebhardt et al. 2005).

The relevant criteria are not the reliability of a religious tradition, the question of universal truth and eternal salvation, or even an overwhelming religious experience. They are (1) the ‘authority of the individual’ in matters of religion, which refers to the freedom and the responsibility of the individual concerning his or her religion, and (2) the ‘fit’ of this religion with the individual, including his or her self-understanding and biography, in short, his or her personal identity. As Charles Taylor puts the key idea of our ‘age of authenticity’: ‘the injunction would seem to be: let everyone follow his/her own path of spiritual inspiration. Don’t be led off yours by the allegation that it doesn’t fit with some orthodoxy’ (Taylor 2007, 489).

Taylor’s analysis of the age of authenticity is helpful in yet another way: critics of these forms of individual, ‘authentic’ religion (frequently, but not only, church leaders and theologians) claim that they are shallow, self-centred forms of ‘wellness-religion’ (for examples, see Gebhardt et al. 2005). According to Taylor, however, although the criticism is justified in some cases, when framed as a sweeping condemnation it overlooks a necessary distinction between ‘manner’ and ‘content’ (or ‘matter’) with regard to religious individualisation (Taylor 2003, 87f.).² The *manner* is necessarily individualised today: ‘The kind of quest which I am invoking here [...] is indeed defined by a kind of autonomous exploration, which is opposed to a simple surrender to authority; and people who engage in this kind of spiritual path are indeed put off by the moralism and code-fetishism which they find in the churches’ (Taylor 2007, 509; cf. Wilke 2013, 74). Gebhardt et al. (2005) very aptly speak of the ‘self-empowerment of the religious subject’. But this doesn’t mean that the *content* of individualised religion is by definition individualised as well. It is quite possible that the individual’s quest leads him or her to forms of spirituality that are not completely self-centred but, rather, oriented toward a higher good and a higher order (Taylor 2003, 82f.). It is this confusion of manner and content that leads to an undue generalisation of individual religion as purely egoistic self-fulfilment.

This idea of a ‘religiously self-empowered’ individual in pursuit of a spirituality that ‘fits’ his or her personal identity poses major problems from the point of view of institutional religion. At least, the problem arises within the scope of this ‘case study’: Christian mainline churches in contemporary Germany. According to Wilke, in some religious traditions, such individual ‘tailoring’ of religion using different religious ideas and traditions does not lead to tension between the individual and the institution (2013, 76). But within Christianity, being a Christian is traditionally linked closely to church membership and questions of universal

2 In his later work, *A Secular Age*, Taylor 2007 speaks of ‘framework’ instead of ‘manner.’

truth and eternal salvation. Multiple religious belongings and the combination of ideas from different religious traditions are not acceptable, in theory at least (Zander 2015).

So there seems to be a fundamental incompatibility between these forms of individual and institutional religion. The key problem lies not in differences at the level of belief content (as the standard example of Christians believing in reincarnation suggests) but between, on the one hand, the institutional view of the interconnected nature of religious truth claims, the authority of the church, and institutional belonging and, on the other, the individual view of radical religious self-empowerment. Because this tension is to be found *within* the institutions, religious self-empowerment and belonging to institutions that are theoretically incompatible in fact go together to a very significant extent.³

Now, how is this problem of compatibility addressed – by the individual or by the institution? To a large extent, it isn't addressed at all, either by the institution or by the individual. With respect to the individual, I have already noted that 'deviance' as lack of compatibility with the institution is not a key category. Being at variance with official church teaching is neither a matter of concern nor a matter of liberation or protest (Gebhardt et al. 2005, 146f.). In my view, this is a key difference to earlier versions of 'individualised religion' in European Christianity. The 'religiously self-empowered individual' is (1) not practicing some sort of folk religion. A folk religion typically is not an individual practice and its participants believe themselves to be within the confines of the church community. The individual's self-understanding is (2) not one of being a 'heretic'. Disputes over orthodoxy were traditionally disputes over religious *truth claims*. The heretic would not claim some sort of individual religion but to be right with regard to *everyone* sharing the belief in question: if God is not triune then this is a matter of fact that is true for everyone. If the pope has no right to hand out indulgences, then no one can profit from an indulgence, and so forth. As we will see, the question of truth claims and intersubjective justification is one of the main differences between 'religiously empowered individuals' and the self-understanding of theology as an academic discipline.

The perspective of the institution is even more interesting. The problem here is most easily grasped with regard to the Catholic Church. The problem is well known (church leaders are, of course, familiar with surveys such as the 'religion monitors') but it seems that theoretical tools to address it are for the most part lacking. Universal truth claims, the authority of the church teaching, and

³ For a rereading of the classical notion of sacramentality in view of this tension see Hoffmann 2015.

the requirement for a comprehensive religious praxis of all (baptised) members: these are core principles of the church to which it continues to adhere, although they are seemingly incompatible with individualised religion. Officially, there is no ‘Catholicism à la carte’. On the other hand, the Catholic Church has, to a large extent, abandoned any practice of sanctioning or excluding dissenters (the Second Vatican Council explicitly refrained from formulating any anathemas). There are pastoral projects that try to take the tension between the institutional idea of what it means to be Catholic and the individual versions of ‘being a religiously self-empowered Catholic’ into account. But on the conceptual level, the churches largely resort to an ‘as-if’ mode: they act as if adhering to the whole apostolic creed and the church teachings, attending mass every Sunday, and so forth can be expected of every member of the church, as if the reasons for non-compliance can be attributed either to unwillingness or ignorance, and as if the remedy therefore is either exhortations or catechesis.

2 Religious individualisation: gain or loss?

At first sight, instead of finding a mediating position in the academic realm, the either–or of the individualised-versus-institutional perspective seems to continue there. The contrasting positions of sociologist Ulrich Beck and theologian Ingolf U. Dalferth can serve as examples.

2.1 Ulrich Beck: ‘A God of one’s own’ for the ‘sovereign self’

Ulrich Beck’s view on religious individualisation is clear from the title of his book: *A God of One’s Own* (Beck 2010). As for Wilke, Gebhardt and his co-authors and others, the ‘sovereign self’ is the new religious ‘authority principle’ (Beck 2010, 29). Just how important the dichotomy of individual–institutional religion is for Beck becomes clear when he declares secularisation as ‘a *great gain* for religion’ (Beck 2010, 24, emphasis in original). ‘Secularization does not mean the demise of religion and faith, but instead the development and massive dissemination of a religiosity that is based increasingly on individualization’ (Beck 2010, 29). The ‘decoupling of (institutional) religion and (subjective) faith’ is a key factor.⁴

⁴ Beck 2010, 26. Beck believes that religious individualisation is part of a larger trend of religious revitalisation. That is highly debatable, for example, if one looks at the data provided by

What sets Beck's analysis apart from other sociological studies is that his analysis is not purely descriptive. Beck makes a clear plea for everybody's 'own God', especially because the individualising of God is necessary for a more peaceful future of religion. Whereas the 'institutional God' insists on exclusive truth claims, the 'God of the individual' tends to encourage peace and tolerance regarding questions of so-called orthodoxy. According to Beck, if truth claims are ever to be reconciled with peace, this can only be achieved if we take religious truth to be radically subjective: one's own God can be tolerant of the Gods of everybody else.

Beck tries to distinguish his concept of a 'God of one's own' from 'postmodern religiosity'. The latter comprises a 'radical cultural and ethical relativism' (Beck 2010, 134) that is celebrated as liberation from totalitarianism. 'Religious postmodernism is based on the assumption that it is intellectually impossible to choose between "truths". To that extent we can and must make our choices pragmatically – and we do so from the standpoint of "what does me good"' (ibid., 135). Beck's objection to this is that 'the cultural, subjective fluidity of religious convictions undermines the minimum of certainty that individuals require in order to form a personal identity as believers who have to assume responsibility in all aspects of society [...] What keeps the conscious mind alert to the fact that the foundations of a personal religiosity can *only* be won and defended through public, political intercourse with others?' (ibid., emphasis in original). Instead of a postmodern religiosity, Beck advocates a 'religiosity in the second modernity' that is not based on radical subjectivity but on the 'impurity of cultures': against 'the ideal of purity to be found among the clerical guardians of the truths of institutionalized national churches' (ibid., 140), multiple belongings are possible. By way of example, he refers to what seems to have become the standard example of 'individualised religion': the belief in reincarnation by self-professed Christians (ibid.).

Thus, Beck tries to advocate an individual religion that at the same time has a public dimension to it. Ultimately, however, it remains unclear how he can extract himself from the dichotomy of 'either institutional or individualised'. How, exactly, can he prevent the 'God of one's own' from being no more than a God who 'does me good'? This paper argues that Beck's model is missing a third perspective between the individual's very own, private God and the religious institutions that claim to have a universal truth. That makes it almost impossible for him to effectively attribute some sort of rational, intersubjectively justifiable dimension to individualised religion.

the 2008 and 2013 Bertelsmann religion monitors. The point here is not Beck's argument as a whole but the way he separates institutional religion and individual spirituality.

2.2 Ingolf U. Dalferth: ‘I determine what God is’ as ‘cafeteria religion’

Can academic theology provide this third perspective? It is important to note that while there is no sharp boundary between theologically trained and untrained individuals – probably every form of belief implies some sort of ‘theology’ –, the distinction between individual religion and academic theology in our case can be made clearly. This is in part due to the specifics of the German situation mentioned above: the academic discipline of theology is, on the one hand, connected to a specific religious denomination but, on the other hand, committed to the rules of the academic discourse, namely an argumentative approach in the context of public discourse. Both features do not apply to the ‘religiously empowered self’.

At first glance, it seems that although theology is not *structurally* to be identified with the *magisterium* – and is very adamant about its academic freedom –, with respect to the critical view of individual religion, the mainstream of Christian theology sides with the institutional view. Ingolf U. Dalferth’s criticism of what he calls ‘cafeteria religion’ can serve as a case in point (Dalferth 2000). He argues that if ‘I determine what God is’, individualised religion is incapable – and unwilling – of rational justification: ‘No one asks whether what is determined this way is really God and whether God is really this way. These questions play no role because they are not thought to have any answer that would be more than a new (or old) mixture of opinions. In matters of religion and faith, public opinion now seems to recognize, at most, questions of taste’ (ibid., 8). Theology, in contrast, although as a self-reflection of religion speaking from the perspective of the participant rather than the observer, aims at *rational* self-reflection and thereby at the ability to account for its position in public discourses. Its critical distance – but not separation – from faith makes it possible for theology to explore the difference between the belief in God and the reality of God, although the reality of God is never accessible from the point of view of an observer. And the reality of God is the reference point, according to Dalferth: ‘The faithful do not subscribe to the principle “We determine what God is”, but rather to the principle “God determines what we are”. They thus determine God as they are determined by his reality. This, at any rate is the claim by which they are to be measured and it is the task of theology to do so critically. The truth of faith is decided by God’s reality’ (ibid., 18).

The Barthian heritage is of course clearly perceivable in this argument. More interestingly, Dalferth, as a Protestant, is in no danger of arguing too loudly with the authority of the church. He doesn’t claim that theology has definitive answers, either:

This does not mean, that we – as individuals or as a community – must consider our own understanding of God infallible or absolute. What Christians believe is not true because they believe it. They distinguish between God and the understanding of God, between truth and the practice of faith, because they seek to align themselves with God's reality. In this way, the fundamental capacity for and obligation to self-criticism is built into the Christian faith itself. To this belongs that we refer to others in our own practice of faith, communicate with them, and thus create relative public spheres in which there is room for comparison, conflict, correction, deepening, or the combination of different conceptions of God.

(Dalferth 2000, 19).

But truth claims and public accountability are the standards of Christian religion, not a 'fit' to personal wishes and spiritual needs. As Dalferth notes, 'Precisely here lies the ineradicable contrast to the current culture of religious tinkering. Because they confess that they live out of the perception of God's effective presence, Christians are obliged to resist the contemporary tendencies toward the privatization of faith, subjectivist mysticism, and the dissolution of religion into psycho-technical media of self-discovery' (ibid., 22f.).

Thus, the authority that is overthrown by the authority of the 'self-empowered religious individual' is not to be understood too narrowly as the authority of the ecclesial magisterium. It may as well be the authority of Scripture or, as in Dalferth's case, the perceived authority of God himself (usually thought of as mediated through the Scriptures and, in some cases, through religious experience). The common denominator of those concepts is that the authority to 'determine what God is' lies *not* with the individual but with an 'outside authority.' This does not mean that the individual has to follow this authority blindly. As we have seen, Dalferth argues strongly in favour of critical reflection and public discourse. But it means that faith is discovered, taken on, accepted, or appropriated, not made or compiled.

2.3 Academic theology: critic of religious individualisation by default?

Although positions vary, of course, and not every theologian would agree with Dalferth's arguments in every respect, assessments of individual religion such as that offered by Dalferth are quite prevalent in Christian theology. There is a considerable amount of scepticism concerning common forms of individualised religion (Gebhardt et al. 2005, 139). Critical reviews of Beck's *God of One's Own* support this impression. Wilhelm Eppler, for example, argues that a 'sovereign self' that looks at religion in a purely utilitarian fashion disregards the truth

claims inherent in the Christian faith as revealed religion (Eppler 2009). And Gregor Maria Hoff remarks that any form of critical reflection on religion – the principal task of Christian theology – is made impossible if everybody believes only in his or her own God (Hoff 2008). Like Dalferth, Hoff highlights as the key problem the lack of any ‘outside’ dimension of individualised religion. The religious self’s own God is a completely internal one, a God that ‘looks confusingly similar to the self’ (Hoff 2008).

Individualised religion seems to be inherently problematic not only from the perspective of religious institutions but – albeit for other reasons – from the perspective of Christian theology as well. But this paper argues that, on a closer look, theology can provide theoretical tools to help understand individualised religion in a more nuanced way and without *a priori* questioning the truth claims of the Christian religion. In this way, the dichotomy of individualised versus institutional religion can be transformed into a tension that can be handled instead of ignored. For the most part, these tools are already at hand but have not yet been applied systematically to the question of individualised religion and its relation to religious institutions.

3 Conceptualising individual religion and its tension with institutional religion from a theological point of view

There are at least two lines of argument in current theology that take the view of the individual into account in some way. Both provide helpful insights but they also have their shortcomings, so it will be necessary to explore a third line of approach as well. In each case, how the issue of *religious doubt* is treated will serve as a test case for the relationship between questions of truth, authority, and individual appropriateness. Although an open approach toward doubt is not in itself a sign of individualised religion, the ways in which religious doubt is understood nevertheless reveal something about how individual faith is conceptualised in relation to institutional authority and intersubjective truth claims.⁵

5 For a more detailed reflection on the emergence of new perspectives on doubt in Christian theology, see Hoffmann 2017.

3.1 Rational justification of faith

The first approach has, in fact, already been introduced into our discussion by Dalferth's arguments. Theology aims for a rational justification of faith and thereby moves away from any idea of *unquestioned* obedience to Scripture, church teaching, and the like. Without rational insight, there can be no public accountability, and rational insight cannot be prescribed. The individual himself or herself may and must take on the responsibility for what he or she believes. So, in a sense, critical self-reflection of religion itself shifts the emphasis toward the individual. However, at the same time, the reason to which rational argumentation refers is not individual, in the sense of relying on a personal fit or a biographical dimension, but is, rather, universal, as rationality is generally understood to be. The reflective process is not aimed at the meaningfulness for the individual but at intersubjective accountability.

This move toward the individual but not, as it were, to the personal level is reflected in the role of doubt – whether it concerns certain key beliefs or practices or the religious option as a whole. Traditionally, because faith is closely linked to truth and salvation, the more certain it is, the better. Doubt is an unwanted and potentially dangerous phenomenon. But if rational insight is one of the key features of individual faith, doubt may play an important role in the process of clarifying one's position. Many theologians would argue that, at least from a rational point of view, faith never becomes unquestionably evident. It follows from this that doubt might even be an unavoidable presence, a constant factor in the 'conflict of [religious and nonreligious] interpretations'.⁶ On the other hand, this form of doubt does not stem from 'personal resonance' but from rational justification, an intellectual exercise, it is true, but not necessarily a markedly individual act. In principle, and at least in the context of the same cultural and intellectual heritage, a good argument would be a good argument for everyone.

3.2 Faith development

The biographical dimension of faith is more evident in the second line of approach: theories of faith development, such as James Fowler's 'stages of faith' (Fowler 1989). Here, individual faith is closely connected with biographical processes. It develops essentially in the context of the personal development from

⁶ For a prominent example of a theology based on this idea (the term 'conflict of interpretations' is derived from Paul Ricœur, but adapted to the theological setting), see Werbick 2005.

childhood to adolescence to adulthood. It is not necessary to look in depth at theories of faith development to see that a fundamental issue already arises in the concept of a ‘development’ (usually in one direction, with possible stagnation but no relapses) towards a ‘mature state’ of faith. Such a teleological understanding of ‘faith development’ tends to restrict the individualisation of religion to individual ways of finally reaching a predefined goal.⁷ Of course, a development of identity can be assumed in children and adolescents and that their faith also develops in this context. But both become problematic when they assume that although some may climb further up the ladder than others, (1) there is a place for everybody to stop, and (2) there is no going back, no climbing down the ladder again.⁸ Hartmut Rosa has maintained that, for many today, personal identity is no longer something they ‘develop’, ‘find’, or ‘achieve’ at some point in their lives but, rather, an ongoing process (Rosa 2002). The same applies to the religious dimension of that identity.

Thus, although faith development theories provide a helpful connection between biographically shaped individuality and religion, there are some heavy constraints to this connection. Our ‘test case’ – doubt – also points in this direction. In the context of faith development, doubt can easily be seen as an integral part of this development, marking the transition from one stage of faith to another. But its function tends to be limited to that of a catalyst for growth. The direction in which it will lead (ultimately, ‘higher up’) seems to be clear from the outset.

3.3 The processual character of religious identities and the role of faith and doubt

These – and possibly other – approaches pave the way for a concept of faith that pays more attention to the dimension of the individual. But in and of themselves, they don’t lead far enough to overcome our individual–institutional dichotomy. If theology wants to find a conceptual way to transform the dichotomy between individual and institutional religion into a tension, it needs to link faith and personal identity more closely. Two aspects are of particular relevance:

⁷ It is important to note that this does not imply that the later stages are ‘better’: Fowler and Dell 2006, 40.

⁸ Fowler speaks of the possibility of a ‘recapitulation’ of earlier stages of faith, but that is not a real relapse but a new working-through of an earlier stage that overcomes earlier blocks or unresolved issues (Fowler 1989, 289ff.).

1. What Taylor calls ‘personal resonance’ is mandatory. That a faith is said to be true or to lead to salvation (or both) is no longer a sufficient reason to engage in it, as long as it does not resonate with the individual. At the same time, Taylor’s distinction between the ‘manner’ and ‘matter’ of individualisation will help to counter the criticism of Dalferth and others that religious individualisation will lead to a completely ‘subjectivised’ religion.
2. Personal identity is to be seen more as an ongoing process, not as a sequence of developments that reaches its final destination in a ‘maturity of adulthood’ and that applies equally to its religious dimension. A once-and-for-all-stability may not even be the ideal anymore. Instead, the aim is an always-to-be-re-discovered ‘fit’ of all the elements of an ever-changing personal identity in ever-changing contexts. Applied to religion, it is not the stability of a definitive, doubtless faith that is looked for, but a personal faith that changes as the personal identity changes – without this identity ‘growing’ to a ‘definite’ or ‘mature’ state. Gebhardt et al. speak of religious ‘wanderers’ (instead of ‘pilgrims’, who are also on the way but are on their way to a clearly defined destination). Taylor takes up the image of being religiously ‘underway’ when he outlines ‘authentic spirituality’ as not aiming for a ‘position’ (of religious certainty, of attained truth, etc.) but as a spirituality of personal ‘quest’: ‘I have to discover my route to wholeness and spiritual depth. The focus is on the individual, and on his/her experience. Spirituality must speak to this experience. The basic mode of spiritual life is thus the quest’ (Taylor 2007, 507f.).

In this setting, doubt, like faith, can be seen as a companion during the whole process of identity formation and re-formation, being affected by, causing, alleviating, or speeding up the mechanisms involved. Doubt can also be understood as a signal that the ‘fit’ between the individual’s overall self-understanding and his or her religious beliefs and practices is lost. It therefore *can* be a catalyst but also a danger, a challenge, or a permanent feature of one’s religious identity. What is *not* the key factor here is what is frequently on the forefront of accounts of religious individualisation: a ‘deviance’ of the individual’s religious beliefs and practices from those of the institution – perhaps even a deviance that makes a point of being deviant. The notion of doubt shows that the process component of religious individualisation connected to identity processes refers not only to an individual appropriation of or deviation from institutionalised religion but also to the process character of individual religion itself: the doubting individual can question religious positions or practices of communities as well as his or her own religious perspective.

So much for doing justice to the individual side of our ‘dichotomy to be transformed into a tension’. What about what has been subsumed under the heading

of ‘institutional’: the role of the churches themselves, as well as questions of truth and rationality that have an inherently intersubjective dimension and, consequently, are in danger of marginalisation in the context of ‘one’s own God’? Critics aren’t wrong to claim that if ‘I determine what God is’ in a sense that excludes all rational justification or reference to already established religious reflection then it is highly questionable if the thus-determined God is anything more than a projection of my wishes, needs, and ideals. As noted earlier, Taylor’s distinction between the ‘manner’ and the ‘matter’ of what he calls ‘subjectivation’ can be used to maintain the tension here instead of resolving it in any one direction. Taylor contends that it is not only possible but necessary to orient one’s identity toward perspectives or values that don’t begin and end within the individual: ‘I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. But to bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what matters’ (Taylor 2003, 40). A similar argument is made by Rosa; the ‘turning inward’ of the individual only works as long as it is not complete: ‘As long as a subject is able to ontologise any part of his or her identity (more *discovering* than *choosing* it, as it were), and defends this part against all opposition, a highly individualised identity can be developed, maintained and articulated’ (Rosa 2002, 290, emphasis in original). Identity problems don’t arise because the individual fails to find definite answers to all the questions he or she asks in the course of this development. The identity enters into a crisis when those questions can’t even be *asked* anymore because a radicalised self-reference no longer accepts any values as more than arbitrary choices – a subjectivation of manner *and* content, as Taylor would call it.

From a theological point of view, this form of connecting individual religion and personal identity allows for a subtler theological understanding of religious individualisation. There is no need to reject it *a priori*, implying that all individualisation equals some sort of self-sufficient, self-centred ‘wellness-religion’. Nor has theology to refrain from any critical assessment for the sake of ‘personal resonance’, for example, with regard to the possibly projective character of ‘one’s own God’.

4 Conclusions and consequences

I have argued that theology can occupy something of a mediating position between individual and institutional religion. Usually, individual religion tends to ignore or outright reject the claims of truth and authority that institutional religion raises, whereas institutional religion tends to be critical of ‘completely subjective’ individualised religion. The conceptual possibilities for the integration of

individual perspectives into the basic orientation of the main Christian churches in Germany are still limited. Theology offers some initial approaches towards the connecting of individual and institutional perspectives that can be used as starting points for a 'mediation' between the two. A basis for further development is the notion that faith and doubt are intimately connected with the shaping and reshaping of personal identity, but it does not follow that one has to completely abandon claims of intersubjective rationality and the possibility for truth. Religious beliefs and practices depend on a 'personal resonance' from the side of the individual, and the distinction between 'manner' and 'matter' of individualisation makes an 'outside grounding' of this personal resonance conceivable.

This by no means implies that the tension between individual and institutional religion can easily be resolved. One could rather argue that it can in this way be described more clearly and therefore recognised as a tension. Theology has to play its part as a medium for critical self-reflection of religion in both directions. Individual religion must, for example, face questions about the projective character of a 'God of one's own'. Institutional religion has yet to fully realise that (1) 'faith' can no longer be conceived of as some objective 'state' defined by church authority that is to be attained and maintained by church members, and that (2) 'personal resonance' and a connectedness with personal identity must shape any contemporary theology of faith (and doubt).

What might be the consequences for both sides of the 'tension'? Here one can only speculate. On the side of individual religion, the possible effects of such a theological approach are particularly difficult to determine. They will depend on, among other factors, a certain willingness of the individual to reflect on and rationally question his or her religious beliefs and practices (otherwise, the concept of 'doubt' is also difficult to apply).

Possible consequences may more easily be envisaged on the side of the institution. The connection of faith, doubt, and identity accounts for individualised religion within a theological framework that is compatible with the core beliefs of the institution. Therefore, it can offer an interpretive approach to the tension between institutional religion and individualised religion within the institution. The individual approaches to, appropriations of, and deviances from the institutional religion would no longer have to be handled in an 'as-if mode'. Instead, they could be interpreted as integral parts of the processual character of lived individual religion. This might be characterised as some sort of 'reinstitutionalisation' of individual religion – if the term is used in line with the overall thrust of the present paper, that is, as referring more to discursive changes than to empirical data. Perhaps a term such as 'institutional integration of individualised religion' would be more appropriate.

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Michael Nijhawan

Constructing a genuine religious character: the impact of the asylum court on the Ahmadiyya community in Germany

1 Introduction

In late November 2014, German investigative reporters for *Der Spiegel*, in collaboration with the televised magazine *Report Mainz*, published a feature about the Ahmadiyya community, alleging that mosque-based organisations in charge of membership registries demanded disproportionately high fees from their newcomers in exchange for certificates needed in court hearings. Such certificates, aside from verifying membership in good standing, are also used to attest the holder's involvement in religious practices. Ahmadi asylum seekers who initially rely on state support, it was claimed in the report, were exposed to an 'extraction scheme' that increased the vulnerability of refugees in an already volatile situation. Although community representatives vigorously rejected the claim that there was any such systematic abuse of asylum seekers, and indeed the reporters made little effort to dig deeper and understand the organisational structures of the group, the state agency for refugees and asylum claims (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF)) launched an official investigation, questioning the legitimacy of the documents in asylum hearings.

It appears that judges in the administrative courts were already sceptical about the credibility of the certificates. In one of my interviews with asylum adjudicators that accompanied my ethnographic work with Sikh and Ahmadiyya communities in Frankfurt and Toronto between 2003–2013 (Nijhawan 2016), a

Note: This is a fully revised and abbreviated version of an earlier published chapter titled 'The Radiating Effect of the Asylum Court on Religion' which originally appeared in my book *The Precarious Diasporas of Sikh and Ahmadiyya Generations*, published by Palgrave Macmillan (Nijhawan 2016). The *German Research Council* (SFB 619) as well as the *Canadian Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences* provided generous support for this project in addition to minor grants from the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University. I use pseudonyms throughout this chapter to refer to all of my research participants. A draft of this paper was presented at the conference "Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective" that was held in Eisenach from June 27-30, 2017. I would like to express my gratitude to Ishita Banerjee, Jan Bremmer, Vasudha Dalmia, Saurabh Dube, Martin Fuchs, Anne Murphy, Kumkum Sangari and Jörg Rüpke for their constructive feedback at this occasion. I also thank Bernd-Christian Otto for his editorial queries and for guiding me through the final production stages.

judge alerted me to this issue, mentioning that the courts explicitly require claimants to document a ‘genuine religious character’ or *religiöse Prägung*. What lurks in the background is the status of Ahmadis as a precarious minority being subjected to religious persecution, a category that has been recognised in the legal system as constituting a reasonable ground for admission. Meanwhile, it appears that the files have become more of a negotiating piece within a larger communicative context between lawmakers, individuals, and religious organisations. Ruminating about the various implications of the certificates, the possibility that demands are made in exchange for a good report, the gendered inequalities that come to the fore, and the role of lawyers who sometimes argue for and other times against the recognition of religious membership through the certificates, the judge described the situation as truly paradoxical: ‘It is simply not enough that a person is in some way persecuted; he must be persecuted on the basis of his Ahmadi religion (*er muss ja wegen seiner ahmadischen Religion verfolgt worden sein*) and the Ahmadi religion has to be of personal importance. He has to be, like they say it, a person with a religious personality. [...] And this is why, besides verifying what had really happened, we always need to check how it is with his religiosity, is he at all devoted? To begin with, is he a member at all? That’s why we have the certificate; but then we have to ask, is he an active member, is he actively engaged? It is a huge problem; of course you cannot look right into his heart (*sie können ihm ja nicht ins Herz rein gucken*)’.

We can already gather from this opening statement that legal processes through which particular categorisations of religious character are validated during asylum adjudications are not only based on the credibility of individual claims. Rather, they also rely on the inquisitive methods of bureaucratic and judicial fact-finding, which in turn are grounded on problematic assumptions about inner states of religiosity and normative religious practices, as well as specific cultural assumptions about what constitutes a credible narrative of persecution. Deliberations between different social actors on these issues have significant ramifications that point beyond the immediate issue of granting someone asylum.

The requirement of an authentic narrative for establishing religious character is neither innocent nor accidental to the system of refugee adjudication which, viewed from a comparative perspective, can take the form of ‘religious trials’ (Kagan 2010, Good 2013).¹ Bearing in mind that there is a broader context for such interrogations of migrants’ religious sincerity and individuality, I want to examine the processes through which religious subjects and categories of

¹ See Kagan 2010, who suggests this terminology in his assessment of refugee boards in international contexts.

religious difference are governed in liberal democracies. To be more specific, I argue that assumptions about the inner sphere of personally held religious faith as encountered above, point directly to how judicial authority, and the law more generally speaking, informs concepts of individual religious choice, interpretation, practice, and understandings of religious character as they circulate in the public realm. The implications of refugee adjudication are manifold in this respect and have long-term effects on the relationship between governments, courts, and society.

The processes through which methods of inquiry, interpretive languages and normative schemes are negotiated and translated between the legal, political and social fields are never static. In fact, the practices constituting these fields undergo rapid changes themselves, with each influx of refugees posing new challenges to the system and creating political pressure on the judiciary accompanying intense social contestations, processes we can witness all over Europe in recent years. Dagmar Soennecken (2009) argues that, certainly when one considers the post-Second World War history of German asylum law, the balance between political and judicial power has shifted over time, with the lower courts gradually taking on the role of silent lawmakers.² It is particularly important to consider the role of the administrative courts, because the large bulk of refugee determinations occur here through the appeal process. Even though scholars have singled out the higher level and constitutional courts as having the most decisive impact on legislative reform in the context of immigration (and religion), the role of the asylum courts is relevant due to the fact that in these courtrooms adjudicators, claimants, and various experts and community members gather routinely to negotiate aspects of social and cultural citizenship. Moreover, the asylum courts provide us with more in-depth perspectives into how norm-setting procedures around legitimate claims to protection from religious persecution work on a day-to-day basis. It is sociologically imperative here to examine how political, judicial, and social fields are framed and become regulative of conduct and practice over time.

Marc Galanter (1983, 120) argues that surrounding even the most authoritative norms there is a great deal of indeterminacy and ambiguity as to how they impact different levels of social practice. Courts can convey 'regulatory endowments' through the modes of rationality that the court rulings establish (thinking about specific 'norms, procedures, structures, rationalizations') and simultaneously by means of 'explicit authorizations and immunities conferred by the

² Whereas most authors are concerned with the growth of judicial power with regard to the realm of political decision-making and legislative change, Soennecken is instead placing the emphasis on 'judicialization from within', which relates to how decision-makers adopt court-like procedures and rationalisations within e.g. bureaucratic structures.

courts (and the law) on an immense variety of regulatory settings' (ibid., 122). If regulatory endowments work in direct as well as indirect ways, it can surely be asked how normative ideas on religious belief and practice that are certified or invested with authorised truth claims in the courts impact on other areas of social action. When judges deliberate on religious practices in the court room, draw on legal guidelines from higher order rulings, hear witness experts, and use their own cultural reasoning to demarcate lines between people's behaviour, they not only produce legal texts that legitimate status issues but they also communicate norms and expectations that are heard and responded to by the community. Not every individual will be affected by it, yet 'religious individualisation' as a process is certainly at stake in a context in which modern law, and more precisely those occupying positions of judicial authority, make decisions that impinge on the normative rendering of individual representations of religious behaviour.

It would perhaps be exaggerated to claim that the law leads to the 'neo-traditionalisation of religion', a topic with which we have framed this section of the publication. Yet what should surface from my discussion below is an answer to the question of how terms such as 'deviance', 'tradition', and 'religious character' are rendered meaningful and become reified within particular constellations of modern judicial power. While difficult to show, these are vital issues when attempting to understand the specific effects that refugee determination processes have had on the Ahmadiyya community in Frankfurt. We can observe here how, over a period of three decades, the assessment of being a genuine refugee (of being genuinely injured in the way defined by asylum law) has become intricately linked to the question of how to be a genuine Ahmadi, that is, of being recognised in one's religious character so that the former becomes intelligible to adjudicators, who have to decide whether or not a higher risk of being persecuted is incurred.

I have organised my discussion under four rubrics. I begin with a brief normative history of the asylum court and clarify the particular role Ahmadiyya cases have had on legal clarifications of religious persecution. I then consider the problem of credibility in asylum claims and elaborate on how judges 'as final arbiters of credibility' (Good 2009) approach the ambiguity of validation (Habermas 1992). Credibility is probably the most commonly referenced topic in recent anthropological studies, which can be consulted for comparative insights. I am specifically interested in the role of intuitive knowledge (or 'gut feeling') and the use of 'imagined identifications' (Kelly 2012, 764) that characterise credibility assessments that are informed by attitudes of either scepticism or benevolence. A third section discusses the role of the judge as cultural arbiter. Here, we encounter a profound translation problem, for it is through specific rationalisations of religious and cultural difference that those seeking refuge are assessed. The tendency

is to make individual motivations transparent, yet claimants are also exposed as cultural others in this process, allegedly lacking certain traits that would make them fall in line with secular values. As the normative underwriting of judicial power is now widely debated in the literature with regard to the religion/secularism binary, the fourth and major section of the chapter examines how, within refugee legislation in international and domestic realms, a particular interpretation of Ahmadi religious character is beginning to surface. Judges not only put credibility on trial and establish narratives as legal fact, they also continuously write the meanings of religion and religiosity into legal texts. I am interested here in how to understand this process from two specific angles. First, as Didier Fassin (2013, 48) recognises in contexts of trauma assessments in the courts, we have recently witnessed a ‘reconfiguration of the perimeter of persecution to include the intimate’, which is most obvious in the importance given to psychiatric documents certifying PTSD and the role played by expert witnesses, such as anthropologists, speaking about atrocities in war-torn countries (see also Good 2009). I argue that a parallel resignification of religiosity occurs, which is recognised as a fluid zone stretching across a ‘core area’ of privately held belief and ‘peripheral regions’ of outwardly expressed behaviour. The courts are in need of certainty and clarity so that the legal process of granting Ahmadi asylum can make sense. Hence, in order to validate acts of religious persecution, it becomes imperative for the courts to establish a relationship between subjectively expressed belief and observed practice based on cultural assumptions of what counts as reasonable or normal expressions of religiosity. The consequences of such assumptions are particularly drastic when collectives such as the Ahmadiyya community bear the mark of either too little or too much religion in current immigration discourses. It is this contemporary constellation of religious individualisation and/or de-individualisation that this chapter interrogates.

2 Ahmadi refugees and the role of the activist court in the light of art. 16 GG

In Germany, asylum law carries a specific historical legacy. Art.16 GG (*Grundgesetz*, ‘constitutional law’) which values generosity over scepticism in the enactment of asylum rights was once a pillar of German post-war democratisation, and one of the foundational constitutional principles upon which part of the moral legitimacy of the new federal republic was seen to rest. Tellingly, it was not the result of a law imposed by Allied Forces but the consequence of a will for atonement that the drafters of the constitution saw as reintroducing dignity into

the law (Soennecken 2009, 121).³ Soennecken observes that the growth of judicial power in the field of asylum did not flow directly from this constitutional principle itself. In fact, it was first ignored when Germany dealt with millions of displaced ethnic Germans – the so-called *Vertriebenen-Deutsche* – in the post-War period. In reality, it only became operative decades later, in the early 1980s, when the then prevalent ethnonational concept of German citizenship was challenged by postcolonial migrations and new refugee movements. It was during this period that new administrative procedures to fully implement Art.16 GG enabled lower courts to acquire the role of silent lawmakers (*ibid.*, 114). The emerging significance of asylum courts was directly related to (1) the lack of political vision with regard to de-facto immigration under a then-dominant guestworker paradigm and (2) the conspicuous ‘legislative silence’ (*ibid.*, 104) on Germany’s asylum policy, which until the major constitutional amendment of Art.16 GG in 1996, left it to the judicial system to shape policy surrounding the refugee question. Post-1980 Ahmadi refugees arrived in precisely this period during which administrative courts acquired the role of activist courts. Ahmadis also feature in the two landmark cases ruled on by the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht* hence BVerfG) in the 1980s, at a time when the government began to dejudicialise the refugee assessment procedure through enhanced bureaucratisation (*ibid.*, 128).⁴ Arguably, the BVerfG ruling to recognise Ahmadis as a persecuted group in need of state protection played a major role. This legal recognition did not imply, however, that asylum status would be granted automatically. Rather, the higher courts specified procedures for establishing the critical threshold of persecution. Much of the ‘fine print’ of the ruling was concerned with risk assessments of inner and outer forums of religious practice. The gradual growth of judicial power in the asylum courts was partly a consequence of the newly required fact-finding missions, a scenario for which the Ahmadiyya continued to provide an important point of reference as time went on.⁵

Ahmadis continue to be systematically marginalised in much of the Muslim world. The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamat, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908), entered the public sphere claiming prophetic qualities, a claim that is still largely rejected by dominant Sunni groups. Discrimination of Ahmadis must also be read within the specific historical context of state-formation in Pakistan, that is, in a context in which Ahmadis, some of whom were politically influential

³ For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Joppke 1999.

⁴ Reference here is to BVerfG 54, 341 (1980) and BVerfG 76, 143 (1987), the two rulings that clarified the recognition of religious persecution under art. 16GG (see also Soennecken 2009, 130).

⁵ The administrative courts have been required to produce detailed evidence to evaluate group persecution status and to assess the risk for individuals to be subject to human rights violations.

leaders and members of the judiciary, became scapegoats in a political power struggle that shifted the country away from its secular constitution. Discrimination against the Ahmadiyya community, pejoratively labelled the ‘Qadiani sect’ after the place where the movement began, was historically motivated by contentions between political factions and religious organisations that date back to the pre-Partition period and the then central political role of the Ahmadiyya movement (van der Linden 2008). It was under Mirza Mahmud Ahmad and during the Kashmir crisis in the 1930s, argues Adil Khan (2015, 126), that the movement gradually shifted its emphasis from the ‘otherworldliness of Ghulam Ahmad’s Sufi metaphysics’ to a broader ‘populist approach that offered this-worldly gains for average Indian Muslims’. Political scientists argue that the volatile institutions and political mobilisations of the post-Partition years created the peculiar conditions for Ahmadis to assume the role of the nation’s enemy (Iqtidar 2012). In addition to Islamist parties, which had as their rationale the rejection of ‘continuous prophecy’ in Ahmadiyya doctrine (Friedmann 1989), parties far removed from Islamism adopted the idea of Ahmadis as deviant others or delegitimised Muslims. In the period between 1974 and 1984, the ‘Ahmadiyya question’ gained political ascendancy, with the consequence, argues Sadia Saeed (2007, 146), that Ahmadis were disciplined into denouncing Islamic affiliation and in that sense served as the decisive figures in a process of redefining the relationship between state and religion. Boundaries ‘between the centre and the periphery, public and private, lawful and unlawful [...] were debated, re-drawn, and re-inscribed in the nationalist narrative’ (ibid., 146). These processes of sanctioning Ahmadis were also supported by the socialist government under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto until it was overthrown by Zia al-Haq’s regime, which authored the 1984 anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance. Since then, it has become de facto illegal for Ahmadis to claim official status as belonging to a Muslim religious organisation and to practice ordinary religious lives in Pakistan. ‘Posing’ as Muslims, as the constitutional amendment reads, is sanctioned with up to three years in prison. Due to the widespread violence and everyday forms of social discrimination, the community decided to move its headquarters to London.⁶ The exiling of the spiritual successor or khalifa furthered the transnationalisation of a religious movement that was initially limited to the proselytising activities of its missionaries. As I demonstrate elsewhere (Nijhawan 2016, 233–74), this transnationalisation resulted in a profound organisational restructuring and institutionalisation of mosque-based

⁶ As Adil Hussain Khan (2005, 165) points out, ‘Ahmadis often compare the story of [the khalifa’s] escape from Pakistan [in 1984] to the *hijra* (emigration) of the Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Medina’.

membership groups from the youth to the elderly, and further accelerated the movement of Ahmadi refugees to the UK, Germany, Canada, the United States and other countries. Although I could not acquire the exact figures, there is no doubt that the demographic of the community or Jamat in the Frankfurt region is disproportionately high in refugees admitted from Pakistan. This has forged a negative public image and social stigma that the community is still fighting to shake off.

In the autumn of 2008, I conducted a number of in-depth interviews with legal adjudicators in the Rhein-Main metropolitan area, among them senior judges of an administrative court who had served there for several decades. The two judges I reference in this section were self-declared liberal humanists and openly critical of revisionist political tendencies in the field of refugee rights. As a result, they called for an activist role for the judiciary. Judge A remembered vividly that when he joined the asylum chamber in 1983, five years after the state decentralised the asylum system by appointing decision makers and a state representative to defend the governments' interest in the administrative courts, they were 'suddenly faced' with 500 to 600 cases of Sikh and Ahmadi asylum seekers per year. This volume would rise in subsequent years before subsiding to 'less conspicuous' numbers during the mid-1990s. In procedural terms, the administrative courts now consisted of specific chambers in which judges presided over asylum cases from a particular country.⁷ They heard appeal cases which, because of the frequent use of the 'manifestly unfounded' category used in first hearings, essentially meant they were adjudicating the large majority of actual refugee claims. When Judge A began his work on Ahmadi cases, it took him almost two years to complete the 'necessary background research', a fact, he admits, which gradually led to 'an intense preoccupation with Ahmadis and Ahmadiyyat' beyond his work in the courtroom. In our conversation, he mentioned the largely dismissive attitude within society and the judiciary and described how in his own chamber the judges felt like protectors of constitutional rights in a political climate that rendered human rights vulnerable to opportunistic projects aimed at gaining electoral votes by calls to curb immigration. Seen from the perspective of the judiciary, their role was to be affirmative

⁷ It was assumed that in the process of gradually acquiring the necessary (legal, contextual and cultural) 'background knowledge', the judges would be in a better position to function as a legal bulwark against fraudulent claims of persecution whilst identifying those who deserved admission.

of the substance of asylum as historically manifest in specific institutionalised forms and practices.⁸

The judges' role is, of course, not adequately addressed by mere reference to the court's defiant stance in a context of rising anti-immigrant sentiments, a situation that we face once more today. Since I have just indicated that administrative courts have been exclusively focused on specific cases, the question of judicial power more generally must be looked at in relation to this country-specific pre-occupation. We have a courtroom here that over more than three decades has functioned as a meeting ground for community, government and judiciary; and so the issue, I think, points beyond case law and the intricacies of asylum legislation. As the subsequent discussion demonstrates, discourses on individual and human rights and cultural and religious difference emerge in this scenario as socially ambiguous and politically consequential. Adjudicating Ahmadis who were subjected to religious persecution necessarily invokes assessments and cultural translations of the inherent religious character of the entire community claiming protection. This is where I want to shift the attention: we can see that over a longer period of time, the court's centrifugal impact is felt in the arena of institutional religion and in public discourses on social integration and religious otherness.

3 The threshold of credibility: semantic indeterminacy and judicial authority

There is little doubt among those working on asylum law that credibility assessments have formed the core of the judicial process of refugee determination. The language of credibility has become pervasive in the court room and among the public at large, be it in response to representations of mass migration and boat refugees or to accounts of forged narratives of persecution that, as Fassin (2013, 50–2) demonstrates, have elicited a generalised sense of deep suspicion that intersects with an already present inherent culture of suspicion in the state bureaucracy.⁹ In asylum hearings in which trauma narratives are the essential focus, the judges' problem of dealing with the 'known unknowns' has acquired

⁸ Fassin (2013, 43) speaks of a 'dual historiographical and semantic legacy' in reference to the marginal space occupied by asylum law and 'the ambivalence of hospitality, [as] always in danger of hostility'.

⁹ See Suketu Mehta's 'The Asylum Seeker' in the *New Yorker*, which suggests the 'banality of deception' in asylum claims as a common trope (cited in Fassin 2013, 51f.).

some attention (Kelly 2012, 765) and anthropologists have looked at the broader implications of the certification and narrativisation of endured suffering (Fassin and d'Halluin 2007; McKinney 2007; Fassin and Rechtman 2009). In international contexts of adjudicating refugee claims, the reference to such credibility assessments (also known as 'refugee status determination' or RSD) is particularly contentious. Kagan (2010) shows that in scenarios of religious persecution, refugee boards and local courts engage in refugee status determination to make categorical distinctions between legitimate refugees and so-called religious impostors. As he notes, 'when asylum adjudicators set out to decide whether to accept such refugee claims, they can quickly find themselves administering a process akin to a religious trial' (ibid., 1181).¹⁰ Even if such trials find a claimant's account trustworthy with regard to the reported external facts, credibility still matters as remaining doubts over the 'internal coherence', a category often used in asylum hearings, can lead to dismissal. Once established as legal facts in court hearings, credibility assessments are unlikely to be questioned and are usually 'not subject to rigorous appellate review' (ibid., 1184). In Germany, the first hearings are administered by the *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF). Considering the many factors that constrain the reliability of admission processes, those involved in asylum hearings are faced with a high degree of arbitrariness and with contradictory decisions insofar as favourable outcomes are not only contingent on the inquisitive strategies deployed by the adjudicators but also on the systematic flaws and errors in the bureaucracies themselves. As Bohmer and Shuman (2007, 603) aptly put it, 'contradiction is at the root of the production of ignorance' in asylum hearings, which they consider to be built not on actual fact-finding procedures but on interrogation techniques that have the sole intention of deterring 'unworthy applicants' (ibid., 604). Factoring in the broader institutional parameters that structure these assessments and the amount of discretion given to first decision makers, it seems inevitable that assessments of credibility and sincerity form epistemologically and morally vexed grounds of decision making.¹¹

10 Kagan (ibid. 1185f.) refers to several court decisions in the United States where similar issues came to the fore.

11 Kagan points out: 'In real life, credibility assessment involves many more factors, including not just the answers but also the questions, the way the questions are asked, and the environment in which they are asked. Even vague and incoherent testimony may not definitively indicate fraud, because cultural barriers, language and interpretation problems, mental health issues, and the general limitations of human memory and communication can produce honest testimony that nevertheless appears superficially incredible' (ibid., 1185).

The judges I interviewed recognised credibility as a major problem.¹² Judge B rationalised the judges' dilemma by highlighting the uncertainties faced in making a judgment. Responding to my question about how he would defend the exceptionally generous handling of asylum cases in his own chamber, he pointed to the matter of credibility and how he and his colleagues, after detailed interviewing and fact checking, would often 'give the claimant the benefit of doubt'. Though he admitted a degree of naïveté in some such instances of credibility checks, he felt his generosity to be morally justified to prevent unjust deportations. The difficulty is in establishing the exact threshold at which 'an asylum-relevant level' of persecution is reached, which can vary greatly depending on how the judiciary defines the critical threshold. He further discussed what in the German legal jargon are referred to as exaggerated accounts (*gesteigertes Hervorbringen*) and noted how such assessments become contingent on the judges' own predispositions. One judge might recognise cumulative acts of discrimination as fulfilling the criteria of human rights violations, whereas another would consider the same circumstances as *indirect* persecution and thus an unsubstantiated claim. To counter legal ambiguity, both judges reemphasised their normative interpretation of Art. 16 GG and the moral obligation to uphold the right to asylum, which required adaptation to changing legal and political guidelines. For instance, interview techniques were adapted to fit the new rulings by upper level courts, especially the BVerfG 1994 decision to withdraw the status of group persecution for Ahmadis. As Judge B explained, they therefore avoided granting or withholding group persecution status and instead consistently assessed the risk potential in individual cases, even if that slowed down the process considerably.¹³

Credibility assessments depend on interview and protocol technique as well as on the judges' willingness and capacity to grant an appellant the opportunity to provide as much contextual detail as they can (through follow-up questions when deemed necessary) to bolster a claim. Much of this process depends on the willingness of the judge to interpret the adequacy of descriptions and to identify discrepancies in linguistic competency as cultural barriers and educational deficits rather than inconsistencies in internal credibility. Language matters profoundly in such circumstances of semantic indeterminacy. Linguistic anthropologists have long

¹² Judge K traces the history of credibility issues to the situation German courts faced when having to assess conscientious objectors to military service in the past.

¹³ Political pressure by the government to dissuade courts from implementing such statutes of group persecution was undeniably also a factor. Judge A points out that the state representative (*Bundesbeauftragte*) was routinely appealing the chamber's decisions. This is notwithstanding the fact that according to the UN human rights conventions, Ahmadis clearly fulfill several criteria that would justify group-based claims.

recognised this fact and looked at asylum hearings as spaces of meaning-making, which Jacquemet (2013, 203) appropriately terms ‘transidiomatic environments’ designed to deal with ‘deterritorialized speakers and their multiple languages’. There are a wide range of denotational and indexical practices through which speaking subjects are rendered credible and culturally intelligible in asylum courts. Jan Blommaert (2009) shows in a case study of Rwandan refugees how qualities such as multilingual competency that attests to a social biography of multiple migrations across fluid borders spaces is, in the courtroom, judged from a standard of normed nation-ness. An individual’s heterodox articulation of identity here becomes ‘indexical of certain political and historical positions, defined from within the synchronic universe of meanings, social categories, and attributive patterns in which his interlocutors operated’ (ibid., 416). We need to pay attention to these legal categorisations of subjects seeking refugee status as either ‘in or outside normalcy’ (ibid., 421), as they attest to the way in which cultural differences, language ideologies, and religious practices are evaluated, and in the context of which we find that judges sometimes express a profound sense of unease when having to make calls based on a high degree of intuition.

How should we read this sense of unease when intuition or gut feeling has to be admitted? The semantic and pragmatic features of asylum adjudication do clash here with an evidence-based understanding of the law and ideal-type form of justice. Getting access to objective facts is notoriously difficult. The inherent instability of the process seems to also result from the tension between legal norms and what Judge B refers to as ideological persuasion.¹⁴ This emphasis on persuasion points beyond ideological differences in the judiciary and speaks directly to the structure of judgments in asylum courts. Werner Hamacher (2006, 678) sees such dilemmas around how to grant human rights claims as a foundational crisis in law. A crisis of judgment becomes manifest with each realisation that the specific remoteness of life-worlds that judges have to grapple with in their reasoning (and which implicitly they have to translate into codified rights when making credibility assessments) produces doubts about the kind of justice being served. It further undermines confidence in the authority exercised and emerges as a nagging doubt for the judge arguing from a value-rational position. They find themselves in a conundrum – perhaps not a moral conundrum per se (as they can preserve moral integrity by granting the claimant the benefit of doubt)

¹⁴ Good (2009, 53) also pays attention to gut feelings in suggesting that ‘many credibility decisions rested on “gut feelings”, the application of common sense, or recourse to personal experience’.

but a conundrum that throws into question the very premises (possibilities and impossibilities) of adjudicating (asylum) law under present political conditions.

The conundrum the judges encounter is not entirely remedied by expanding the zone of indecision to maintain moral integrity. Hamacher (*ibid.*, 686) carves out the idea of an simultaneous activation and inactivation in the process of granting rights (such as human rights) that, when (partially) suspended, could restore something of the humanity of those *having to* call upon such rights under particular circumstances – which for him of course becomes an *aporia* for modern law itself.¹⁵ Yet, in the asylum courts it is still required that those seeking protection under changing legal frameworks must prove that they have been affected by severe or cumulative effects of state-condoned violence as a consequence of the way in which their religious identity as Ahmadi is publicly conveyed.

This is a key point. It is because of this crucial issue of enacted religious character that the courts have had to set new guidelines for courtroom interviewing. In the five cases of Ahmadi appellants reviewed by a ruling of the UK Upper Tribunal in 2012, it was affirmed that in order to establish indisputable credibility, asylum seekers have to demonstrate the personal threats they faced beyond proof of identity as Ahmadi. So the burden to prove the seriousness of the violation of the right to expressing oneself as a religious persona always remains on the claimant and, implicitly, on the judges' 'inquisitorial methods' (Soennecken 2009, 106) and wilful decisions.¹⁶ For example, when Judge A spoke about the role of 'justification patterns' in Ahmadi cases, he was quick to differentiate between the recurrent patterns of an older generation ('they say we won't leave our home country unless we are under extreme threats') and those of the younger generation ('they say they are being prevented from educational success and produce documents that indeed demonstrate that they couldn't take an exam or were denied admission'). Despite the fact that these accounts assume the form of narrative patterns (thus not individually specific texts), for the judge it does

15 Hamacher suggests that 'political, anthropological, and theological authorities who claim to be the advocates of human rights would serve the justice, freedom and dignity of man best by expanding the zones of their indecision and by bringing about the circumstances in which none of their rights need ever be appealed to – circumstances in which the right not to need and not to use rights could be exercised without any limits' (*ibid.*, 690).

16 Soennecken (2009, 106) argues that historically, judges in administrative courts were rather deferential to the state bureaucracy. In the post-World War II period we witnessed a fundamental change to this attitude. Judges at this level used an 'inquisitorial principle, which encouraged them to be more investigative than their North American counterparts. [...] German administrative law judges who adjudicate refugee claims are required by law to apply inquisitorial principles, in contradiction to assumptions about deference'.

not altogether undermine their credibility.¹⁷ Even under current legal guidelines, judges are being asked to put themselves in the shoes of an ideal-type social actor who is always also imagined as a particular kind of culturally shaped *individual*. Tobias Kelly argues that, ‘judges walk a line between accepting that you may not know many things about a claimant and assuming that they may be hiding something from you’ and that the problem here is not only the difficulty of reading motivation but also of imaginary identification that stipulates ‘an image of the “rational man”’ (Kelly 2013, 765). But I argue that it is not just the assumption of rationality that matters, it is also how a particular political and cultural context is read as capable of instigating forms of affect. While there are precautions in the legal tradition against taking imaginative leaps that might betray a class bias, it is still prudent to ask how cultural contexts are accounted for, especially if the situation is politically volatile and culturally complex.

4 The judge as cultural arbiter

In a context in which judges deliberate on the credibility of asylum claims from a single group over a period that spans a generation, it is worthwhile considering what broader cultural implications such an engagement has. The Rhein-Main metropolitan area as the local context for the social interactions between state, courts, and communities was not arbitrarily chosen for this study. The administrative court in question played a leading role in documenting the situation of Ahmadis and provided extensive reference material for other courts in the country as well as bureaucrats making decisions about safe third-country regulations. Moreover, we find here the largest concentration of Ahmadiyya institutions and mosques in Germany, including the national headquarters, missionary schools, media and press outlets, and a locally established network of institutional links between community representatives and municipalities that operate on multiple levels of social and educational engagement. Notably, the first mosque-disputes unfolded in this region too, with segments of the local population aggressively mobilizing against the founding of new Ahmadiyya mosques in cities such as Schlüchtern or

¹⁷ Kagan (2010, 1183) notes, ‘the most challenging cases are those that rely extensively on affording asylum seekers the benefit of the doubt because of the lack of corroborating or contradictory evidence. In these cases, adjudicators assess credibility mainly by analyzing the applicant’s testimony in reference only to itself, looking for consistency, detail, vagueness, and contradictions, among other factors. This process is sometimes referred to as internal credibility assessment’.

Wiesbaden.¹⁸ The judges interviewed for this research are social actors within this broader social field and, importantly, are also active participants in civil society where they have supported social integration efforts and even initiated cultural exchange groups. Their discourse on the religious minority of Ahmadiyyat is accordingly shaped by these experiences and reflects local events that relate to the social integration of the community combined with all the associated debates over cultural assimilation that have taken place over the years in the public.

In the judges' discourse there are many explicit references to social and cultural features that carve out a distinct representation of Ahmadis as religious subjects. Judge A emphasised more than the others the degree of his background knowledge about the community, based on his efforts to gain a first-hand experience of the political situation in Pakistan. In order to acquire this experience, he travelled together with Ahmadi acquaintances to the country and did not shy away from participating in the Jamat's community events and activities in his own city. Using the language of participant observation, he told me how his social engagements and actions as a decision-maker were always 'guided by an interpretive approach' (*von einem Verstehensansatz her geleitet*). In longer narratives in which he described various situations in which he personally witnessed threats against Ahmadis, he gestured towards his development of an 'intuitive feeling' for their situation which served him in better evaluating the truth-claims made in the court room. In the judges' accounts, which I can only briefly sketch here, an important distinction was made, however, between being a witness to the religious persecution of Ahmadis and becoming a 'cultural sympathiser'. Whereas personal engagement with the community was seen as supporting the role of the activist judge, opinions about existing cultural cleavages between liberal law and the religious normative order remained quite profound. Remarks on the cultural and religious otherness of Ahmadis went beyond the repertoire of integration problems that one often encounters in the public realm. They specifically concerned the 'fatalistic attitude' displayed by Ahmadis, specifically the idea that Ahmadis have a desire and duty to missionize (*sie haben ein Sendungsbewusstsein*) and that they would passively accept their own victimisation. Concepts evoked in the judges' comments, such as the 'lack of critical self-inspection', 'fatalism', 'obedience to religious authority', 'proselytising consciousness' or 'living in the enclave society' (*in Parallelstrukturen leben*) are all pervasive tropes in the wider public debate about the community and talking points for critics of Islam. The judges' accounts – despite unambiguously rejecting any form of right-wing populism – often dovetail

18 A detailed discussion of these contexts and the issue of mosque opposition can be found in Nijhawan (2016, 153–90)

with this discourse, such as when Judge A separates the cultural and political conditions that subject Ahmadis to violence (Pakistan persecuting a minority) and the cultural responses by Ahmadis (their ‘fatalistic outlook’ as an incomprehensible facet of religious difference). Incomprehension with regard to the ‘absolute faith’ of Ahmadis (*aber die meinen es ernst*) is an idea I came across frequently among adjudicators, even though not everyone would provide similar explicit rationales. But what is reiterated here is a civilisational discourse of the law (*zivilisatorisches Rechtsverständnis*) as the guiding normative principle, which outweighs whatever debates there might be in regard to credibility assessments, on the one hand, and Ahmadis’ displayed religious belief, on the other.

Judge A’s interpretation of this norm aligned itself with Hannah Arendt’s terminology of the banality of evil. The context for bringing up the banality of evil was explicit, as he defended the generous interpretation of narratives of persecution that judges in other courts deemed too banal and not credible. The rejection of such a ‘banality of deception’ in claimants’ narratives of persecution (see also Fassin 2013, 52) was further clarified in his acknowledgement of various social and economic motifs that bring people here (*I am not stupid! I know that they come to be married here*). And yet, the affirmation that there indeed was a ‘banality of evil’ (‘today they will call you bad names, the next day you are caught praying [i.e. posing as Muslim]’) remains a core issue for these judges. Perhaps because this generosity nourishes nagging doubts or because judges feel at risk of losing their neutrality in the eyes of others in the profession, they also made it very clear that the court room had a pedagogical function of reasserting secular constitutional norms in distinction from an alleged cultural incomprehensibility on the part of the other. There was a telling moment in our conversation when Judge A described how he lectured Ahmadi women on German democratic principles. All judges were rather explicit in their critique of the patriarchal structures that they saw as characteristic of this religious group. Hence, performative utterances such as lecturing claimants on the differences between verses in the Quran and principles in the constitution helped reassert judicial authority in a secular legal context. Ahmadi women, in particular, were seen as lacking autonomy and in need of intervention. The tacit assumption that the community would have the organisational and ideological characteristics of a sect or ethnic enclave never fully vanished from this discourse and was further infused by each new incident in the courtroom or public debate. Such examples illustrate the broader discursive effect of discourses on Islam in Germany. Ironically, the very effort to identify a genuine religious character that the Ahmadis needed to establish credibility simultaneously cements representations of religious difference and cultural assimilability. During court practice, the judges often had the impression that what unfolded before them in the form of collective processes of religion-making must not undermine key principles of liberal autonomy

and freedom. Thus, legal adjudicators inadvertently enter a terrain of normative complexity that stipulates a relationship between languages of the law and of religion, which is anything but transparent.

5 Genuine religious character in legal discourse

In order to fully grasp the impact of the court system on a normative view of religion and religious character, we need to finally consider the implications higher court rulings have had for asylum adjudication. We have observed on a small scale how, within the contexts of asylum adjudication, specific regulatory endowments such as the membership certificates and routine techniques of credibility assessments implicitly affirm the regularity in patterns of religious behaviour and ways of representing core beliefs associated with Ahmadiyyat. However, it is not too far-fetched to argue that asylum adjudication of the sort discussed in this chapter has even broader repercussions for the legal and public discourse about religion. There is nothing new, of course, about noting that law renders religion ‘in terms that are compatible with its own structural assumptions’ (Berger 2007, 281) and so the legal processes as specified in this chapter fit within a scholarly discourse on the governance of religion in late-modern times. This can be observed in different areas of legislation at the level of the international courts (Fokas 2015), when we consider, for example, how subsidiary principles concerning national jurisdictions become entangled with unfolding controversies on religious difference and pluralism.¹⁹ The asylum court does have an important place in this discussion. Through their continuous interactions with the community, and the meticulous procedures by which narratives of persecution and endured suffering become legal protocol, the courts are routinely engaged with these questions, which directly affect social citizenship and belonging.

To further illustrate this point, I want to turn to the 2012 ruling of the European High Court of Justice (EHCJ) which, in conjunction with Ahmadi asylum appeals before the German Federal Administrative Court (BVerwG) and the Upper Tribunal in the United Kingdom (UppTr), helped revisit prior legal criteria for assessing Ahmadiyya religious practice in relation to the legal category of religious persecution. According to the new guidelines set by the EHCJ it cannot be expected anymore that Ahmadis would withhold their rights to call

¹⁹ Effie Fokas (2015, 55) argues that the European Court for Human Rights ‘case law has centrally contributed to shaping the terms of such controversies. The latter to the extent that the Court may be considered to be in the process of developing a “theory” on the proper place of religion in the public sphere’.

themselves Muslim just to appease the majority in the countries of origin, to be discreet about their religion, and to seek the option of internal refuge in order to prevent themselves becoming the target of the violence of non-state actors (UppTr point 117, 50). The assumption of such internal refuge has been the cause for many rejections in asylum courts in the past. During the UK tribunal, the government representative had the audacity to claim that the anti-Ahmadi legislation would be upheld to keep public order and not to discriminate against the religious minority. Yet the judges' response (which is referenced by the EHCJ) was abundantly clear in rejecting such flawed argumentation, as 'all the evidence shows that it is the violent aggression of sections of the majority population that needs to be curbed' (UppTr, 49). With regard to state persecution, the court further clarified that the likelihood of unfair trials and prolonged imprisonment in Pakistan (in conjunction with the complex political dynamics concerning non-state actors hurting Ahmadis) form a context in which 'these factors are capable of amounting to a state-approved or state-condoned act of persecution within the meaning of the Qualification Directive and under the [Geneva] Refugee Convention' (point 116, 50).

The cautious tone in such statements nonetheless demonstrates that decision-makers are granted a space of discretion to determine whether or not these factors are fully operative in each individual case. Hence, in reference to Pakistan's penal code, the European High Court of Justice refrained from naming the ordinances as sufficient evidence for religious persecution, as it would be 'unhelpful to talk about laws per se being persecutory'. Instead, the focus of the detailed, thesis-length legal text is really on the assessment of the specific conditions of violence that could curb religious freedom. It deserves particular attention in this context that the EHCJ has declared invalid the distinction between a core area of religiosity and public display of a religious way of life, which in legal jargon is known as the difference between the *forum internum* and *externum*. Previously, the judges were asked to verify 'beyond reasonable doubt' if an individual's right to religious freedom in the core area was actually violated, which in Germany would fall under Art. 4 GG. Despite different argumentation in the past, the German federal administrative court readily accepted the new EHCJ directive to do away with this problematic distinction, which, to remind the reader, the judges also mentioned when referring to the intense probing of the *forum internum* as akin to taking the confession of a claimant (*den Antragssteller einer Gewissensprüfung unterziehen*).²⁰

²⁰ See BVerwG 2.3.2, where the court affirms the extended definition of religion and the decision not to link the assessment of the level of incurred harm to the specific (private or public) aspect of religiosity.

Peter Danchin (2015) argues that the modern conception of the *forum internum* as category of inner belief has produced key dilemmas for the legal framing of religious freedom in terms of the individual's right to religious self-expression. On the one hand, he identifies a dilemma in that the *forum internum* engenders ideas of autonomous choice (based on freedom from coercion) in contrast to other operative assumptions that convey the idea of a right to 'maintain a certain category of inner belief such as "conscience" or "faith" understood as in some sense un-chosen' (ibid., 243). We have seen above that this tension between choice and coercion played a significant role in the judges' scepticism about Ahmadi claims, particularly when individuals appeared to the judges as 'obedient' and 'fatalistic selves' who precisely 'could not' or 'were not allowed to' make individual choices after paying spiritual allegiance to the khalifa. This relates to the second point Danchin mentions, namely that in recognising the manifestations or limitations of the freedom of religious self-expression (*forum externum*), judicial authorities take it on themselves to differentiate and determine the extent to which the *forum internum* could be expanded into the public realm. In other words, as soon as religious self-expression is understood as relational and not solely anchored in the individual anymore, the question of how others' rights and sensibilities are affected becomes a guiding principle for jurisprudence (ibid., 244). According to Danchin we can observe a 'dramatic shift in spatialization' (ibid., 246) in the European and North American case law on religious symbols in the public sphere (such as wearing the hijab, the crucifix cases, etc.) where interpretations of the right to wear a hijab or Sikh turban have been used to de-facto limit the individual choices of those being addressed. For Danchin the consequence is that, 'once religion is understood in terms of the three features (1) Enlightenment rationality posits (2) a conception of individual belief that is (3) autonomously chosen in the forum internum, then most of what was formerly internal and private is transformed into an external manifestation of religion now subject either to recognition or limitation by the state in the new, vastly expanded forum externum' (ibid., 246).

If such changes of what constitute the *fora internum* and *externum* in the juridical field matter in deliberations about different forms of religious practice and how they are brought into accord with secular values, it is significant to see that the EHCJ has suspended this dichotomy of private and public religion. However, Danchin demonstrates how other jurisdictions clung onto this distinction in order to effectively limit claims to religious freedom that seem to deviate from what states define as the boundaries of religious accommodation.

It is yet speculative to suggest that the EHCJ decision would undermine such efforts or in other ways impinge on the religious freedom case law. For a

discussion of religious individualisation, it might appear to be a point of scholarly hair-splitting. Perhaps we can say that in both scenarios the key point is that political and legal institutions have retained the power to redefine the boundaries by which religion is allowed to enter the public realm, as well as the extent to which collective rights matter when it comes to religious freedom. When seen from the perspective of the daily workings of asylum courtrooms we find that new directives further problematise questions of individual choice and representations of religion, for there is a certain tendency to read a traditional, if not dogmatic, view of religious practice into legal reasoning.

To illustrate this, let me briefly summarise one of the asylum hearings that I observed in which deliberations around the sincerity of religious conduct came to the fore. This particular hearing occurred in 2012, shortly after the EHCJ ruling, and consisted of a two-hour investigation of the claimant's religious conduct. Much of the judge's interview comprised questions about the regularity of the claimant's participation in the local community, what specific positions the person held, or what other activities he was engaged in. There was only passing mention of the membership certificate that the court had filed. The asylum seeker, who I shall call Mr Naveed here, did his best to account for his volunteer work and community engagement, which from what I could tell was not satisfactory to the judge. Many questions ensued about his participation in the annual gathering of the Jalsa Salana, going into detailed questioning about activities there. For instance, she wanted to know what personal relationship Mr. Naveed had with the spiritual leader of Ahmadiyyat, which Mr Naveed affirmed, claiming that he sends weekly letters and even received personal responses. At this point, the lawyer presented various letters and other materials such as local newspapers in which we see Mr Naveed helping out with street cleaning activities after New Year's Celebrations. But this was still not enough. The judge then continued with questions around prayers and practices of reading and the study of the Qur'an. She wanted to hear details about specific prayers and what relevance they held in weekly sermons. She went on to ask about his close relatives and their status in the Jamat. Mr Naveed was divorced, so the main line of question revolved around the religious education of his child, who happened to live with the mother. Confirming that the child is educated through the missionary system (*waqf-e nau* scheme) gave some additional support. In this manner, an hour and more was spent by the court in evaluating aspects of public religious conduct and details about the claimant's knowledge of the Ahmadiyya faith. It was interesting to see how even minor, everyday aspects of providing social service and religious conduct were recorded in the court protocol. The judge continued to ask in more detail about Mr Naveed's social and personal background in Pakistan: How would he describe his living situation and relationships with the community in the village where he

lived? When exactly was he confronted with enmity and aggression? What did these acts consist of? She also asked what function he held and how that made him visible as an Ahmadi. How many other Ahmadi families were in the village? What exactly did ‘the Mullahs’ hold against him?

There is clearly a horizon of expectations that need to be met and failure to do so undermines the idea that privately held belief and publicly expressed behaviour are meaningfully related. Even if a claimant is capable of creating a relatively coherent self-image of religious service in diaspora contexts, the burden of proof still requires continuity between these more readily documented and verified practices and the social and political contexts of exercising religion in different regions of the country of origin, where it is of course notoriously difficult to come up with evidence.

From the vantage point of such court hearings, the legal coding of religious sincerity and credibility can be seen to work in tandem with normative expectations of community service and participation in organised religious activity. As indicated above, adjudicators view the community almost solely as a patriarchal social hierarchy that puts strong conformity pressures on its members. Paradoxically, however, the courts’ interview techniques contravene the judicial discourse on individuality, for despite the scepticism levelled against the collective framework of religion, it is that same framework with which an individual’s account needs to conform. Failing to meet expected standards of expressed belief and community engagement would logically lower admission chances. Any inconsistency that claimants show in the court protocol when, for example, aligning themselves with the organisational and doctrinal structures or providing an interpretation of Islamic tenets that fall out of a narrow interpretive grid of questioning used in the court interviews, would lead to what we already encountered as the problem of credibility. Significantly, the revision of asylum law has made establishing religious truth claims the major focus of such credibility. Is a person who seems unclear on certain tenets of the faith or expected religious routines still an Ahmadi? Will they need specific protection? These paradoxes are clearly enhanced as the courts are required to continuously assess the credibility of narratives of religious persecution on a case-by-case basis.

The tendency of more intimate and intimidating credibility assessments in asylum courts that is spurred by this process runs parallel to what Didier Fassin (2013) discusses in relation to the case of trauma narratives in refugee hearings. In France, he observed a similar shift to more and more intimate questioning and increasing doubts levelled against the authority of medical and psychiatric experts. Despite all the rhetoric of individual rights and the uniqueness of each individual’s testimony, the fact-finding procedures in courts appear to be guided by a court culture of paternalism and suspicion, putting ever higher

demands on individuals to articulate intimate details of religious self-making that must fall in line with what amounts to an orthodox framework of religious norm-setting. In its 2012 country guidance on Pakistan, the Upper Tribunal already demanded several obligatory steps be taken by the decision-maker when faced with the task of determining the identity of an Ahmadi, including the official documentation provided by the religious organisations of the Ahmadiyya community and an interview process through which genuinely held beliefs could be validated. Note how directive 122 demands judges ‘to include an enquiry whether the claimant was registered with an Ahmadi community in Pakistan and worshipped and engaged there on a regular basis’, whereas directive 123 specifies the need of ‘enquiry into the claimant’s intentions or wishes as to his or her faith, if returned to Pakistan’. Furthermore the document reads: ‘The burden is on the claimant to demonstrate that any intention or wish to practice and manifest aspects of the faith openly that are not permitted by the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) is genuinely held and of particular importance to the claimant to preserve his or her religious identity’ (Pakistan CG [2012] UKUT 00389 (IAC), 51).

It is important to remember here that leading religious specialists have appeared before these courts to outline the set of core beliefs and practices through which Ahmadiyyat can be set apart from other Muslim traditions. Key in such representations is, for example, the reference to *tabligh* as the personal engagement in meaningful debate and the propagation or proselytisation of Islamic ways of life. As I have discovered in my research over the last few years, the emphasis on *tabligh* has been framed as the major objective of the Jamat by the current khalifa. The religious leadership expects all auxiliaries to commit a certain amount of time to complement the work of trained missionaries and new educational programs have been developed to reach such goals. During the UK Upper Tribunal for example, witness evidence explicitly linked spiritual authority, faith propagation, and individual duty, leading to the normative claim that ordinary Ahmadis would all be ‘keen and desirous to preach and those who cannot do it feel they are unable to discharge their duties as a Ahmadi. When living under a law that prevents that they feel sorry about that. Ahmadis are expected to respect the law of the country, but this does not mean they do not have the desire of doing *tabligh*. A display of high moral standard by Ahmadis which might attract others does not really discharge the entirety of the obligation of preaching required of all Ahmadis’. What is cited here by the court as an Ahmadi’s desire and duty to preach amounts to a strong normative claim about how to interpret ‘genuine religious character’ in matters of refugee determination. And it is precisely because the court took notice here of a norm that establishes a relationship of continuity between internal and external forums (of internal desires

and spiritual claims and external constraints on fulfilling such desires) that adjudicators will feel motivated to continue the intense probing of credibility.

6 Conclusion

The sociological inquiry that I have presented in this chapter can contribute to a better understanding of the cultural specificities, conceptual tensions, and political implications of processes of religious individualisation as they unfold in late-modern contexts of state power and migration. I have argued that the emerging processes of self-other interdependencies in contexts of global migration require a thorough rethinking of the specific meanings of religious individualisation, for as we saw in the legal discourses discussed above, the ostensibly secular understanding of religious freedom seems to clash with the pervasive effort to establish narrow definitions of religion that are mapped upon entire groups. Religious individualisation is a contingent process of cultural articulation embedded within broader historical dimensions that have produced various forms and imaginaries for social relations, degrees of religious agency, and challenges to traditionalism (Fuchs 2015). However, I think there are still many open questions to be answered. What do we mean by the relationship between individual agency and attributions of religious subjectivity or character in each context? In what specific ways are self-other relations embedded within practices of state power and the bureaucratisation of societies? Does a notion such as individualisation prioritise forms of agency and autonomy that appear intelligible to us, whereas other modalities of the “self” continue to elude Western audiences? Who defines the “us” and “them” in such debates and how do categorisations of such difference matter in practical terms?

Referencing the religious individualisation matrix, Bernd-Christian Otto (2017) lucidly remarks that not only have scholars associated religious individualisation with analytically distinct processes of ‘individuation’ and ‘individualisation’ (see also Rüpke 2015) but the intelligibility of each concept depends on very different levels of abstraction and cogency. We can study broader secularising trends or more intimate processes of inner experience and creativity, which each, when taken on their own, constitute significant analytical conundrums. Admittedly, I have not said much in this chapter about how such inner experience is constituted and how the cultivation of religious selves is to be understood through the lens of the practitioner. Such questions guide my second inquiry on migrant precarity and religious subjectivity in this publication. In the context of the

debate on state power, traditionalisation, deviance, and religion that frames the contributions in this section of the publication, my aim was instead to demonstrate how, within modern institutions associated with state sovereignty and liberal democracy, we can identify deeply ambivalent social processes that directly impact categorisations of religion and religious character. I have focused on asylum courts and the adjudication of refugees because this is a key site of social and political change. The current public debate on refugees is just one aspect of this process that has already caused major controversies in Europe around right-wing populism and its challenges to European values. I have shown this by contextualising the role of the courts within such evolving forms of social and political change, along with the far-reaching changes to immigration policy and the unfolding debate on religion and violence that has affected the public image of Muslim minorities. My second point was then to complicate the debate on ‘deviance’ and ‘traditionalisation’ by demonstrating how state and the law assume a normative role when defining the parameters of such categories.

Among other things, I have shown how in legal discourse individual acts and choices are measured against a standard of religiosity that has become the standard of determining risk-assessments of religious persecution. Let me reemphasise that my point was not to propose linear transactions between the legal and social fields, or to make a strong case for altered modes of everyday conduct and practice. Nonetheless, as several scholars working in the area of law and religion have thoroughly examined (e.g. Sullivan 2005; Mahmood 2006; Sullivan et al. 2011; König et al. 2012), the formative role of jurisprudence over religious minority rights and the governing of religion as a category of difference does have far-reaching consequences for social practice. ‘Courts, legislatures and other governmental agencies judge the activities of persons as religious or not, as protected or not, based on models of religion’, writes Winifred Sullivan, ‘that often make a poor fit with religion as it is lived’. The ‘poor fit’ of which Sullivan speaks matters in terms of how languages of the law and religion relate to each other. The asylum courts that I have studied routinely perform such rationalisations of religious character as evidenced in standardised repertoires of religious conduct and problematic assumptions about what kind of social commitment should be expected of Ahmadi Muslims. Judges and lawyers are now keenly aware that they act as interpreters of theological facts – as one lawyer phrased it sardonically in a conversation: ‘We are now also experts in theology’ – and their perception of secular law and guiding normative concepts has thus been lastingly affected.²¹

²¹ For a discussion of how experts in the legal sphere have assumed the role of theologians, see also Mahmood 2006.

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Afterword: de- and neotraditionalisation

Our essays are sharply different in tenor, concepts, vocabulary, disciplines and modes of analysis. This hardly comes as a surprise. It is to be expected that such differences manifest themselves in this broad comparative effort. Each contribution examines historically and culturally divergent forms of *Vergesellschaftung* as the societal and symbolic context of the processes of de- or neo-traditionalisation analysed here. Only on such a broad basis is it possible to identify normative authorities and deviations from them in text and practice. We thus found a starting point in the relationship between specific historical constellations and encounters, and the opportunities they open up to reformulate what given historical actors and groups regarded as tradition and as transgression or deviance.

With the Athenians, in Jan Bremmer's chapter we see a concentration of immigrant and native intellectuals who started to disseminate destabilising and subversive ideas. Yet the power of public order remained the factor that determined courses of action. A similar view concerning differences in power is shared by Richard Gordon in his chapter. For Gordon, the fundamental issue in relation to 'deviant' religious action in the Roman Empire was the differential distribution of religious knowledge-practices within a highly stratified social order, and the efforts of socio-political elites, both central (i.e. at Rome) and local, to claim that only their version of practices worked. For the 'deviants', such claims made no sense: why should the political elite prescribe to everyone else how to exploit the resources of the divine world? Avner Ben Zaken argues that it was the cross-cultural circulations of a grimoire, and its multiple receptions among key Renaissance thinkers, that transformed natural magic from belonging to the realm of esoteric practices into a coherent alternative philosophical program that challenged the tenets of late medieval philosophy of nature, making possible the rise of a new science.

Turning from Mediterranean antiquity and the European Renaissance to South Asian modernity, we encounter a period of continuity and rupture, in which several traditions were coined while others were contested. The past was now reread in anti-colonial as well as patriarchal and sectarian ways and these were, at times, intertwined.

Kumkum Sangari's contribution looks at nationalism and anti-modernity in the early twentieth-century writings of Annie Besant and M. K. Gandhi as they responded to the situations in India and England in a comparable way. The dissenting milieu in late nineteenth-century London acted as a trigger for both. The

circulations of ideas and people involved here show that the British and Indian contexts were entangled. Vasudha Dalmia's chapter is situated in post-colonial mid-twentieth-century India. Her analysis shows how the making of a fundamentally egalitarian and secular Constitution by the state encountered consolidated Hindu sectarian interests invested in ideas of Hindu supremacy and sharp social difference (for the textual constructions of authorities see also Feldhaus in III.2).

Michael Nijhawan's chapter offers a conceptual bridge, demonstrating how a religious minority (the Ahmadis) first entered the multi-religious arena in India under colonial rule and eventually, in the course of the emergence of the nation-state after 1947, were minoritized and forced to re-describe themselves in a context in which they were identified with deviant and heterodox religion. The legal and social processes of resignifying such deviance and heterodoxy in the context of contemporary migration procedures in Europe display the ambivalence between religious individualisation and norm-setting, including neo-traditionalisation. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is a framing of a debate that also plays a part in the discussion of the contrast and relationship between individual and institutionalised religion in the 20th and 21st centuries German Christianities, as analysed by Veronika Hoffmann.

Bringing in the perspective of state and hegemonic formations relativises the concept of religious individualisation. There are different kinds of hegemony that are at stake in these papers and different kinds of legal systems within which to contextualise this discussion. In Athenian society of the 5th century BCE, the final authority lay with the collectivity of citizens, who could decide whether religious ideas were acceptable or not. In a few cases, execution was the final punishment for deviance. In the huge space of the Roman Empire, with its localised religious order in which priestly office in the public sphere was a mere adjunct to elite political careers, very diverse forms of religious specialism (divination, ecstasy, healing, initiation, magic ...) were extremely attractive to those with sufficient gifts in that they provided a means of achieving a modicum of social and religious capital 'below' the public system. Although such practices might be dismissed as 'superstition' or 'magic', and many small-time religious specialists offered 'malign' magic alongside their other skills, they were not generally felt to threaten the commonweal.

In the Renaissance, proponents of natural magic instigated a coherent criticism against the (intellectually and institutionally) hegemonic scholastic philosophy of nature, which started losing its firm hold on intellectual high-ground. The medieval church and universities persecuted and marginalised natural magic, ascribing it to the heretic religious sources of Islam, Judaism or paganism. Renaissance thinkers, however, working at courts or within secretive societies, dared to pursue oral traditions, occult practices, and encrypted lost manuscripts, bringing them to the fore by printing, commenting on, and cultivating the philo-

sophical tenets of natural magic, presenting it as a return to the lost and perfect wisdom of the ancients. The origins of such wisdom, so they argued, could be traced back through a mystical lineage to the origins of humanity, before religious disconcert, philosophical controversies, and a lack of concord between occultist views of natural phenomena, such as ‘forces’, and the accepted traditional views that denied their existence. In so doing they revolutionised the role of the philosopher of nature, turning his persona into that of a magician and transforming his function from one who contemplated nature to one who actively experimenting with it. This new image placed the natural philosopher at the center of the exploration of nature.

There are overlaps and differences between the positioning of Hinduism and that of Islam in multi-religious societies in the colonial and post-colonial period. The struggle between sectarian and pluralist positions has been an important feature of social and political life in India from the early 20th century onwards. Besant and Gandhi were active in the struggle for rights in London and South Africa and both came to position rights within a discourse of dharma and duty in India. Besant’s own trajectory through Christianity, atheism and Hinduism was notably eclectic and became quite conservative. Gandhi moved ahead to pose a direct challenge to the hegemony of the British Empire and turned the discourse of duty against the rulers. However, his discourse on women and religion contradicted the individualisation of his own religious practice. As Dalmia shows, after the violence of partition and Independence, the Indian constitution was being written even as the Hindu Right attempted to redefine India as a Hindu nation and to legislate accordingly. In this context, Gandhi resisted the merger of religion and culture and emphasised reason and morality over unquestioning fidelity to religious texts. And as Nijhawan shows, legal exclusion and violence in Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh pushed many Ahmadis to seek refuge in Western Europe and North America from the 1980s onwards. Religious transnationalisation emerged as a process of institutional integration and adaptation to the norms of the liberal state. Yet in this context, religious minorities such as the Ahmadis have been confronted with another hegemonic formation in Europe, a formation that is both national and supranational and operates through the legal system. It is the judicial system that by its rules and procedural practices can enable and disable individual expressions in relation to various forms of membership, including citizenship. This is exemplified in antiquity as well as modernity.

The production of deviance and attempts to foreclose it is another striking element of our chapters. Questioning traditional beliefs about the gods and the natural order, the ‘modernising’ intellectuals in Athens adopted a point of view that we could call, to some extent at least, secularisation. This led to satire and iconoclastic behaviour in sections of the upper classes, ultimately causing the

state to set limits on acceptable levels of deviance. Although witchcraft was always available as an explanation of misfortune in the Roman Empire, there were many other competing explanatory forms and, at least among the Roman elite, such fears were considered superstitious and ridiculous. Divination, however, was a different matter, especially astrology, the new and 'scientific' form of divination that entered the Roman world in the second century BCE. With the establishment of a monarchical form of rule by Augustus (ruled 27 BCE-14 CE), emperors – who made considerable use of personal astrologers – attempted to prevent others, especially within the elite, from making any political enquiries. As a result, the term *magia* principally came to denote the resort to astrology.

Given the sheer numbers and diversity of minor religious specialists developing their own 'superstitious' practices, such attempts at repression hardly weighed in the balance until the post-Constantinian 'Christian Empire'. Renaissance divination, which acted against the backdrop of institutional Aristotelianism as manifested in the dogma of church, approached astrology not by taking for granted its tenets but, rather, by accommodating it to natural philosophical explanations. Ficino, for instance, presented the challenge of natural magic to the hegemonic philosophy of nature, not seeking to topple philosophy but, actually, to tame practitioners of astrology and magic by imposing on them a philosophical procedure and consequently creating a metaphysical framework for natural magic.

The personal religious choices of Besant and Gandhi were highly individualised, yet they positioned women as the guardians of dharma in essentialist, prescriptive and repressive ways. In contrast to the mingling of the religious and the secular in the writings of Besant and the early Gandhi, the Hindu Right posited a homogeneous Hindu social order with an overarching culture that saw secularising trends as deviant. In the European context, where secularism is upheld as normative, we see the paradox of the law trying to fix the parameters of what counts as authentic religious belief and practice among the Ahmadis, and this has immediate repercussions for the individuals and communities concerned. We can see in these three essays how categories of belief and personal religious expression, including dharma, are defined in national and transnational contexts. This complicates the questions of individualisation as well as those of de-, re-, and neo-traditionalisation. For instance, transnational locations within a prolonged colonial temporality show examples of traditionalisation on old and new colonial sites in Sangari and Nijhawan's chapters.

Several of the chapters here demonstrate the precarious social situations of women in the various societies which affect the possibilities of religious individualisation. Dalmia and Sangari even show the divisions amongst women on these questions and Sangari indicates that the gap between social individuation and

religious individualisation of women was an area of deep social contradictions. In each case discussed in this section, we can see how heterogeneity is being produced and suppressed in mono-religious *and* multi-religious contexts. At specific historical junctions, the possibilities of individualisation, whether they are allowed or not, are mediated by the existing range of social, intellectual and religious currents, both locally and trans-regionally.



Section 4.2: **Pluralisation**

Angelika Malinar

Religious plurality and individual authority in the *Mahābhārata*

1 Introduction

The emergence of religious alternatives to Vedic ritualism in the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era was an important feature of the larger political and socio-economic transformations that unfolded in this period in India. They appeared around the same time as the establishment of the Maurya empire epitomised by King Aśoka (268–233 BCE) and consolidated during the reign of the Gupta dynasty (350–550 CE). This period was marked by an expansion of agricultural production, trans-regional trade, intercultural contacts and confrontations between North Indian rulers and outside invaders (Greeks, Scythians, etc.), the advent of script, and by new modes of representation (sculptures, inscriptions, etc.).¹ The intellectual dimension of these processes was mirrored in an enormous production of texts reflecting these changes and offering new forms of knowledge. The pluralisation of religious doctrines and practices in this period was connected to processes of individualisation and new interpretations of religious agency. These resulted in enhancing the primary determination of personhood according to normative social roles (accorded in life-cycle rituals) by opening up new pathways for individuals to strive for their own well-being in this life and the afterlife (see Malinar 2015a). This development was manifested in new interpretations of the conditions of embodied, individuated existence, with the discourses revolving around teachings about the self, ego-consciousness, and various ideas of liberation from the limitations of corporeal existence. New interpretations of *karman* as a mechanism of retribution that not only works in the sphere of ritual, but also (potentially) applies to all deeds accorded individuals an important role in the production of their own life-conditions. Auto-diegetic narration and life-story emerged as new literary forms,² and the depiction of individuals entertaining their own ideas about the goals of life became a recurrent feature in a range of textual sources. Without necessarily taking recourse to the commonly accepted forms of authorisation (initiation by Brahmanical teachers,

1 For a discussion of some features of what has been referred to as the period 'between the empires', see the essays in Olivelle 2006.

2 For an overview of the development of life-history and autobiographical writing in India, see Malinar 2019.

for instance), individuals engaged with the questions of what goal is the ‘best’ (*śreyas*), what is the ‘highest good’ (*niḥśreyas*) or the ‘unseen purpose’ (*adr̥ṣṭārtha*) for which one should strive, and what are the best methods for obtaining this good and stopping the causes of suffering.³ Some of them voiced their dissatisfaction with well-established and commonly accepted religious goals and practices, and set forth new interpretations of their own; others promulgated alternative religious-philosophical pathways. When these individuals convincingly argued, enacted, and embodied their tenets, they had the possibility of gaining social acceptance as living proofs of the validity of their ideas, and some of them became teachers and attracted followers. Some of these developments can be traced to dissent and a plurality of views already existing within the established, exclusive circles of Brahmanical learning. However, individuals from outside these circles, such as women, warriors, and merchants, also began to appear in the texts and were presented as formulating their own views on religious goals and practices. While the evidence for these developments does not suggest that the individual as such became the centre of social transactions and intellectual discourse – as is the case in modern individualism – it does point to the emergence of a diversified and proliferating religious field, which gave room to a plurality of religious-philosophical pathways that individuals could adopt.⁴ At the same time, resistance against these developments, and thus against further religious pluralisation and individualisation, can also be detected.

The compatibility of the established norms of social life with the new religious doctrines and their individualised forms of practice varied. The established norms were based on the ritual duties ordained in the Veda and administered by Brahmanical experts, predominantly for householders. In the period under discussion, the household was the primary site of religious practice. Vedic religion did not demand the establishment of permanent structures for public ritual performances, such as permanent ritual altars or temples. Such forms of public institutionalisation began to spread with the establishment of larger kingdoms

³ The discourses about these issues and the spectrum of practices connected to them constitute what could be viewed as ‘religion’ in the period under discussion and this is what I refer to when using ‘religious’ or ‘religion’ in this paper. The general question of the applicability of the modern term ‘religion’ to classical India cannot be addressed in the context of this paper.

⁴ In standard theories of modernity, now much debated, the emphasis on the rights and the freedom of the individual and the rise of individualism are seen as features which distinguish modern societies from non-modern ones. With respect to the latter it is maintained that the individual is nothing more than a member and a representative of the social group to which he or she belongs. For an influential application of this view to India, see Dumont 1966. For a general critique of Dumont’s views, see Fuchs 1988. For a criticism of the idea that Indian culture lacks a notion of the ‘individual’, see Malinar 2015a.

and with the popularisation and patronage of new religious ideas and practices. Ascetic religions, such as Buddhism and Jainism, as well as the monotheistic *bhakti* religions, were important factors in this process (with new religious sites, such as monasteries, reliquaries, icons and temples). Of key importance in this period was the establishment of the royal household centring on the king as a hereditary ruler of his kingdom and a powerful figure whose status and functions were contested. Some of the new religious ideas and practices were directly connected to kings, who are depicted as either teachers or addressees. Furthermore, the king represented participation in the religious field through his intellectual engagement with various religious-philosophical teachings (debates at his court, involvement in different registers of religious practice, patronage, etc.), through statements and rulings on religious groups and practices, through protection and patronage of various religious groups, and through the selection of his own religious preferences beyond his patronage of Vedic rituals and other religious groups. The inscriptions of King Aśoka (268–232 BCE), and the scholarly debates about his (private?) affiliation with Buddhism while supporting a range of religious groups, point towards this constellation of developments.⁵ Literary texts take up the issue as well, as can be seen in the *Mahābhārata* epic with its inclusion of various discourses about kingship and of a considerable spectrum of religious-philosophical doctrines and practices. But members of other social groups, such as merchants and women from a variety of social strata, also emerge in this period as supporters and practitioners of the new religious teachings.⁶ This is attested in the epic as well.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the ways in which religious plurality is depicted in the epic and ask which roles individuals assumed in the criticism and re-interpretation of the ‘transmitted knowledge’⁷ of the Veda. The epic not only documents individual doubts and opinions but also more fundamental

5 See, for instance, Bloch 1952, Lamotte 1953, Thapar 1961.

6 On the spectrum of Buddhist donors, see Coningham 1995; for the role of women, see Willis 1992; on archaeological and other data for the support of *bhakti*, see Härtel 1987.

7 This expression is used in the following instead of ‘tradition’, as it is not only closer to the Sanskrit equivalents (*āgama*, *paramparā*, *sampradāya*) but also highlights the processual character of the creation and administration of an authoritative body of knowledge-practice. The latter is characterised by a concern for stabilisation (‘canonisation’, forging community) and ensuring its continuing relevance (commentaries, production of new texts, selective re-arrangements of practices, attracting new patrons and audiences, etc.). ‘Transmitted knowledge’ also points to the situation that it is connected to particular ‘textual communities’ as well as to a selective acceptance of extant authoritative knowledge traditions and canonical texts by different religious communities. What appears as a fixed canon of Brahmanical authoritative texts is rather a ‘kanonfundus’, a corpus of texts used selectively in Hindu religious communities; see Malinar 2011a.

concerns about how to establish reliable knowledge. This connects the epic with the emerging field of philosophy as a new expert discourse. Some philosophical schools accepted originality as well as the exemplariness of an individual (whether human or divine) as the basis for a religious-philosophical truth claim, championing the idea that the testimony of ‘trustworthy persons’ should also be accepted as a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). The formulation of such claims in the epic, as well as in philosophical discourse, sometimes included a rejection of the Veda as the sole authority. As a consequence, representatives of the Vedic tradition viewed the proliferating field of religious individualisation as a characteristic feature of a ‘dark age’ of confusion and undesirable disorder (the so-called *kaliyuga*), which calls for counter-reaction. While one can detect resistance to and criticism of pluralisation almost from its very beginning, from about the 5th or 6th century there are explicit efforts to delimit the spectrum of choices and to reassert the authority of the Veda over against doctrines and practices based on the authority of individual teachers. This reassertion culminated in Veda-adherent philosophers like Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa (6th-7th centuries) and Śaṅkara (7th-8th centuries), who advocated a restriction of acceptable authorities and the outright rejection of teachers and teaching traditions not based on Vedic texts. While aspects of this later development have been studied in some detail,⁸ the dynamics of pluralisation and the processes of individualisation in the preceding period, to which these reassertions reacted, need to be studied in a more comprehensive manner. The *Mahābhārata* is an important document within this historical constellation since it not only attests religious plurality but also the resistance to it.

2 Negotiating religious plurality in the *Mahābhārata*

The *Mahābhārata* (*MBh*)⁹ includes not only seminal texts of *bhakti*-religion, Yoga, and Sāṃkhya philosophy, but also various discourses about the authority

⁸ See Halbfass 1991, Eltschinger 2012. On the repercussions of the reassertion of Vedic-Brahmanical normativity for the acceptance of *ātmatuṣṭi*, individual choice or preference as the reason for a religious practice, see Davis 2007; for the rejection of the idea of ‘following one’s desire’ (*kāmacāra*) as a desirable goal, see Malinar 2014.

⁹ In the following, I deal with the epic from a systematic perspective, referring to the text in its redacted, written form as found in the critical edition. The ways in which the juxtaposition of texts is the result of the textual history of the epic is an issue that cannot be addressed here. While there is no scholarly consensus about the exact date of the epic, its written form can

of transmitted knowledge as well as a broad spectrum of individual voices that each give their ideas and opinions about the ‘highest’ goal and the best practices for its pursuit.¹⁰ The wide range of texts is indicative of the fact that the validity of the Veda is no longer taken for granted and that the authority (*pramāṇa*) of ‘transmitted knowledge’ has become a highly contested issue. This is one of the features of the epic that have led scholars to view it as a text that mirrors, as well as addresses, a situation of political and intellectual ‘crisis’.¹¹

At the centre of the religious-philosophical debates depicted in the epic are doubts about what actually constitutes the ‘highest good’ (*śreyas*, *niḥśreyas*), the working of the law of *karman* (the law of retribution), the after-world (*paraloka*)¹² and, perhaps most often, what constitutes *dharma*, a polyvalent term that frames in many instances the negotiation of social norms and religious-philosophical doctrines. The word *dharma* is used in the epic, on the one hand, as an abstract term with a variety of meanings, such as law, good practice, norm, rule, order, righteousness, socio-cosmic order, or religious-philosophical doctrine. On the other hand, it is used in various specified meanings, such as *kuladharmā* (law of family), *rājadharmā* (law of the king), or *mokṣadharmā* (rules regarding liberation). The epic deals not only with the clash of different normative orders but also with the situation in which the following of ordained *dharma* and ‘transmitted knowledge’ does not yield the expected results. Some protagonists experience

quite certainly be dated to the period under discussion (2nd century BCE – 4th century CE). For an overview of religious positions documented in the epic, see, among others, Hopkins 1902, Strauss 1911, Sutton 2000.

10 A remark on the sheer quantity of texts we are talking about here may be appropriate. For instance, the part of the twelfth Book dealing with *mokṣadharmā* (‘right practice [for obtaining] liberation’) consists of more than sixty texts (comprising 186 chapters) on religious-philosophical issues (including one long exposition of *bhakti* to the god Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa). In addition, there are texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā* in Book 6, the *Anugītā* and other texts in Book 14, important discourses in Books 3 and 5, and the instructions in Book 13.

11 For an interpretation of the textual history of the epic as testifying to the intention of restoring the ideological supremacy of Brahmans after they lost influence due to Buddhism (patronised by King Aśoka) and other anti-brahmanical groups, see Holtzmann 1892–95 and Fitzgerald 2006. On the role of *bhakti* as a new doctrine that claims supremacy through mediating Vedic ritualism with ascetic ideals in order to allow householders to seek liberation, see Biardeau 1981 and Malinar 2007a. At the same time, the epic documents the pluralisation of religious-philosophical views and practices by juxtaposing various teachers and teachings, and depicting conflicts of norms and practices without rigorously suggesting one as the ‘best’ or the ‘final word’. This is illustrated in the collection of philosophical-religious texts included in Book 12. On the scholarly debates about the role of these texts in the history of Indian philosophy, see Malinar 2017a.

12 The concern about what remains of a person after death, if there is an afterlife for the individual, is the major topic of a philosophical discourse at *MBh* 12.211–212; see Malinar 2017b.

suffering on a scale that defies the idea that obeying the law results in plentiful rewards. Experiences of injustice cause doubts about, and even disgust (*nirveda*) with, what one was taught to accept. Individuals are depicted as coping with the tensions between their personal opinions and the social-religious values they have been taught to live by. But intellectual dissatisfaction is also an important reason for doubts and dissent. It is manifest in references to new expert groups, such as the “debaters of proofs” (*hetuvādins*), and in the depiction of householders brooding over the validity of transmitted knowledge. Furthermore, some epic passages highlight the plethora of ideas and practices advertised by all kinds of people as ‘best’ as the referential framework of meaning for discussing doubt and confusion.¹³ The epic contains numerous texts in which the Veda and its adherents are criticised, although often for quite different reasons and with an equally broad variety of reactions, ranging from censure to endorsement. At the same time, new doctrines, such as *bhakti*, are not only propagated in the epic but also countered by calls for ‘proper’ (Brahmanical) authorisation. Furthermore, the epic narrative and the various didactic tales included in it are populated by a number of highly influential Brahmanical authorities who function as instructors and preceptors of the main protagonists.¹⁴

13 See, for instance, *MBh* 12.21, where the ‘great ascetic’ Devasthāna introduces his view on the matter as follows: “[...] Beings look to this and that Law (*dharma*) in this and that way at one time and another. [...] Some recommend quiet calm, others vigorous exercise; some recommend neither the one nor the other, and others recommend both. Some men recommend sacrifice, and others recommend renunciation. Some recommend giving, and others recommend receiving. Some others renounce everything and sit still in silent meditation. Some recommend kingship, the protection of all creatures by slaying, shattering, and cleaving enemies and wrongdoers, and others live a solitary life’ (12.21.6–9; tr. Fitzgerald 2004, 212). Another depiction of religious plurality is at *MBh* 14.48.12ff.: ‘Is there at all among the *dharmas* (doctrines about the right practice for achieving the highest goal) one known which one must follow best (*anuṣṭheyatama*)? It seems to us that the course (*gati*) of *dharma* is of different sorts, almost contradictory. Some say that there is something beyond the body, others say this does not exist; some say the non-eternal is the eternal, others say the eternal exists and exists not [...] When the right practice (*dharma*) is being subject to such disagreement it spreads out in diverse ways. We come to no conclusion here – confused as we are. “This is the best (*śreyas*)! This is the best!” – thinking like this an ordinary man sets out (to obtain it). For the one, who is convinced of something being the right practice to pursue the (best) goal, worships it always’. For a discussion of this whole passage, see Malinar 2015a.

14 For an analysis of how Brahmanical norms are implemented in the household of some epic heroes, see Malinar 2015b.

3 The household as a contested site of religious practice

The discourses in the *Mahābhārata* show that religious pluralisation was viewed as potentially threatening to the Veda-ordained ritual duties anchored in individual households (*gṛha*) with extended families (*kula*, *kuṭumba*), in particular when goals and practices were advocated that would undermine the household as the centre of ritual-social transactions. This is true, for example, in the case of ascetic practices (*tapas*) within the Vedic tradition that developed into the new life-styles of the forest ascetic (*vānaprastha*) and the complete renouncer (*saṃnyāsīn*).¹⁵ These forms of ascetic life are recommended as well as controversially debated in the epic. In addition, there was the new religious goal of ‘liberation’ (variously called *mokṣa*, *kaivalya*, *nirvāṇa* etc.) from corporeal existence (including that in the heavenly worlds propagated in the Veda) as championed, for instance, in the traditions of Buddhism, Jainism, and Yoga. These traditions call householders to ‘houselessness’, that is, to becoming itinerant ascetics, renunciators, lonely practitioners, monks, nuns, etc. However, ‘houselessness’ is not the only form of religious individualisation in this period, as is suggested by the juxtaposition of ‘householder’ and ‘renouncer’ as an influential scholarly representation of religious life in classical India.¹⁶ We also see householders expressing their own views and engaging in new religious ideas and practices without showing any intention of changing their status or leaving their family in order to follow a particular religious doctrine. The new religious doctrines offered not only ‘renunciation’ but also various other forms of engaging with the ‘highest’ goal of liberation, such as providing support for mendicants, or performing devotional reinterpretations of daily activities.

It was not only Buddhism that offered householders new avenues for engaging in religious-philosophical knowledge (monasticism, becoming a lay follower) but also the new monotheistic *bhakti* doctrines promulgated in the epic in texts

¹⁵ For the history and institutionalisation of *saṃnyāsa* and the gradual acceptance of ‘liberation’ as a ‘goal of men’ (*puruṣārtha*) in addition to the classical three goals of Vedic ritualism, see Olivelle 1993.

¹⁶ This juxtaposition has been discussed variously in connection with Louis Dumont’s claim that the renouncer represents ‘the individual-outside-the-world’ (Dumont 1981); see also above footnote 4. While this juxtaposition has served to address certain features of Indian society, the actual scope of agents and life-styles in classical sources needs to be dealt with, a factor which complicates matters considerably.

such as the *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG*) and the *Nārāyaṇīya*.¹⁷ These emphasise the compatibility of a householder life-style devoted to god with the prospect of liberation, and they redefine ‘renunciation’ (*saṃnyāsa*) as dedicating, ‘giving away’ one’s daily activities to god, and ‘liberation’ as a state in which the devotee shares or gains access to god’s transcendent state of being. Furthermore, Buddhism as well as *bhakti* doctrines advocate renunciation as an option for all (and not only for male initiates of the Veda) and they include in religious activities householders, such as women and Śūdras, who were previously excluded from learning Vedic texts or practising Vedic rituals on their own. In this way, they considerably widened the spectrum of potential followers.¹⁸ Vedic ritualism was thus not only challenged by the new ascetic religions but also by householders who were attracted by the new forms of practice (temple worship, giving alms to monks, nuns etc.) and who had their own ideas about god(s), the after-world, and the best religious practice. One important feature of this plurality is that doubt and confusion about which religious goal and practice are the best are depicted and discussed in the epic as well. This suggests a situation in which religious authority has ceased to be based exclusively on patterns of kinship, well-established genealogies of social relationships, and restricted access to Vedic texts handed down exclusively by Brahmanical teachers. Instead of paying heed to the Veda transmitted from time immemorial, new teachers promulgated their own doctrines and practices without necessarily seeking Vedic authorisation. Furthermore, representatives of Vedic ritualism are accused of a lack of ‘true’ knowledge and of abusing rituals for dubious, egotistical purposes, with these representatives or their clients said to be guilty of perverting the true meaning of sacrifice.¹⁹ They are also criticised for asserting that there are no alternatives to the goals and practices of the Veda (*nānyad asti*: ‘there is nothing else’).²⁰ This criticism is often connected with doubts about the basis of authority (*pramāṇa / prāmāṇya*) and thus points towards the changing modes of authorisation for religious texts and practices, which now seem to include individual experience and testimony.

17 For an analysis of the *BhG* and its relationship to the epic discourses, see Malinar 2007a; for the *Nārāyaṇīya*, see the essays in Schreiner 1997.

18 See, for example, the authorisation of women and Śūdras for practising *bhakti* at *BhG* 9.32. This targeting of the lower classes is viewed by the critics of these developments as a flaw of the new teachers and as a dubious strategy to attract followers; see, for instance, epic and purāṇic depictions of the present age of decay (*kaliyuga*) in which Śūdras become teachers; see Eltschinger 2012; for similar statements in philosophical texts, see Halbfass 1991.

19 Such criticism is not only voiced in texts like the *BhG* (for instance *BhG* 2.40–3, and 16.10–7) but also by representatives of Brahmanical norms themselves. See for instance *MBh* 5.43.31.

20 This is how the opinion of those engrossed in expounding the Veda is summarised at *BhG* 2.42.

4 Doubting the reliability of transmitted knowledge

When epic protagonists are faced with divergent views and contradictory injunctions, reasoning and critical inquiry are presented as means for resolving the difficulties, although this is not always accepted unanimously. While critical examination is in some instances recommended as a method for establishing what can serve as a guideline and authority in matters concerning the ‘highest good’, it is elsewhere viewed as the cause of all intellectual problems and the weakening of age-old authorities. Not only new expert groups, such as the ‘debaters of proofs/reasons’ (*hetuvādins*), are depicted as reasoning about the validity of transmitted knowledge²¹ but also individual protagonists. The latter are presented as voicing their doubts when faced with theoretical and practical dilemmas that result in a critique of the social role they ought to represent and of the use of ‘playing by the rules’. One important aspect of the depiction of these views is that the social basis for producing and obtaining religious knowledge is enhanced through the depiction of Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas as authorities in religious matters, a role that is no longer restricted only to Brahmans. Women are also depicted as using ritual instruments on their own,²² as practising forms of religion not envisaged for them,²³ and as doubting the validity of established religious doctrines.

An example of the latter is the dialogue between Queen Draupadī and her husband King Yudhiṣṭhira at *Mahābhārata* 3.28–37. The couple discuss the reasons for following prescribed *dharma* when this does not produce the promised

21 In quite a few places, the ‘debaters of proofs’ (*hetuvādins*), who attack the Veda and Brahmanical norms with the ‘science of reasoning’ (*tarkavidyā*) are accused of excessive doubting and of propagating disregard for transmitted Vedic knowledge. In one of the more elaborate polemics, they are compared with dogs and condemned as being unsuited for social relationships (*MBh* 13.37.11–6). Elsewhere, their appearance is interpreted as a sign that the last and worst of the four world-ages, the age of decay (*kaliyuga*), is in full swing (*MBh* 3.188.26). On the relationship between such ‘heresy’ and ‘apocalyptic’ ideas in later Purāṇas and in Buddhist literature, see Eltschinger 2012.

22 See the two versions of the story about how Kuntī obtained a powerful *mantra* that allowed her to summon any god she desired at *MBh* 1.104 and 3.287–289; in relation to this incident a discourse unfolds at 1.111–3 that aims at prohibiting the independent agency of women; see Malinar 2014.

23 At *MBh* 9.51, the Brahman sage Nārada objects to the unlicensed ascetic practices carried out by the daughter of the Brahman Kuṇi-Gārgya and forces her into marriage, since unmarried women are not allowed to become ascetics. On the epic depiction of Nārada as a representative of Brahmanical normativity, see Malinar 2015b.

rewards but, rather, only disaster.²⁴ Draupadī says (3.31.7): ‘The Law, when well protected, protects the king, who guards the Law, so I hear from the noble ones, but I find it does not protect *you*’. She calls on her husband, who has lost his kingdom despite always obeying *dharma*, to accept that such obedience does not work and to stand up and fight for his rights. She also suggests that the *karman* doctrine that implies ‘good will do good’ is in fact an idea disproven by the sad reality of the exile she and her husband are suffering. For the learned (*pañḍita*) Draupadī, the ideas of ‘order’ and ‘justice’ implied in the terms *dharma* and *karman* have become dubious. She suspects that it is not lofty values that count but only actual power (*bala*): ‘Or, if the evil that has been done does not pursue its doer, then mere power is the cause of everything, and I bemoan powerless folk!’ (*MBh* 3.31.42. tr. van Buitenen 1975, 281). She also argues that the gods are mere schemers who are not interested in human welfare but rather treat human beings like puppets (3.31.35–7). Yudhiṣṭhira is alarmed by the critical impact of her reasoning, of her doubting that transmitted knowledge is the authority (*pramāṇa*) in salvific matters. He seeks to censure what he views as a transgression and accuses her of being a ‘non-believer’ (*nāstika*) since she doubts and argues too much.²⁵ He warns his wife of the negative karmic consequences (being reborn as an animal) of her denying established authority. She is accused of *ātmapramāṇa*, of taking herself (*ātman*) as authority, instead of relying on *ārṣapramāṇa*, on the authority derived from the Vedic sages (*ṛṣi*). Says Yudhiṣṭhira: ‘Who is excessively doubting *dharma* will not find a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) in anything else. Arrogant is he who takes himself as the authority (*ātmapramāṇa*) as he despises what (or: who) is superior. [...] Who neglects the authority that belongs to the sages (*ārṣaṃ pramāṇam*) is not guarding the laws, being deluded he violates all authoritative instructions and does not find any peace in all his lives. You must not doubt excessively the *dharma* that is followed by the learned as it is timeless (old), being proclaimed by all-knowing, all-envisioning sages’ (*MBh* 3.32.15, 20–1). Individual, self-reliant reasoning is checked here by insistence on belief, on the (tautological) statement that one must follow the ancient truths because one should better not doubt them. The excessiveness of the criticism is presented

²⁴ For an analysis of the whole dialogue focussing on the issue of gender, see Malinar 2007b. Another royal household debate at *MBh* 12.18 concerns a king who has chosen to live from alms (*bhāikṣya*) after taking up the life-style of a ‘skull-bearing’ ascetic (*kāpālim vṛttim*). His wife reprimands him for what she thinks is mere hypocrisy.

²⁵ See the many occurrences of the prefix ‘*ati-*’, signifying an excessive or deviant performance of the activity denoted by the verb. Thus, Draupadī is said to ‘doubt too much’ (*ati+śaṅk*, 32.6, 7, 9, 14, 15, 17, 21), to ‘argue too much’ (*ati+vad*, 32.6), to ‘transgress’ (*ati+gam*, 32.9.20) and to ‘offend’ (*ati+vṛt*, 32.18) norms.

as the main reason for Yudhiṣṭhira's warnings as it results in Draupadī claiming a position she is not entitled to; at least not according to the very norms she objects to.

In Book 12 of the epic, Yudhiṣṭhira's own questions about *dharma* are made the point of departure for a series of discourses. At several points he is depicted as doubting transmitted knowledge. At *Mahābhārata* 12.251–2, for instance, Yudhiṣṭhira asks his grandfather and teacher Bhīṣma about the criteria for defining *dharma*. Initially, Bhīṣma answers rather conventionally (following the account in Dharmasāstra literature) by stating that *dharma* can be defined by reference to *sadācāra*, the 'conduct of the good (norm-setting) people' or 'good (norm-setting) conduct', to authoritative *dharma* texts (*smṛti*), and to the Veda (*veda*). But Yudhiṣṭhira's doubts are more fundamental when he turns to logical reasoning (*anumāna*). He detects contradictions, circular reasoning, and other undesirable characteristics of the three conventional methods of authorising *dharma*. First of all, Yudhiṣṭhira takes up the 'conduct of good (norm-setting) people' (*sadācāra*) and points out that it suffers from the flaw of 'mutual dependency' (*anyonyas-aṃśraya*, circular reasoning): 'Dharma is regarded as the practice of the good, if however good people define what is (good) practice – how can one prove what needs to be proved, since what is good remains undefined?' (*MBh* 12.252.5). Thus, good practice cannot be used as a criterion for defining *dharma* because it is explained by reference to undefined 'good people'.²⁶ Next, the reliability of the authority of the Veda and (Veda-based) *dharma* manuals is questioned by pointing out that 'the doctrines of the Veda diminish from world-age to world age' (12.252.7) and that the Veda is 'spread out in different directions' (12.252.9). The diversification of the Veda entails the possibility of contradictory injunctions and thus undermines the reliability of these texts in matters of *dharma*.²⁷ Therefore, they cannot serve as a *pramāṇa*, an authority, a means of knowledge: 'If they [the different texts] were all a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) then a means of knowledge would not be available at all. How then is scriptural authority established in case of contradiction, when it is both a means of knowledge and not a means of knowledge?' (12.252.10). Once the problem of defining the authority of transmitted knowledge has been recognised, certainty vanishes like a mirage as soon as it is explored by

²⁶ On this problem and the definitions of *ācāra* in medieval Dharmasāstras, see Davis 2004. Yudhiṣṭhira further rejects the method of inferring *dharma* from its opposite (*adharma*) and vice versa.

²⁷ Diversification refers, on one hand, to the transmission of the canon of the 'four Vedas' (*caturveda*) in different schools, and, on the other, to the very pluralisation of the original single (*eka*) Veda into four; see Malinar 2011b.

‘critically examining thinkers’ (*anvikṣyamāṇaḥ kavibhiḥ*; 12.252.13). This loss of old certainties is an important point of Yudhiṣṭhira’s speech.

How is this reasoning dealt with here? Instead of demonstrating in which respects the Veda can be regarded as *pramāṇa*, or arguing that erudite Brahmins set the standard for what should be taken as the ‘practice of good people’, Bhīṣma gives an account of an encounter between the merchant Tulādhāra, belonging to the Vaiśya caste, and the Brahman Jājali (*MBh* 12.253–256). At the beginning of his account Bhīṣma relates that Brahman Jājali, a great ascetic dwelling in the forest, went to the ocean for further ascetic practice (*tapas*). When he began to think that there was nobody to equal him, he was told by the Piśācas (forest demons, goblins) surrounding him that he ought not entertain such thoughts. Such thoughts, they said, are not appropriate even for the famous merchant Tulādhāra in Varanasi. A displeased (*vimanas*) Jājali exclaims that he wants to see this man and sets out to pay him a visit. At this point Yudhiṣṭhira interrupts the account and asks what Jājali did in order to obtain such high ascetic perfection (*siddhi*). Bhīṣma replies (12.253.13ff.) with a second report of what brought the Brahman to Varanasi.²⁸ He relates that Jājali had been following the rules of forest asceticism all on his own and was engaged in ‘terrible’ (*ghora*) ascetic exercises (*tapas*). For years he would sit like a piece of wood, ‘eating wind’, and letting a pair of birds build a nest on his head. Since he did not move, the birds were not afraid to lay their eggs and raise their offspring on his head. When the birds finally left, Jājali was amazed by his own achievement: ‘He thought “I am a Siddha (a perfect man)” and self-conceit (*māna*) possessed him’ (12.253.38). He blurted out his conviction that he had mastered *dharma* (12.253.41). However, in response to this Jājali was immediately rebuked by ‘a voice in the air’ stating that in matters of *dharma* he was not the equal of the wise Tulādhāra – and even Tulādhāra was not permitted to talk like this. Full of anger, Jājali travelled to Varanasi and approached the merchant, who was going about his business. When Tulādhāra, ‘who made his living from merchandise’, saw the Brahman he welcomed him by displaying his knowledge about Jājali and about the circumstances that brought him to Varanasi. Mocking the Brahman slightly, he pointed out that the latter believed that mastering *dharma* consists of ‘taking care of sparrows’ and this misconception is the reason why Jājali was directed to him.

The Brahman then asks how Tulādhāra, a merchant (*vāṇija*) dealing with all kinds of goods, has obtained the ‘highest insight’ (*naiṣṭhikī buddhi*).²⁹

²⁸ A discussion of the composition and textual history of the Tulādhāra story is beyond the scope of this chapter. Both accounts highlight the problem of individual ascetics misjudging religious achievements (see also below).

²⁹ This expression is used also in other instances in the epic for perfection in religious-philosophical knowledge; see for instance, *MBh* 12.211.15; 217.28; 260.8.

In introducing the merchant's reply, Bhīṣma highlights the rather unusual situation that the Brahman is taught 'subtleties of *dharma*' (*dharmasūkṣmāṇi*) by a Vaiśya, who knew the true meaning of *dharma* (12.254.4). Without further ado, Tulādhāra starts his instruction by pointing out that to live one's life without bearing malice towards anybody is the *dharma* that is eternal, ensures the welfare of all beings, and is friendly (*maitra*). In putting this into practice he has chosen 'sameness' (*samatva*), being impartial, as his religious observance (*vrata*), which he practises not in the context of Yoga meditation or other ascetic practices, but in his daily transactions with his customers. He describes his trade and points out that he holds his 'scales' (*tulā*) the same for all alike.³⁰ Irrespective of whether they are friends or enemies, whether he weighs gold or grain: all are his friends whom he wishes well. Says Tulādhāra: 'He who is the friend of all, and is always delighted in the welfare of others in deeds, thoughts, and word, knows *dharma*, Jājali. I neither praise nor condemn the deeds of others as I am watching the colourfulness of the world like [I watch the clouds] in the sky. I neither coax nor impede,³¹ neither hate nor love. I am the same towards all beings, behold, Jājali, my observance! [...] My scales are the same for all beings' (12.254.9–12). Furthermore, the merchant points out that not posing a danger for others is the best conduct (*ācāra*) and therefore any maltreatment of animals (in trade, agriculture, or animal sacrifice) and human beings must be avoided. Otherwise, one takes what is not authoritative (*apramāṇa*) as an authority (*pramāṇa*; 12.255.14). Impartiality and non-violence set the highest standard of *dharma* which others (namely: Vedic Brahmans, ascetics, and mighty people) have ruined through violent partisanship (12.254.21).

The scales are both instrument and yardstick for Tulādhāra's understanding of *dharma* as a steadfast 'observance' of 'impartiality'. His way of carrying out his profession is depicted as a religious practice that sets a standard for the 'conduct of good people' and also for Brahmans. The issue of what constitutes 'conduct of good (norm-setting) people', and thus 'good (norm-setting) conduct' (*sadācāra*), raised earlier by Yudhiṣṭhira's identification of the lack of a definition of what or who is 'good' (*sat*), is here addressed by means of a didactic story. The Tulādhāra story has received some attention for its advocacy of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) and

30 The name Tulādhāra (meaning 'scales-holder') seems programmatic for this convergence of professional life and religious practice.

31 This can be very well understood as referring to his non-manipulative handling of the scales (see also the use of the *ātmanepada* form of the verbs in this stanza).

its criticism of animal sacrifice.³² But the merchant's ideas about *sama(tva)*, being 'the same', 'impartial', 'indifferent', as the best practice is also an important aspect of the text. It is presented as a form of conduct in which Tulādhāra's personal engagement with religious-philosophical knowledge converges with the professional activities of his daily life. However, it is not depicted as resulting from an affiliation with a specific religious tradition or community. This resonates with other epic passages in which *samatva*, 'sameness' or 'impartiality', is advocated as a desirable attitude that demonstrates a person's freedom from egotistical interests (rooted in desire, anger etc.) and his concern for the welfare of others.³³ But it is also presented as the result of meditative practices in the context of specific religious-philosophical teachings, such as Yoga, Sāṃkhya philosophy, and *bhakti*.³⁴

The depiction of the merchant Tulādhāra's idea of 'sameness' resonates with the uncertainty Yudhiṣṭhira had voiced earlier with respect to the criteria which establish the validity of Vedic texts and define what is 'good' norm-setting conduct. His ideas of *dharma* are put into practice as an 'observance' (*vrata*) that is tested in the merchant's daily business of 'holding the scales' for all kinds of people. The merchant's views and his criticism of Brahmanical norms and practices are neither challenged nor explicitly endorsed, apart from their being reported by Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira. In contrast to this, Jājali's solitary pursuit of asceticism results in a misunderstanding of *dharma*,³⁵ which is connected in

32 See Proudfoot 1979. The Tulādhāra instruction is not the only text in the epic advocating non-violence as the yardstick of what is a salvific, norm-setting practice irrespective of the religious path adopted; see, for instance, *MBh* 14.48ff.

33 For instance, *MBh* 12.152.30; 12.154, 12.161.42.

34 The *Bhagavadgītā*, for instance, recommends Yoga as a method of becoming 'the same', which entails being able to view all things and beings as same, and to see the 'same' (absolute being, here: the self, *ātman*) in all beings; see, for instance, *BhG* 2.48, 4.22, 5.18–9, 6.8–9, 29, 32. In connection with its *bhakti* teachings, 'sameness' is described in the same text as an attitude of the highest god towards all beings. It is declared that the god Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa is not only 'neutral' (*udāsīna*), that is personally disinterested in engaging in earthly matters, but also impartial (*sama*), since he himself treats all beings alike, without personal aversion or affection. Yet, this impartiality is scaled since he responds favourably to those who approach him with *bhakti*; see *BhG* 9.29–32; for a scaling of different forms of *bhaktas*, see *BhG* 7.16–28 and for an evaluation of different ascetic practices *vis-à-vis bhakti*, see *BhG* 12; *samatva* is also propagated as a characteristic feature of a devotee, for instance at 18.54; see Malinar 2007a.

35 This is not the only instance in the epic in which a Brahman ascetic is criticised for his misunderstanding of *dharma* by 'inferiors', such as a wife or a member of a lower caste. At *MBh* 3.197, for instance, the Brahman Kauśika is first criticised by his wife for his ascetic life style and then by a hunter; see Brinkhaus 1994 for the composition of the text. In a similar vein, when Yudhiṣṭhira entertains the idea of becoming a forest ascetic (12.9), he is criticised by his brothers (12.18ff.).

the text to the situation when a person takes himself as the authority for validating his or her own achievements. This points to a problematic aspect of religious individualisation, namely the danger of misjudging and misinterpreting religious ideas and practices when pursuing them on one's own. The case of Jājali illustrates the danger of being carried away by achievements deemed extraordinary such that one comes to think that one's achievements are incomparable. The case of Draupadī points to the problems that arise when confidence in transmitted knowledge dwindles. Her experience of injustice results in a transgression of social roles and normative religious behaviour when she claims the right to think for herself, to take herself as the authority (*ātmapramāṇa*). In contrast to Jājali, Draupadī is censured by her husband as he keeps his dharmic faith. This highlights the gendered structure of the individualisation processes and the authorisation of individual agency as depicted in the epic.³⁶ While both instances demonstrate that disapproval and censorship are never far away, it is also made clear that the querying of *dharma*, 'higher' insight, and norm-setting conduct is no longer the exclusive possession of Brahmanical authorities and that the discourse is not limited to negotiating the relationship between asceticism and householder-life.

Not only in the passages discussed before, but also elsewhere in the epic, the word *pramāṇa* serves frequently to address the issue of authority, and in some instances, it seems to be already imbued with the new technical meanings in philosophical expert discourse, 'means of knowledge' and 'valid cognition'. The newly emerging field of philosophy is an important arena for negotiating and delimiting religious pluralisation and individualisation in this period. The rise of philosophy is part of the cultural-historical context of the epic debates on authority.³⁷ It plays an important role in the consolidation of old and new fields of knowledge in authoritative bodies of texts (*śāstra*, *sūtra* etc.), in the delimitation of ideological pluralisation, and of individual authority in matters pertaining to the 'highest good'. In the following, some aspects of the philosophical discourse on valid knowledge shall be highlighted that connect the epic debates to another field of discourse which deals with ideological pluralisation and the broadening of the social basis of people engaged in religious-philosophical issues (royal households, merchants etc.).

³⁶ This issue cannot be discussed further within the scope of this chapter; see Malinar 2007b, 2014.

³⁷ For a discussion of the place of philosophy in the epic in the history of Indian philosophy, see Malinar 2017a.

5 Trustworthy persons as ‘means of knowledge’ in philosophical discourse

Individual statements about the ‘highest good’ and debates about their authority are represented in the epic without rigorously expounding one religious-philosophical pathway as ‘the best’. The epic juxtaposes various texts that claim to provide instruction about the ‘best’ and even places some of these at nodal points in the epic narrative, as if launching an ideological key-text. However, none of these positions is endorsed or activated across the epic as the religious-philosophical ‘master-discourse’.³⁸ While the epic testifies to ideological pluralisation, philosophy is one of the driving forces of religious-philosophical pluralisation and at the same time provides instruments for regulating it. Philosophers cope at an epistemological level with the validity of competing religious-philosophical doctrines, *inter alia*, by making ‘doubt’ (*saṃśaya*, *śaṅkha*) a prerequisite as well as a topic of philosophical expert discourse. Even more important is that critical inquiry and ensuring the validity of knowledge through accepted ‘means of knowledge’ become the characteristic features of philosophical discourse. In this connection, the word *pramāṇa* (in epic often used in the sense of ‘authority’, ‘yardstick’, etc.) obtains new technical meanings, namely ‘means of knowledge’ and ‘valid cognition’.³⁹ The production of philosophical tenets also entailed teachings not based on the Veda or even critical of it. Philosophers like Kapila, the founder of Sāṃkhya philosophy – which in its systematic exposition declares that the Vedic soteriology is ‘uncertain’ (*anekānta*) –, were accepted as authorities, a status that had to be validated. This meant not only justifying the criticism of the Veda but also providing criteria for the authority of the words of an innovative philosopher or religious teacher who was not transmitting or reinterpreting the ‘eternal’ Veda. The crisis of the authority of the eternal ‘words’ of the Veda and the claim that newly promulgated *dharma* is also reliable, or even more reliable, are addressed in philosophical discourse with the acceptance of the

38 Various candidates for such an ideological ‘master-discourse’ have been suggested (for instance, Sāṃkhya philosophy, *bhakti*, Brahmanical normativity) without reaching a scholarly consensus; for an overview of the debates on ‘philosophy’ in the epic, see Malinar 2017a; for various interpretations of the epic, see Brockington 1998.

39 The two meanings of *pramāṇa* point to what Matilal calls the ‘systematic ambiguity’ of the term that ‘means both, a means for (or a way of) knowledge and an authoritative source for making a knowledge-claim. It also means a ‘proof’, a way of proving that something exists or something is the case’ (Matilal 1986, 35f.).

verbal testimony (*vacana*, *śabda*) of knowledgeable individuals ('trustworthy persons', *āpta*) as a means of knowledge on a par with the Veda.⁴⁰

The ensuing philosophical debate on the reliability of the 'statements of trustworthy persons' (*āptavacana*) testifies, on the one hand, to attempts to legitimise new teachers and doctrines, and, on the other, to a resistance to further pluralisation and individualisation of teaching traditions. The latter is mirrored in the arguments against the authority of individuals in matters of 'unseen goals' and 'highest good' offered by Mīmāṃsā philosophers championing the sole authority of the Veda. The controversy is based on a general consensus among philosophers, who accepted 'verbal testimony' as a means of knowledge, that without words there would be no knowledge about things and entities that are invisible (*adṛṣṭa*), such as the after-world (*paraloka*) and the 'immortal self' (*ātman*). The other means of knowledge, perception (*pratyakṣa*) and logical inference (*anumāna*), cannot provide such knowledge. According to Nyāya philosopher Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana (ca. 5th century), a trustworthy person gives instruction (*upadeśa*) in invisible goals (*adṛṣṭārtha*) one should strive for, and also provides the reasons (*hetu*) for the recommended course of action. In his commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra* he states: "Trustworthy persons"⁴¹ are those whose characteristic feature is to perceive directly "this must be abandoned", "this is the reason for abandoning it", "this is something that needs to be obtained", "this is the reason for obtaining it".⁴²

In philosophical discourse, *āptavacana* is treated as a source of philosophical-religious knowledge as well as an object of philosophical examination. Reasons must be adduced and the knowledge derived from verbal testimony is open

40 The acceptance of verbal testimony or knowledge derived from words (*śabda*) as a *pramāṇa* side by side with perception (*pratyakṣa*) and logical inference (*anumāna*) is a characteristic feature of Indian philosophical discourse. Most philosophical schools accept 'verbal testimony' as a *pramāṇa*; exceptions are the materialists (who have no use for 'invisible goals'), and early Vaiśeṣika; for an overview, see Saksena 1951, Oberhammer 1974, and Malinar 2013. While the 'words of the Buddha' (*buddhavanaca*) are the basis of Buddhist practice, the question of in which respects the Buddha was regarded as a *pramāṇa* by contemporary Buddhist philosophers Dignāga (ca. 5th century) and Dharmakīrti (ca. 7th century) is intensely debated by scholars; see, for instance, Ruegg 1994 and 1995, Krasser 2001, and Silk 2002.

41 The plural form *āptāḥ* can also be understood as an honorific 'the trustworthy person'.

42 *āptāḥ khalu sāḥṣātḥkṛtadharmāṇaḥ idaṃ hātavyam idam asya hānihetur idam asyādhigantavyam idam asyādhigamahetuḥ iti; Nyāyabhāṣya on Nyāyasūtra 2.1.68.* The Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti states: 'Man cannot [safely] exist without resorting to the [reliable] authority of tradition [consisting of reliable statements], because from [reliable verbal knowledge, *āgama*, alone] he hears the great advantage and the [great] disadvantage of engaging in or abstaining from certain [acts] whose results are not [at present] perceivable' (*Pramāṇavarttikasvavṛtti*, 108, 2–5, tr. van Bijlert 1989, 119).

to critical examination by means of the other *pramāṇas* (perception, logical inference).⁴³ How does one know that a person is ‘trustworthy’ and his instruction reliable? Philosophers who accept the authority of the statements of trustworthy persons (*āptavacana*) argue that the exceptional qualities of these individuals are the criteria for their authority in these matters. Nyāya philosophers emphasise that the instructions by trustworthy individuals are based on immediate ‘insight’ and ‘direct perception’ – much the same as with the Vedic sages⁴⁴ – and on the desire to communicate it truthfully.⁴⁵ Another feature regularly mentioned in these discussions is that such a teacher has ‘compassion’ or ‘empathy’ (*anukampa*, *karuṇā*) for those who are not capable of knowing on their own how to obtain the ‘highest good’ and end their suffering.⁴⁶ This characteristic is closely connected to the claim that, in contrast to ordinary persons, trustworthy teachers are free from egotistical impulses (desire, hate, etc.) and have nothing to gain for themselves when they instruct others.⁴⁷ Therefore, they are also not liable to lie and cause deception because such misdemeanour only occur if personal interests are pursued. In cases of the ‘trustworthy’, lying would not serve any purpose.⁴⁸

43 This is the position Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana when he states: ‘The self exists – this is known from the instruction by a trustworthy person’. He then continues with the logical inferences (*anumāna*) that would support and substantiate the validity of the verbal testimony; cf. *Nyāyīya-sūtrabhāṣya* on *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.1.

44 In accordance with a widely accepted notion that certain persons are able to directly perceive the things that are beyond the senses, early Nyāya texts claim that the founder of the science of medicine (Āyurveda) had direct knowledge of all diseases and cures. Similarly, the seers of the Veda have directly perceived how the Vedic texts are connected to rituals and their results, see Chemparathy 1983. Yāska’s *Nirukta* 1.20 stresses the ability of the *rsis* to perceive *dharma* directly, while later generations lack it: ‘There were seers who directly perceived dharma(s). By [their] instruction they transmitted the [Vedic] mantras to the later ones, who did not directly perceive dharma(s)’ (tr. Ruegg 1994, 308).

45 Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana, for instance, explains: ‘A teacher (*upadeṣṭā*) who has directly perceived *dharma* and is motivated by the desire to communicate the matter as he has seen it and is capable to do so, is “trustworthy” (*āpta*)’. *Nyāyabhāṣya* on *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.7.

46 See *Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* on *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.68, which resonates with Buddhist as well as early *bhakti* texts.

47 In a similar vein, but with an emphasis on the trustworthiness of the statement itself, the author of the *Yuktidīpikā* and philosopher of Sāṃkhya explains: “‘Trustworthy’ (*āpta*) is the utterance of someone who is free from passion etc.; it serves the purpose of another and is the cause [for a cognition] that cannot be obtained [with other means of knowledge]’ (*āptā nāma rāgādīviyuktasyāgrhyamānakāraṇā parārthā vyāhṛtiḥ*, YD on *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 5, 87, 4).

48 The alternative would be to keep one’s insights to oneself and just pursue an individually discovered truth privately. This option is a topic, for instance, in the case of the Buddha when he is depicted in the Pali Canon as being reluctant to teach after he has awakened to the ‘noble

Exponents of the Veda rejected these views and argued that only the words of the Veda are reliable since they are by definition ‘unalterable’ (*akṣara*) ‘truth-formulations’ (*brahman*) that were ‘seen’ and then voiced by ancient sages (*ṛṣi*). This position is elaborated in the philosophical school of Mīmāṃsā by means of the doctrine of the ‘authorlessness’ (*apauruṣeyatva*) of the Veda (so-called *śruti*). Philosophers such as Kumārila Bhaṭṭa refuse to accord individualised truth-claims a status on a par with the Veda.⁴⁹ At the most, they would accept them as *smṛti*, less authoritative texts composed by human authors. Mīmāṃsā philosophers argue that human beings are not reliable as they are subject to egotistical impulses and therefore prone to errors. This makes their words structurally unreliable. This argument also applies to ‘eternal’ persons, that is *bhakti* gods, such as Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, or (later divinised) philosopher / teachers, such as Kapila or the Buddha, since they need a body (the site of egotistical impulses) in order to instruct people about *dharma*. Mīmāṃsā philosophers would also not accept the claim formulated in *bhakti* texts and endorsed by later Nyāya philosophers⁵⁰ that the ‘highest’ god is the creator of the Veda. In this respect, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Nārāyaṇīya*, the early *bhakti* texts transmitted in the epic, differ from later theological-philosophical justifications of *bhakti* that seek to prove that their texts and practices are rooted in the Veda (*vedamūlatva*). These developments demonstrate that the religious pluralisation in the period under discussion does not simply continue. Instead, we see a reassertion of Brahmanical normativity that, *inter alia*, aimed at restricting a further proliferation of religious individualisation in the context of *bhakti* and other religious traditions.

truths’, as well as in the figure of the *pratyekabuddha* (Pali: *paccekabuddha*), the Buddha who is a Buddha for himself only; see Kloppenburg 1983. See also *MBh* 12.9.3ff. on the attractiveness of solitary asceticism as the ‘blissful’ path one travels all alone.

49 As is emphasised, for instance, by Taber 1992, 205: ‘Mīmāṃsā fundamentally rejects the ability of humans to know any transcendent matters’. This also applies to the idea that the Veda is created by (an) *īśvara* (creator god, god as cosmic sovereign) as propagated in some of the monotheistic *bhakti* traditions; see also Clooney 1987, who includes modern ideas of ‘authorlessness’ in his discussion of this position.

50 Later Nyāya texts, such as Udāyana’s *Nyāyakusumāñjali* (10–11th century), defend the authority and validity of scripture and verbal testimony (including the Veda) by arguing that it was produced and promulgated by the eternal creator god (*īśvara*), thus rejecting the Mīmāṃsā doctrine of the ‘authorless’ eternity of Veda; see Chemparathy 1972.

6 Trustworthy ‘eternal’ persons in the epic

As in philosophical discourse, the reliability and authority of the words of an individual is depicted in the epic as depending not only on the reasons provided for recommending a certain doctrine but also on the qualifications of speaker. Thus, epic texts emphasise the speaker’s disinterestedness and his freedom from ‘desire and anger’. Compassion (*anukampa*) and the concern for ‘the welfare of all beings’ (*sarvabhūtahita*) serve as credentials. In addition to this, the personal relationship between the teacher (revealing his divinity in the course of the instruction) and the person approaching him plays a prominent role in the two longer epic instructions about *bhakti*. The ‘conversation’ (*saṃvāda*) between two individuals constitutes not only the narrative situation but also the form of instruction.⁵¹ The authorisation of the instruction is connected to a personal relationship based on acceptance and trust.⁵² This is highlighted, for instance, when audiences are asked to have *śraddhā*, confidence in the efficacy of a doctrine, because of the authority of the teacher.⁵³ The trustworthiness of the teacher is mirrored by the trustfulness of the suitable disciple.⁵⁴ Trust plays an important role in the process of establishing the authority of individual-based religious-philosophical knowledge, since it is intrinsically connected with the relational character of authorisation. The confidence in the goals and practices taught by the teacher must be stable in order to ensure one’s success. This means ‘keeping the faith’ even in situations that seem to disprove it, or when one is censured by others. The emphasis on the actual teaching situation is thus an

51 In this respect, these dialogues differ from the collective discussions in household contexts as the arena for voicing opinions and giving advice. See, for instance, the household discussion about Yudhiṣṭhira’s wish to give up kingship and become an ascetic at *MBh* 12.6–38; or the deliberations about war and peace in Book five. These household discussions also differ from the ‘verbal contest’ (*brahmodaya*) between teachers attested in Vedic literature.

52 See, for instance, *BhG* 4.3, when Kṛṣṇa makes Arjuna’s being his devotee and friend the foundation as well as the motive for revealing his teaching; in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, the Brahman sage Nārada has to declare his credentials before he is instructed how to approach the god Nārāyaṇa (cf. *MBh* 12.322).

53 See, for instance, *BhG* 3.31–2, where Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to have confidence in ‘my doctrine’ (*me matam*).

54 See, for instance, *BhG* 3.31, 4.39–40, 6.47, 7.21–2, 9.3, 23, 12.2, 20 etc. *Śraddhā* is one of the key terms already in Vedic literature wherein it refers to the confidence in the efficacy of Vedic rituals and becomes manifest in the willingness to pay the priests a reward for their services. In some texts, *śraddhā* is also used when dealing with confidence in persons of authority; see Köhler 1948, and Hacker 1963. In a number of epic texts, *śraddhā* is intertwined with *bhakti* and refers to the trust in the efficacy of the word of god and the devotion to him; see Hara 1964 and 1979 on the difference between *bhakti* and *śraddhā*.

important feature of the promulgation of *bhakti* doctrines in the *Mahābhārata*, which highlight individualised relationships between god and devotee as the foundation of religious practice. The various ways of relating to the embodied, visible presence of an otherwise transcendent god determines the religious life of a devotee in ways that could even result in ignoring or rejecting social norms. The spectacular character of the ‘vision’ (*darśana*) of the divinity granted to the devotee in both the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Nārāyaṇīya* serves to substantiate the verbal testimony by reference to empirical evidence and provides a context for god’s iconic representation in places of worship. It unfolds against the background of god’s presence in the human body of the teacher. The authorisation of *bhakti* to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgītā* and to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in the *Nārāyaṇīya* draws on both these aspects: while its promulgation depends on a body of teachings and an embodied teacher, its authorisation draws on the criteria of the larger discourse on this issue in combining specific characteristics of their personality with the ‘empirical evidence’ of a theophany. Yet in both texts there are also marked attempts to realign *bhakti* with Vedic rituals and Brahmanical normativity.⁵⁵

The acceptance of temporarily embodied ‘eternal’ persons as authoritative instructors is contested not only in philosophical discourse but also in the epics. It highlights the need for the new teachings to address the tension between the embodied, temporally situated, promulgation of the knowledge and the claim that it has ahistorical validity. One way to counter the Brahmanical insistence on the ‘eternity’ of the Veda as the reason for its insurmountable authority was to make ‘eternity’ or some ‘transcendent’ state of existence a characteristic feature of the ‘trustworthy’ instructor. The ‘eternal’ Veda is countered with the ‘eternal’ person (a divine or liberated being). This results in an ambiguous positioning of the ‘historical’ teacher as both human and divine. This may explain why there is a considerable overlap in the depictions of human-styled teachers, such as the Buddha, and the new *bhakti* gods appearing in a body (*tanu*, *avatāra*).⁵⁶ In this

55 This can be seen in passages in the epic that aim at replacing, or at least reconnecting, the *bhakti* doctrines of the *BhG* with Brahmanical norms; this tendency is already apparent in *BhG* 17; see Malinar 2007a. In the *Nārāyaṇīya*, the god Nārāyaṇa is depicted as endorsing Vedic rituals and protecting the Vedic gods; for a comparison between these two texts, see Malinar 1997.

56 This is clearly formulated in the *BhG* 9.11ff., for instance when Kṛṣṇa says he has taken a ‘human body’ in order to promulgate his divinity, while also pointing out that this should not be a reason to disrespect his tenets. It is also pointed out at *BhG* 7.6 that the god appears in an ‘apparitional’ or ‘artificial’ body that is not subject to *karman*. Although the *BhG* does not use the word *avatāra*, the idea of divine embodiments (the basis of what is known as the ‘*avatāra*-doctrine’) is present in the text, see Malinar 2007a. In a similar vein, Buddhism develops the ‘three-body’ (*trikāya*) doctrine of the Buddha; see Reynolds 1977. When later Nyāya philosophers like Udaya-

way, the historically proclaimed new knowledge is turned into a manifestation of a trans-historical truth by according the teacher a transcendent, eternal state of being. A ‘highest’ god has to take a human body in order to reveal himself to his devotees; conversely, human teachers tend to be divinized, or are viewed as the embodiment of a transcendent state or divinity by their adherents. They show as well as represent the path to be followed. They are themselves the *pramāṇa*, the reliable authority and means of knowledge, as well as the guarantor of the efficacy of their instruction.⁵⁷ In this way, the temporal quality of the statements of trustworthy persons entwines with a trans-historical truth-claim and the individualised, embodied character of its authorisation. Religious-philosophical knowledge also obtains an experiential, personal dimension, since the teacher is regarded as the living proof of the fruitfulness of practising it. His activities as attested in the stories about his life serve as corroborative evidence for the words spoken. They highlight the exceptionality, as well as the exemplariness, of the ‘trustworthy person’ and extend the issue of the relational structure of acceptance and persuasion to literary forms of representation (as can be seen in the emergence of the new genre of *carita*, ‘life-history’).

7 Conclusion

It is not being as unique or different as everybody else (and thus sharing a commonly acknowledged equality as an individual) that constitutes individuality in the sources discussed here, as is the case with modern individualism, but, rather, exceptionality and exemplariness in the realisation of a religious-philosophical knowledge, as well as skilfulness and expertise in exposing it.⁵⁸ The authority of an individual can be assessed by means of a catalogue of characteristic features. In this way, exceptionality is intertwined with exemplariness as the foundation of the authority of an individual in religious matters. The combination of exemplariness and exceptionality results in an ambiguous perception. While in some respects the teacher continued to be remembered as an individual with specific

na accept the doctrine that an *īśvara*, a creator god or cosmic sovereign, creates the Veda, they also postulate that he has an artificial body (*nirmāṇakāya*) or instrument body (*upakaraṇaśarīra*) to carry out this task; see Chemparathy 1972, 148–57.

57 See *BhG* 4.11 on the god Kṛṣṇa setting the pathway to follow and *BhG* 16.24 on his ‘authoritative teaching’ (*śāstra*) as *pramāṇa*; the teaching (*dharma*) promulgated by the god Nārāyaṇa in the form of an authoritative text (*śāstra*) is made the *pramāṇa* at *MBh* 12.322.38–41 and 12.328.22ff.

58 See Rüpke 2013 on similar elements of individualisation in Roman antiquity in contrast to modern individualism and its emphasis on ‘being different’.

doctrines and a life-story, in other respects his very exceptionality resulted in interpretations that tended to de-individualise him. On the one hand, the emphasis on the exceptional can result in ascribing the teacher divine characteristics while, on the other, the authority of the teacher becomes part of a larger discourse on the authority of verbal testimony (*śabda*) in matters of the 'highest good' and 'invisible goals'. This becomes obvious in the emerging philosophical schools and their different interpretations of what constitutes the authority and validity of the statements of a person. It also marks the transition from the juxtaposition of individual 'opinions' (*mati*) in the *Mahābhārata* to the establishment of a philosophical expert discourse for dealing with 'elaborated doctrines' (*mata*) as the framework for evaluating such 'opinions'. Instead of recording the current confusion about what is 'best' (*śreyas*) by juxtaposing different views, as is done in the epic, philosophers seek to create a referential framework that authorises as well as controls pluralisation and individualisation.

All these processes are connected to contemporary socio-political contexts at different levels. The previous analysis points to the interest of supporters of new religious-philosophical ideas in endorsing individual authority and individualised religious practices. At the same time, plurality and individuals claiming authority were increasingly met with scepticism and even outright rejection by representatives of the Vedic-Brahmanical tradition, not only in the epic but also in the field of philosophy. This situation is also mirrored in a reconfiguration of the religious practices of householders in the socio-political realm and in intellectual discourse, as well as in a broadening of the social spectrum of householders engaged in the pursuit of new religious goals. Authority in matters of *dharma* is no longer exclusively in the hands of Brahmanical teachers, although they continue to play an important role in the epic and the (re)assertion of their authority has left its mark in many parts of the text. This connects the epic to efforts (apparently shared by both new and old religious teachers) to establish a referential framework that authorises only exceptional, highly skilful individuals in specific religious contexts and under certain conditions. While individualised forms of religious practice and individual opinions about the 'highest good' are recorded and represented in the *Mahābhārata*, they are only explicitly recommended in cases of exceptional persons, who are at some point declared to be embodiments of a transcendent god (and even they do not remain uncontested in the epic). Otherwise, they are either censured – in particular in the case of women – or presented without further comments, as is the case with the Tulādhāra story. In these cases, the very inclusion of a particular instruction or religious-philosophical position in the epic is a sign of approval and authorisation by composers and redactors of the epic, as well as by patrons of manuscript production and the various audiences who constituted the pluriform ideological environment of the

epic.⁵⁹ The various doubts, opinions, and instructions included in this text thus remain accessible as modes of thinking and acting, documenting religious plurality as well as the controversies that surrounded it.⁶⁰

Another aspect of the re-configuration of the household is that compliance with Vedic ritualism does not rule out personal engagement with other forms of religion or even a selective approach to the spectrum of ordained ritual duties. The interpretation of the place of Vedic rituals, for instance, for householders who have become devotees of a 'highest' personal god can take quite different forms, as the epic attests. Thus, promulgations of 'highest *bhakti*' that advise against worshipping other gods stand side by side with a doctrine of *bhakti* that includes ritual care for Vedic gods. The latter option is particularly important for householders as it allows them to continue Vedic rituals (most importantly the *samskāras*, so-called 'life-cycle' rituals ensuring socio-ritual status), while also adopting *bhakti*, or Sāṃkhya philosophy, or even Buddhism as their personal religious pathway. Yet doubting too much, or engaging in one's religious pursuit while openly rejecting social normativity, or misjudging one's competence in assessing religious accomplishments, invited censure, in particular in the case of women. Another aspect of this re-configuration is that ascetic renunciation ceases to be the only form in which one could concentrate one's life on a religious quest directed at 'liberation'. The case of the merchant Tulādhāra demonstrates that religious authority can be based on the insight that one's daily occupations are in fact the training ground for religious practice.

Pluralisation and individualisation found support in decentralised forms of patronage and an intellectual discourse that accepted authoritative texts and verbal testimony by trustworthy persons as a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). But both the epic and philosophical discourse also point to the resistance against these developments and to efforts to delimit the dynamics of such individualisation and pluralisation by restricting individual authority and individualised religiosity. The pluralisation of religious-philosophical knowledge thus resulted both in a proliferation of individualised forms of engagement with the religious field and in various attempts to restrict and delimit the latter by subjecting it to new criteria of acceptance. While this double-edged process is accompanied by what can be generalised as 'de-traditionalisation' at various

⁵⁹ This is also pointed out by Bakker and Bisschop (1999, 468) with respect to the inclusion of various versions of Sāṃkhya philosophy in the epic.

⁶⁰ The recognition of these texts as a whole (but not necessarily in all of them) as authoritative is already sought in the epic itself with its claim to be the 'fifth Veda'; see Malinar 2011b. Its 'official' endorsement happens when it is regarded by advocates of the sole authority of the Veda as *smṛti*, a text of (secondary) authority.

levels (criticism, dissent, adoption of alternative texts and practices, turning to new teachers, etc.), it was by no means one-directional and nor did it necessarily result in a replacement of the old by the new. It led, rather, to various re-configurations of the ‘transmitted knowledge’ of the Veda in view of changing socio-political frameworks and a pluralised, competitive field of available religious-philosophical teachings. This may point to the fact that processes of individualisation may not only be followed by processes of de-individualisation in a later period or as resulting in more and more individualisation, but also as continuously being intertwined with groups and institutions contesting and rejecting it.

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Jörg Rüpke

Ritual objects and religious communication in lived ancient religion: multiplying religion

How can religion be described from the individual's perspective and as practiced by the individual? This fundamental question lies behind any approach to ancient Mediterranean religion that deals with individual agency in religious contexts, from an elite's self-styled *sacra publica* ('rituals on behalf of the commonwealth') to groupings centring on a god, *secta dei* ('sect of the God', as Tertullian says). Traditionally, ancient religion has been conceptualised as collective action within a coherent political framework (usually a city-state, a 'polis') and, thus, as involving a shared system of gods, ritual rules, and meanings (for criticism of the concept of civic religion see Bendlin 2000; Rüpke 2012; Rüpke 2016a). To allow for the evident religious plurality in our sources, 'elective cults' have been identified in earlier scholarship (e.g. North 1992; Price 2012) by postulating a personal network, if not an organisation, lying behind practices that use the same name for the central divine addressee(s). The paradigm of 'group religion' (see the contributions in Rüpke 2007a) has been helpful to describe a wide variety of religious practices outside of, or only loosely coordinated with, 'public religion', but it does not do away with the central role of individuals in religious cooperation and the formation of groups (Rüpke 2007a, b; Rebillard and Rüpke 2015; Lichterman et al. 2017).

I will address this problem by proposing an analytical model of religion which describes religion as an individual resource that enlarges agency, strengthens identity, and furthers communicative success. My paper will draw on recent social, and social psychological, research as well as on discussions of the concept of religion within the discipline of the History of Religion. Stressing the place of the individual agent in the notion of 'religion' by referring to agency, collective and personal identity, and communication, this paper will open up new perspectives on 'objects'.

The original intellectual background to this paper is the work of the research group 'Religious Individualisation in Historical Perspective' at the Max Weber Center. The research group studied and challenged the widespread practice of dichotomically assigning individualisation and individual religious agency to

Note: The ideas in this paper have been developed within the Kolleg-Forschergruppe 'Religious Individualisation in Historical Perspective', based at the University of Erfurt and financed by the German Science Foundation (DFG) under KFOR 1013. I am grateful to Paul Scade, who (again) improved not only the flow of the text but also the clarity of the argument. Remaining mistakes are mine.

modernity, while characterising antiquity, as far as religion is concerned, in terms of the collective (concise summary Fuchs and Rüpke 2015; Fuchs 2015). The basis for this position, which we criticise, is a specific definition of religion. Religion is defined, often by reference to the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), as a collective enterprise, a definition that has frequently been criticised for its inability to adequately take account of non-Western religious developments.

If religion is conceptualised from the methodological point of view of the individual and his or her social context, it is not ‘systems’ of belief or practices as elaborated by internal or external observers that will be the object of such a research strategy. Such systems could be appropriated by individual agents only partially and imperfectly (for the concept of appropriation, see Certeau 2007, 1984, and Füssel 2006; the imperfect reproduction remains constitutive for de Certeau: Certeau 1987). Instead, it is lived (ancient) religion in its individual variations, its situations, and social constellations, that will be the subject of scrutiny (Rüpke 2012; Rüpke 2016a, 2016c). Only rarely do such interactions grow together into networks, organisations, or written texts which might develop an existence of their own and then resemble what we used to regard as ‘religions’. It is this ‘lived ancient religion’ that a subsequent research group (named after its object of study) has, over the past few years, tried to grasp and turn into the basis for a larger narrative about ancient religion and the way it changed and developed (summarised in Rüpke 2016b). In the context of the present publication, I would like briefly to sketch the background theory before turning to examples of the diversification and multiplication of religious expressions and choices, and then narrowing the focus to the place of objects within such processes.

1 Religion

Let me start with the most general framework, religious action (the following is based on Rüpke 2015). Where is religion to be found in the context of the individual, if it is not to be looked for primarily in society, in collective phenomena? How should it be conceptualised if it is accepted that the individual is not isolated from society?

Before I start to sketch my model, I offer a definition. In the context of my interest in religious change, I define religious action as *risky communication with or about not unquestionably plausible agents*. To enter in such a communication changing the situation, in which this communication takes place. Whether these agents are seen as gods, demons, or dead relatives is a matter of the relevant his-

torical context. I do not say that this is religion but that for the understanding of religious change in antiquity (and comparable contexts) it is useful to understand religion in this manner.

In pursuing a phenomenological approach, I propose to examine three different areas:

- 1) Where does religion strengthen the individual's agency, that is, his or her competence and creativity to deal with daily and extraordinary problems?
- 2) How does it contribute to the individual's forming of his or her 'collective identities', that is, orientations or convictions that make the individual act or think as an imagined part of a group or a social formation of different form and intensity?
- 3) What is the role of religion in interpersonal communication; how is religion strategically invoked as, and solidified into, a medium of communication, which in turn provokes and shapes further communication?

I am interested in analysing religion from the point of view of the actor, the agent. I hope thus to also contribute to the understanding of the successful functioning of religion in larger, public contexts as well as in instances of ancient individuals' appropriation and shaping of religion couched in the semantics of religious grouping, or even more atomised forms of religious plurality. It is this new lens through which we can look upon religion that I like to call 'lived ancient religion'.

2 Religious agency

Interpretative sociology and cultural anthropology have understood human behaviour as meaningful action, an understanding which is to be considered against the backdrop of socially produced meaning. The Pragmatist approaches taken by American sociologists since the early twentieth century have refined such analyses. Action is above all acting in order to solve problems. Time and again the individual faces situations that cannot simply be treated in preconceived ways, employing established aims and meanings. In the face of an imminent problem that needs to be solved, the individual develops or modifies aims and meanings within their course of action, or they modify pre-existing aims and meanings. After all, the acting person is always part of a social context that includes all of that context's other agents and traditions of action. Within a concrete and contingent space of possibilities the agent can be creative and develop new solutions (Joas 1996). Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische have briefly sketched this background and have refined a concept of 'agency' against such a pragmatist back-

ground. Religion is not one of the topics they reflect upon but their employment of the notion of time within a theory of action is very useful for a concept of religion that is centred on the individual actor.

'Agency', in the understanding Emirbayer and Mische, is 'the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations' (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 970). The notion of agency is defined and developed on three temporal levels. a) Ever more elaborate and successful 'schematizations' are developed by the agent with regard to past action and with the aim of establishing routines. b) The agent develops 'hypotheses', which have an increasingly large time horizon, with regard to the future consequences of his or her acting; thus the agent is projecting such actions into the future. c) As far as the agent needs to evaluate the present situation in terms of practicality and needs to develop an appraisal of the situation within the social context, the agents develop ever more adequate 'contextualizations' based on their growing social experience (*ibid.*, 975, 983, 993). It is not the individual who 'has' agency but, rather, in dealing with the structural context in a given situation the individual acts agentially: 'the actors engage agentially with their structuring environments'. In this sense, structure and agency constitute each other (*ibid.*, 1004). What does this imply for specifically religious action? I will briefly suggest a number of phenomena that come into sharper focus through pursuing the suggested line of inquiry.

For the development of schematisations out of past experience, one's own and those of others, a historian of religion has to inquire how religious acting is learnt and made available for use in specific situations. What are the contexts of religious learning? How do observation, restricted or accompanied participation, and informal or even formal teaching interact with each other? How do individuals learn to interpret experiences as religious? How can they develop new religious roles or take on a religious personal name?

Projecting into the future requires temporal structures that can be used to order future time. Who introduces new festivals or reforms festival dates? How can processes of change in institutions, for example the genesis of new priesthoods or the modification of existing priesthoods, can be considered from the perspective of agency?

The reinterpretation of social experience for the evaluation of the present possibilities of a situation that has arisen and can now be further developed offers a lot of space for religious action. Temporal rhythms might be changed by practices of sacralisation; the locus of action could be changed by employing local ritual action in order to deal with spatially distant problems; religious competences, for

instance those of religious specialists, might be transferred or derogated due to new arguments of religious legitimacy; political decisions might be influenced by invoking oracles (*ibid.*, 1000–2).

To summarise, the enlargement of the environment defined as relevant for the situation through the introduction of ‘divine’ actors or instances is typical for religion. It is, most likely, this strategy that opens up new realms of imagination and creative individual intervention, thus enlarging agency (see the hypotheses *ibid.*, 1006–7). At the same time, this very mechanism can seriously diminish agency for religious actors, since they might also attribute all further agency to such divine actors, leading them to wait for miracles or at least some form of explicit divine inspiration before taking any further action.

3 Religious identity

The concept of collective identity has been justly criticised insofar as it is used to postulate a permanent or even exclusive individual awareness of belonging or to imply that those who are ascribed permanent membership in some social group maintain a continuous self-description as a member (see Rebillard 2012, who opts for the concept of ‘salient identity’). I have, for a long time, refused to use the concept of identity at all and still prefer the plural ‘identities’. However, given the effects of even vague forms of belonging on individual behaviour, empirically validated in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1974, 69 for the definition of ‘group’; Turner 1975; summary: Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 1999), it is difficult to get rid of the concept. In order to develop an empirically rich concept of religion (which covers a wide range of phenomena), it is useful to enlarge the perspective on action that is implied in the concept of ‘agency’ when viewed through the lens of the concept of ‘collective identity’. At the same time, it is necessary to employ a differentiated and dynamic concept of such identities. Recent research in social psychology has made a number of attempts to identify such a concept (e.g. Cameron 2004, 241, who distinguishes three factors of cognitive centrality for the individual agent, ingroup-affect, and ingroup-obligations). I will follow the proposal of three psychologists from New York who argue for a sevenfold scheme that is sufficiently rich to fully, distinctively, and sufficiently grasp the facets of the phenomenon. Again, religion is of no importance for their modelling. All factors are conceptualised on the level of the individual, not of the group.

The elements listed by Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe are: self-categorisation; the evaluation of membership (whatever its form) by individuals and their perception of others’ judgments; the importance ascribed to this par-

ticular group membership; the attachment to the group, that is the emotional involvement felt and the sense of interdependence (a feeling potentially producing a large overlap of personal and collective identity); ‘the degree to which a particular collective identity is embedded in the person’s everyday ongoing relationships’ (social embeddedness); the shaping of the individual’s behaviour by the particular collective identity; and, finally, the whole cognitive dimension of imaginations and narratives about the values, characteristics, and history of the relevant group as known and maintained by the person (Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004, 83). Given the widespread critique of the diverse concepts of ‘religions’ as over-emphasising institutional features, it is important to stress that ‘group’ here does not imply any organised association but, rather, any situational grouping of actors (not only human) to which the individual ascribes him- or herself or from which observers distance themselves. Of course, this might lead to highly complex collective identities and multiple belongings (and distancing, *ibid.*, 84).

How ‘religion’ (which will be more precisely defined below) is involved in a particular historical and cultural context and how this involvement might change over time or through processes of entanglement, is a matter of contingency, not of definition. Scholars of religion are concerned with familial identities relating to primary social groups as well as concerned with secondary groups. They are concerned with the different roles of local, regional, and trans-regional identities, and the transfers and interferences between them (see Jones 2012 for ancient ‘Greek’ identities). It is of the utmost importance that any essentialisation of these groups and associations be avoided. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu, archaeologists focusing on material survivals have warned about making any direct interference from material objects to correspondingly hardened social relationships. Thus, a perspective that ‘community is something [...] which is done’ (van Dommelen, Gerritsen and Knapp 2005), needs to be stressed.

One might conceptualise religious identities as particular frameworks of situations and hence integrate them within the action-theoretical model of agency. Likewise, acting might be described as a situational result of identities (see Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 992, who point to the frequently retrospective character of the concept of identity). However, by differentiating frameworks and identities, the dynamics and diachronic structure of the concept of ‘agency’ can be combined with the synchronic analysis of the horizontal structure of social context. Importance is, thus, attributed to both poles, structure and agency. Finally, by replacing an essentialised concept of ‘religions’ (plural) with a complex model of collective and individual identity we are able to analyse processes involved in the formation of religious groups in terms of their differing trajectories and varying strength. This is particularly important for the study of religion in antiquity.

4 Religious communication

By taking the concept of communication on board, the analytical approach acquires additional dimensions that further enrich its ability to provide a description of religion. First and foremost, communication is carried out by individuals, whether as communicator or part of an audience. Even in the context of mass communication, the reactions of those addressed could vary widely. Even if a message reached its addressee and was understood, it could still be interpreted and evaluated in very different manners by different individuals (see Chandler 2011, s.v. 'active audience theory').

The classical semantic theory of communication starts from the relationship between sender and receiver. The addressing person acts as the source. A signal is transmitted to the addressee and received as information, command, or the like. Elaboration of the model have concentrated on either the processes of encoding and decoding the message intended or on the social context, the setting of the communicative act, conceived of as small or large. Every communication based on primary media (language, body language, signs used face to face by sender and addressee), at the least, is full of interaction. Conversely, every interaction implies communication. In the extreme case of symbolic interaction, action is determined by the intention to transmit a message, even if highly encoded.

Relevance theory, as developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, presupposes the encoding and decoding activities implied in the elementary use of language and integrates the complexities of human communication in a model that is based on the assumption that 'human cognition is relevance-oriented' (Sperber and Wilson 1987, 700). One acts on the most relevant stimuli found in the environment. The same holds true for communication. In communication the communicator's informative intention to make his assumptions manifest or more manifest to an audience goes together with the need to make this informative intention mutually understood. This could be insured by stimuli which make this intention clear; this latter aspect is called 'ostensive-inferential communication' (700). As a result of communication, the mutual cognitive environment changes (699). Given the many stimuli for the potential audience, the ostensive stimuli must raise the expectation of optimal relevance of the ensuing communication. The gestures, music, and objects usually involved in religious action provide ample evidence. That is to say, the effort necessary to process the information (used in the broadest possible sense) must seem worthwhile for the audience. The communicator must produce the most relevant information she or he is willing and able to produce (Wilson and Sperber 2002, 257f.). Comprehension then means simultaneously constructing hypotheses about the explicit content, about the

intended contextual assumptions (the implied premises) and the intended contextual implications (the implicated conclusions, *ibid.*, 262).

Religious communication has not yet been addressed within this framework in any substantial way, so I offer here a first approach to the topic. One strategy for gaining relevance in religious communication is to use specific intermediaries. These are seen as ‘media’: persons especially sensitive to divine messages. The frequent presence of religious specialists (‘priests’, ‘seers’, aged or young individuals) raises the problem of religious ‘competence’, potentially a paradigm for agency and power, and its distribution and restriction. The imperial period, with its processes of the professionalisation of some religious specialists and the discussion of the legitimacy of claims of divine revelations, underwent important changes in this respect.

The material presence of media acts as a further stimulus and enlarges the dyadic perspective of human-divine communication to secondary addressees, audiences, witnesses, connoisseurs, and tourists. The choice of media or ‘stimuli’ constitutes such circles. Thus, spoken prayer and written curse, familial sacrifice and public processions, constitute very different audiences.¹ Certain forms of communication with the divine might be monopolised, as the late ancient ‘expropriation of the diviners’ (Fögen 1993) demonstrates. In order to undermine the assumption that the divine is permanently attentive, scarcity might be construed and removed – the ancient Greek practice of privileging certain persons or representatives of certain cities queuing for oracles (*promanteía*) illustrates both mechanisms (on which, see Latte 1968). Communication cannot be interpreted without regard to power and social inequalities. Thus it adds considerably to the actor-centred approach proposed here.

This leads back to the specifics of relevance theory. If the pragmatics of communication with the divine lead to specific and extraordinary stimuli in order to gain the recognition of the gods, the introduction of religious communications into ordinary communication makes for an extraordinary stimulus as well. Extraordinary relevance is claimed by introducing gods in the context of inter-human, interpersonal communication and thus alters the latter’s rules. The many permanent forms of media of religious communication attest to their importance, while their survival attests to the success of this kind of communication. They help to utilise, easily repeat, or recurrently introduce religious elements in agential action or collective identity.

¹ For the dimensions of the concept of ‘public’ in a history of religion perspective, see Gladigow 1995; Rüpke 1995, 605–28; Fine 2010; Mullaney, Vanhaelen and Ward 2010; Wolson and Yachnin 2010.

5 Bringing objects into religious action

Within the triangle of communication formed by agents, media, and addressees, I have concentrated above all on the first and sometimes on the third corner, largely leaving aside the media of religious action or communication, and in particular those cases in which the latter take the form of objects that have a material presence beyond the situation.

I claim that the framework produced so far helps us to understand object-related practices and their change. A few examples, taken from a larger study of religious transformations in the ancient Mediterranean world (Rüpke 2016b), will help show how the individual perspective, informed by theoreticians of the material turn, Bruno Latour's actor-network-theory in particular (Latour 2005; see also Gosden 2005; Hodder 2012; Raja and Weiss 2015), helps us understand religious diversity and plurality.

Perhaps already at the end of the sixth century BC, simple clay heads (or racks bearing such heads?) were being used in the Campetti district of Veii (Steingraber 1980, 224–6). The practice was only haltingly imitated but became very popular from the end of the fifth century BC. Ceramicists could cater to the new demand with a novel technology probably available in Italy from the end of the sixth century: the mass production of likenesses by the use of either a single or a dual matrix (Hofter 2010, 70; hand-fashioned heads and portraits: 72–3). Throughout central Italy, especially at the larger cult locations, people were offered a supply of heads or – surely cheaper – half-reliefs of heads that they could use for religious communication. The objects themselves prompted the uses to which they could be put, many of them being provided with rings at their base by which they could be stood securely on podia or benches, in chests or showcases, and even on the ground if such a position was appropriate. The half-reliefs, on the other hand, had provision for being hung (Steingraber 1980, 234; on visibility and invisibility: Bagnasco Gianni 2005).

The quality of these objects often left something to be desired. The backs and edges remained unworked. After several hundred castings, the moulds were worn or had faults that were only superficially retouched. The products remained unpainted and almost always uninscribed: a lack of purchasing power was combined with a deficient level of literacy. Many were fashioned as need dictated by the purchasers themselves, while others were individually finished, after the manner of a portrait. Notwithstanding such differences, the message conveyed to gods and humans by displaying the head was of a similar nature. For all the splendid architecture and decoration, for all that we know about the patrons of this place and their position as members of economic, military, political – and now, to top it all, religious – elites, the agents underlined that they, too, were

present. It cannot have escaped many of the actors that their heads would at some point be cleared away or taken down, and then thrown into pits or shafts. Despite this knowledge, in this way the actors appropriated these locations redolent of superhuman powers and human potentates, took possession of them in a way that was legitimated by the fact that their actions were religiously based – even if only for the time that their heads were present.

Where religious activity allowed some individuals self-representation through architectural splendour, thus at the same time representing an attempt to guide religious practices in particular directions, it allowed others to appropriate the very same spaces by modifying elite practices and, in so doing, to claim recognition of their own concerns and desires. Such appropriations needed legitimisation. It is precisely in Rome and Latium that frequent signs of coverings to the backs of the clay heads of simple actors provide clear evidence that the whole gesture is thus presented as one of specifically religious communication (Söderlind 2005, 362; Comella 2004, 337; see also 333 on the representation of covered heads in Latin-region statues). Clay heads vied with built structures in this way until the end of the second century BC. Broad social strata and elites entered into an indirect trade-off in central Italy; the mass presence of objects originating from a multitude of hands had the effect not only of appropriating the religious infrastructure but also of strengthening it by contributing crucially to the sacralisation (Rüpke 2013) of structures and precincts. Here was a medium that served quite different purposes in many parts of Greece, while often undergoing similar processes of popularisation. In Greece, however, gods or gods in the presence of humans (thus perhaps implying tactics similar to the Italian ones) were the main theme of the clay reliefs (Steingraber 1980, 251; cf. Comella 2002).

But it was not only heads that were depicted. If the head could stand *pars pro toto* for the whole person, the same role might also be assigned to other body parts. While such parts as eyes, feet, arms, and legs were still so to speak of a public nature, the same could not be said of the external sexual organs, breasts and penises, and internal organs such as the lungs, intestines, or uterus. Anyone presenting the latter category of body parts within the public space of cult structures evidently understood such spaces primarily as settings for intimate communication with those that were to be addressed there, as well as one form of individual appropriation. The precise content of such attempts at communication remained hidden to later observers. Was the intention to formulate and impress on the memory of the interlocutor quite specific concerns by means of quite specific objects? There is no doubt at all that the practice entered into a medical discourse in which specialist suppliers provided ever more specific representations, perhaps as an element of a consultation or as a diagnostic offer that was by no means anatomically ‘objective’ (for extreme examples, see Recke and

Wamser-Krasznai 2008, 67–9; Charlier 2000). It was perhaps as a consequence of such a conversation and diagnosis that, in the third century BC, a woman from Etruria commissioned a female torso showing, between small, taut breasts and thick folds of fabric over the thighs, a large ovoid opening in the belly displaying the details of internal organs, including a loop of intestine at the lower extremity (Recke and Wamser-Krasznai 2008, Cat. no. 25).

Plautus, the dramaturge and writer of comedies, and later Titinius, were able to address this theme with terminological precision at the turn of the 3rd century BC: their characters wished to ‘fulfil’ a *votum*, or ‘vow’, or were ‘condemned’ to it and so obliged to fulfil it (*Rudens* 60; Titinius, *Comicorum Romanorum Fragmenta* 153). The language was not ancient and does not appear in inscriptions prior to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. The juridical precision of the subject matter and the language it gave rise to suggest that the problem was conceived and resolved in situations in which the bounds of the dialectical space between individual humans and deities were exceeded, that is to say in which demands on the public purse were involved (Scheid 1981). This assumes a developed state system, which did not exist in 6th and 5th century in central Italy and was not achieved in Rome until the second half of the 4th century BC.

For a long period, research into these religious practices did not inquire into the relations between objects and the space in which they were presented, or into the question of whether an object was acquired on the spot or had a long history of usage within the agent’s household, thus holding memories of festivals, periods of hunger, and, perhaps, showing traces of repeated repair. The only relevant questions for such an approach to research were already pre-defined by the well-known answer, that is ‘votive’, *votum*, denoting a sequence of human problems and a promise to the deity in order to secure divine help, then an acknowledgment of this help by means of a ‘votive’ object, a material dedication. On closer inspection, we do not find that this is the only or even oldest answer. Old inscriptions contain, rather, the word *donum*, ‘gift’, if they use any such term at all.

Looking even closer, and with a view to chronology, the idea that somebody can be ‘condemned’ to honour his promise to a god by that god’s appropriate action in response to the human’s previous plea and promise is not ubiquitous. Rather, it is a result of a specific discourse of the third century BC. This discourse tried to address a specific and new problem by giving a more juridical precision to an act of religious communication within a wider social context. Probably, only very few situations of *vovere* in Rome itself existed up to the Second Punic War at the end of the third century BC: at the departure of a commander to the war (*vota nuncupare*), at the construction of temples, and upon the announcement of ‘great games’ (*ludi magni*). According to Livy’s account of Roman history, narratives of other, more individual, *vota* only appear from the end of the Second Punic War onwards. It is not until 200

BC that questions appear to have been asked as to how the body politic could be bound to a regular act of religious communication by means of *vota*, and how *vota* in general could be detached from concrete causes (and resources). The ('great') votive games were counted as periodically recurring events and were linked to a consul's immediately preceding 'five-year vow' (Livy, *Roman history* 31.9.9–10). It was such reflections that were taken up by the comedies referred to above.

The *votum* was not the epitome of Roman piety but, rather, a special means of committing to religious communication substantial resources that were subject to a social disposition. Questions arose as to how, for example, those hundred cattle promised by a Scipio in Spain (Livy 28.38.8), but to be slaughtered in Rome, were to be paid for. In order to deal with such problems, by the end of the 3rd century BC an institution had been developed against a background of increasing statehood in Latium, and perhaps directly in Rome, that, while clearly covering the requisite ground, at the same time also offered a solution for particular problems involved in normal religious communication. Even though the *votum* created some new problems, and might give rise to ridicule, it quickly became popular. Already under the Republic, its use had become so formalised that, at Rimini, Pupius Salvius was able to assume that the abbreviation *VSLM* in his inscription was comprehensible: 'He gladly fulfils the vow as merited by the god' – *votum solvit lubens merito* (*Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae* 241).

I will now turn from religious practices in publicly accessible places to the domestic sphere and move from discussing the third and second centuries BC to the first and later centuries AD. Again, I propose a methodology, a perspective onto practices, that accepts differences as being the result of individual religious agency and individual (even if frequently copied or, better, appropriated) communicative efforts and experiences rather than viewing them as insignificant variations of a predefined set of rules and rituals called 'domestic' or 'family religion'. Thus, again, from an analytical perspective 'religion' is multiplied.

There was no '*religion privée*', no 'domestic religion' in Roman antiquity (against e.g. Laforge 2009). The type of communication that is treated here as religion was, in the first place, a network of practical strategies, experiences, and conceptions, also acts of institutionalisation and shared signs, which came into use, or already defined communication, in different social spaces. These various elements had to be learned and applied constantly to new spaces and situations, and so further developed; above all, however, they always came into confrontation with the religious communication practised by others. This religious competency, comprising knowledge, experience, and also courage and the will to experiment, moved, as the people possessing it moved, through different spaces. Such journeys or displacements, flights or abductions, were themselves presumably only rarely motivated by religious concerns. But the spaces to which they

led were, to a varying extent and through the agency of various actors, already ‘occupied’ by religious signs and actions.

For many in the great imperial-age cities and metropolises, the street as a ‘house’ comprising different rooms constituted the primary living-space. However, the few home-occupiers who were able actively to configure the architectural features and furniture of their homes created an ‘infrastructure’ that could also be used by others in a multitude of ways. Lighting played a major role here, not only in terms of which spaces should be lit and used but also which spatial elements, whether mural decoration or furniture, should thus be moved into the light. Lamps themselves were instruments of religious communication of the first order. Sculpted objects arranged around the wick of either bronze or clay lamps produced a corresponding shadow (Bielfeldt 2014, 202). But the lamp also illuminated itself; figures of gods decorating its aperture might be made to appear brightly illuminated (221). These, in common with other options such as circus scenes or erotic motifs, became real ‘eye-catchers’ that stimulated the gaze, and lamps serving as brilliant ‘eyes’ created the feeling in the observer that he or she was being seen by them.

The same considerations apply to another vital religious instrument: the altar. The decorative, often also richly-decorated, slender Italic altar, and perhaps its portable and collapsible equivalent in bronze, also had its place in the garden (Dräger 1994). It was used as an unmistakable sign of communication with a presence that was not otherwise immediately obvious to the eye, whether that be ‘gods’ or ‘the dead’. Its use was unthinkable without a flame or a libation and the shape of its upper surface invited just this mode of activation. Even in this respect, however, the object was not merely an instrument to be used but, with its decoration depicting ritual procedures and other instruments and materials used in those procedures, it was itself an act of religious communication and ritual that was continually in progress. It could be still further activated with a minimum of effort, by the placing of a lamp and a minimum of speech or song. More might of course be done: baked items of various forms, aspect, taste, and smell were also widely used, as were flowers.

Strategies practised in houses (or in the street) might also be used in institutional spaces designed for religious communication, such as temples and temple grounds. If graffiti were welcome in the home, as an emphatic reaction on the part of invited guests, this minimalised but durable form of linguistic communication may also have played a role within the precincts of temples. This was demonstrably the case at Dura-Europos in the east of the Roman Empire. There, in the temples and assembly buildings of Jews as well as worshippers of Christ and Mithras, users of graffiti endeavoured to perpetuate themselves by placing their requests to be remembered or blessed as close as possible to the foci of religious communication: close to the cult image, on mural paintings, or in corridors

(Stern 2014, esp. 146; in houses: Scheibelreiter-Gail 2012, 161 with instances from the 1st century BC to the 4th century AD). In this way these individuals appropriated the great two- or three-dimensional signifiers of religious communication belonging to others. Of course, altars both great and small, and increasing numbers of lamps as offerings, continued to play a large role in the Imperial Age, to the detriment of depositions (exemplary: Scapaticci 2010, esp. 107).

Architecture itself was a more visible and more effective means of multiplying religion. Collaborating with the architect, those who commissioned temples could express and communicate their desires as to external size and shape, as well as internal design in terms of spatial effect and decoration, and the specifications of the image of the god, its size and positioning in the inner room (see e.g. Davies 2012). This is especially evident in the choice of unusual forms such as the round temple.

A few years after 146 BC (the confirmed date of the first marble temple in Rome), after a successfully foiled pirate attack, a merchant called Marcus Octavius Herennus, who had previously been employed as a flute-player, built a round temple on the Tiber and dedicated it to Hercules Victor. In so doing, and as confirmed by Masurius Sabinus in the early first century AD, he linked his specific interpretation of his own experience with Hercules' general association with successful commerce (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.6.11). It is possible that he was supported by the prominent architect Hermodorus, who was active in this period. The structure – if it is the round temple still visible on the Forum Boarium and this temple is not to be identified with the one built by Lucius Mummius, the victor over Corinth, and also dedicated to Hercules Victor (discussion in Coarelli 1992, 92–103; 185–204) – was unusual in many ways (details: Arnhold and Rüpke 2016). It had neither a podium nor a clearly-defined frontal aspect. The twenty columns stood so close together that they entirely obstructed the view of the core structure, the *cella*, and from a distance also obscured the entrance with its two flanking windows. It was only from a close distance, with the door and windows open, that the statue placed at the centre would have been well-lit and visible. The foundation was built of the widely used Grotta-Oscura tufa but the structure above emphasised innovation and high aesthetics. The interior walls were built of the new but local travertine and the almost ten and a half metre high slender columns were fashioned out of Pentelic marble from Attica. This was surely a demonstration of superior wealth and of the appreciation of Greek culture, similarly visible at multiple locations around Rome, as well as in cultural contexts, in its institutions, and its theatre.

It was probably a few decades later that Quintus Lutatius Catulus continued the experiment with round temples by building a temple of 'Fortuna of the present day' (*Fortuna huiusce diei*) on the Field of Mars, today to be admired as Temple B on the Largo Argentina. The importance that the consul of 102 BC assigned to religious

communication is shown not only by this temple, built in the following year, but also by the fact that, while himself probably lacking a priestly office, he succeeded in having his son co-opted by the pontiffs in the following decade: a son who then in his turn became celebrated by completing in lavish fashion the restoration begun by Sulla of the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter (Rüpke and Glock 2008, no. 2308).

Quite unlike Herennus, Catulus set his round structure on a two and a half metre high podium, and surrounded it with eighteen more substantial pillars, also on Attic bases and with Corinthian capitals, to an overall height approaching eleven metres. The builder gave this structure, one of the series of temples on this square on the Field of Mars, a clear orientation and frontal aspect – it must not be forgotten that the visibility of a temple depended primarily on the degree of development of its surroundings; Rome's narrow streets frequently allowed only short lines of sight (Betts 2011, 129). A broad stairway leads onto the podium, and the entrance lies in the alignment of access behind a widened intercolumnium. Catulus had the cult image placed in such a way that it faced the visitor on a colossal scale and in living colour at the opposite side of the internal space; the visible body parts were of white marble (perhaps with a painted surface), while the rest may have consisted of bronze body armour. With the entrance open, at a height of some eight metres this space-filling deity was visible from a great distance.

Catulus also refers back to the tradition of 'Fortuna', the force of fate, linking her with a radically personal twist on fortune as a visible, even insistent presence: she is the power who helped him at a particular moment. His purpose is entirely polemical. Catulus is here celebrating as his own victory the defeat of the Cimbri at Vercellae (June, 101 BC), won by him *together with* Gaius Marius, the already celebrated commander, an assertion to which the construction of the temple gives monumental relevance. We must not forget that he is doing this in a context in which the presentation of votive objects is a widespread form of popular ritual practice. The marble structure gleams in contrast to the clay objects left on benches and in pits (on this level at the Largo Argentina, see Andreani, Moro and Nuccio 2005). But this itself makes it clear that the temple is not just a building but a representation and perpetuation of a specific religious communication aimed at higher authorities. Of course, Quintus Lutatius also broadcasts his version of events by word of mouth and by the written word, but in the heightened competitive atmosphere of the Late Republic mere tales or assertions were not enough. This is perhaps the underlying reason that narrative friezes on temples played no great role in the pursuit of individual distinction (thus Rous 2011). Pluralisation of religion was above all made visible in new architecture. And new architecture offered space for individual religious experiences and communications that left visible traces for others on a much wider scale, as we saw in the sequence of examples at the very beginning of this chapter.

6 Perspectives on religious objects and object-related rituals

How do these examples fit into the understanding of religion and, above all, religious communication sketched out above? I propose four perspectives from which they can be approached.

- 1) *Relevance*. Objects, as I have already briefly implied, might help to enlarge relevance. They draw attention. This is, of course, not a new idea but the standard interpretation of dedications. It holds true in a vertical dimension, increasing the attention to the gods, as, for instance, when an Aelius Aristides presents a silver tripod. Similarly, in a horizontal dimension, awareness of something relevant is raised among other visitors of a place, even mere bystanders. In both cases, objects increase the agency of the agent, the probability of agency being ascribed to her or him by other human observers, but they also invite the ascription of agency to themselves. Thus, agent and object mutually gain further identities.
- 2) *Sacralisation*. I propose to use the concept of sacralisation not just as a synonym for ‘religious’ but as a part of the strategies used to make a situation ‘special’ (see Taves 2009; Knott 2010; Taves 2010, 2015), to mark out action and communication as ‘religious’. In this sense, the notion stands on the same level as ‘ritualisation’. ‘Sacral’ is frequently used in topographical terms, as defining limits in space – a sanctuary for instance. However, within a specific situation often the individual actor cannot effectively establish exclusive boundaries, but can just focus attention for a certain period. Here the manipulation of objects comes in. Incense allows the definition of a space by a special smell for a certain time. A cake is prepared or bought from expert producers, it is handled during a performance, and presented as a token of benevolent communication. The killing and subsequent preparation of animals makes for an even more complex performance, if we think of pigs or even larger animals, and also allows for the involvement of a larger community. For smaller groups, a cock or dove is much more quickly prepared. If roasting and boiling takes too much time, interest in the events might begin to wane but the Roman concept of *dies intercesi*, which could be used for ordinary business *inter caesa et porrecta*, points towards a way of dealing with this problem in the case of large scale rituals.
- 3) *Sacredness*. The concept of permanently being sacred, beyond the period of a performance, transcends religious action proper. It has a temporal trajectory in both directions, preserving memories afterwards and raising the status of a place by pointing forward to such memories before a religious action. The

place is upgraded by memories even if these are false ones: I remember a ritual I participated in in a different place when I see indicators of others' former rituals in this place. The place is attributed agency and a specific, religious, identity. Such an attribution asks for a strategic placement of indicators to delimit ritual space. The agents are often temple personnel, not the individual actors. They appropriate individual religious communication by placing dedications, thereby making them more or less visible, and they create the affordances of a place.

- 4) *Experience*. The influence exerted by earlier acts of religious communication already points towards my final perspective: the experiential dimension. The approach I have taken focusing on agency seems to stress the strategic aspect of religious action. But strategy does not equal deceit. Nearly always, there exist 'secular' alternatives to acting religiously – if we except the situation analysed in the famous ancient *Gedankenexperiment* of somebody uttering vows while drowning. Acting religiously is also risky. Others might resort to force, might question the initiator's religious competence, or might question the claim that the god invoked is listening, or even doubt its very existence. To minimise such reactions, the choice to act religiously will usually be based on experience. Such experience could be previous individual experience, but it could also be the experiences known to or communicated by others, that is by way of their contributions to the sacredness of the place or on institutional patterns of plausibility.

The choice of the object employed is clearly far less risky and much more based on individual decision, on one's investing of memories or money in the selection of an object that was previously employed in everyday use, on special occasions, or bought or created for the very act. This is a part of the life of the object or the 'biographies of things' that are intertwined with the users' own life experience. Such objects create very different 'resonances', also with regard to later observers, thus contributing to the sacredness of a spatial context.

7 Conclusion

Agency, collective identity, and communication define the perspectives I have used to focus on the individual in its sociality and environment in the first part of this paper. Each of the three terms refers to individuals reaching out as they,

- act upon their total environment as temporal beings, in their appraisal of past, present, and future ('agency');

- position their structured selves in a socially structured environment ('identity');
- and address their social environment in an interactive manner, in a direct form, via intermediaries or lasting media ('communication').

Religious action, on this interpretation, is understood as a form of communication that enlarges a relevant situation by ascribing agency to not unquestionably plausible agents. Within this framework I have analysed the role of objects, developing four different perspectives: relevance, sacralisation, sacredness, and the experiential dimension.

The high social and material investment involved in the construction of initially less plausible contemporaries (or 'counterintuitive agents' in the terminology of evolutionary theories of religion) and in the project of producing relevant communication with them seems to produce, time and again, a surplus of self-stabilisation, power, or the capacity to solve problems. And it is immediately rendered precarious and contested due to the shifting of positions, of prestige, and even of the power produced by success. Sacralisations, that is, engaging in the risky type of communication described as religious above, within the otherwise unquestioned plausible and evident environment, are elements of such strategic action. My metaphor of 'investment' alludes to the material extravagance, to the enormous expenditure of religious communication for its media of such communication. This includes cult images and sanctuaries, complex rituals, textual and communicative strategies, and, not least, personnel.

I have not claimed that objects are necessary for religious communication. If Maik Patzelt is right, the basic religious act is that of praying: expressive, emotional speech, or, even better, song and dance (Patzelt 2018). Objects are something added to this. And this degree of freedom is probably what accounts for the enormous variety in this cultural field and the resulting multiplication of religion.

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Luise Marion Frenkel

Institutionalisation of tradition and individualised lived Christian religion in Late Antiquity

Eusebius of Caesarea's letter *CPG* 3502 is one of the earliest narratives about the Council of Nicaea (325) that describes procedures and documents used at meetings between bishops and the emperor Constantine. This chapter looks at processes of religious individualisation in the reception of the letter from the fourth to the seventh century and asks which mechanisms of religious pluralisation shaped the transmission of this seminal text for the history of Christianity. It thus questions the context of its twentieth century publication. Analysing also Cyril's letter *CPG* 5320, the chapter scrutinises the reliability of the narrative implied by the texts that have usually been regarded as sources for the councils of Nicaea and Ephesus (431). It does this by pointing to the processes of religious individualisation that shaped lived Christian faiths and pieties in Late Antiquity. The scope of enforcement of conciliar decisions and the vulnerability of the representativity of the participants will be discussed, situating their actions in the context of the plurality of lived Christian faiths. The chapter also discusses the dynamics of the de-institutionalisation of Roman religious rites in Late Antiquity by examining them in the context of fragmented Christian orthodoxies in which bishops and other religious authorities were vulnerable to accusations, and social upheaval or unrest.

In the vast and ever growing literature about political, religious, and social developments in the fourth-century Roman Empire, anyone reading about the statement of faith of Nicaea, Constantine's involvement in theological matters, Eusebius of Caesarea's Arian inclinations, or related issues is fortunate when the account gives information about relevant fourth-century texts. One of these will probably be Eusebius' so called *Epistula ad Caesarienses*, *CPG* 3502. Depending on the target readership of the publication, this information may be followed by a cryptic reference to a recognised modern edition of the work. Most probably, the extremely abbreviated form will lead to '*Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streits 318–328*, ed. Hans-Georg Opitz, Athanasius Werke 3.1, Berlin/Leipzig: 1934,

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42–7'. This edition is a landmark of conciliar and patristic studies which reflects their harmonising positivistic historical approach to texts. It implicitly created volumes of *acta* for the synods and councils involving Athanasius and Arius, not least for Nicaea (Brennecke et al. 2007, v–vii; Meier 2011, 125; Brennecke 2011, 15–7; Blaudeau 2012, 139–44, 153; Testa 2014; Stockhausen 2015, 136–42).

From the apparatus of this compilation or the notes in a commentary or a study, the curious reader may learn that the letter was not transmitted as a stand-alone piece or as part of a collection of Eusebius' letters (which neither he nor any other contemporary or later editor ever assembled). Rather, it was quoted in the works of Athanasius, Gelasius, Socrates, and Theodoret. What the cryptic list of fourth and fifth-century works¹ does not indicate is that even when significant variants are attested, all the authors were engaging with the text that appears in Athanasius' collection, appended to *De decretis Nicenae synodi* (Opitz 1935a; Opitz 1935b; Hauschild 1970, 108; Hansen 1995, 1). In this work, Athanasius defended his faith and piety by analysing conciliar practice and output, as attested in Scriptures and the memory of the fathers of Nicaea, including, with caveats, Eusebius. The reliability of this foundation was secured by the presentation of written evidence, namely a dossier containing at least a letter. According to the title it bears in Athanasius' dossier, Eusebius had allegedly sent it ahead of his arrival from Nicaea to the people of his diocese. The letter is self-referential and programmatic in character, and some of the rather detailed comments on disciplinary and theological matters addressed at the council are destabilising. Little doubt has been voiced concerning the authenticity of the chronology implied by the rubric in *De decretis*, which makes the letter 'the most ancient source concerning Nicaea' (Cameron and Hall 1999, 265; Ramelli 2011, 47) and informs the biography of Eusebius' literary persona.

1 Late-antique religious pluralisation

The generally accepted picture of the early Church Councils is based not on contemporary documents but, rather, on various narrative sources that have been compiled years, and sometimes many years, after the events they describe. The usual justification for accepting these later sources as evidence is the surrender to their intra- and intertextual claims and narrative guarantees of trustworthiness and accuracy. A long tradition of scholarship on contemporary, or near

¹ 'Ath. de decr. nic. (BKO R) Sokr. 1.8.35 (MA FHC G Σ) Theod. h. e. 1.12.1 (An s ζ) Gel. 2.35.1 (abc) Th.' (OPITZ 1934, 42 *ad loc.*).

contemporary, evidence, including studies about Rabbinic culture, Manicheism, Neo-Platonism (and other philosophical lifestyles), magic, Sassanian religion, and North African and Arabic peoples, has not eroded the belief that within a few decades before or after Constantine, if not before, lived Christian religion was an individual position-taking in relation to an institutionalised Christian Church. It is also widely assumed that it can be described with patient *Quellenforschung* of texts in Greek, Roman, Syriac, Coptic, etc. and the material evidence. The right questions urge rephrasing (Donner 2006).

The textually more prominent late-antique Christianities were self-asserting cultures. Like other late-antique mystical, philosophical, rhetorical, and legal schools, they resorted to textual representations of their past and values, as well as to the performance and narrative problematisation of practices and rituals (Berg 2001, 88–91; Gordon 2015). Within a constellation of discourses of faith, such as statements at synods, or in writings, such as Eusebius' letter, Christian oral and written works were arguments in processes of individualisation for persuasion through identification with religious paradigms and the relative authority of synods (Heil 2010, 87–9, 99f.; DelCogliano 2011a, 672; Radde-Gallwitz 2017; Graumann 2017b, 52). Meanings varied according to the awareness and acknowledgement of biographical narratives and the sayings and writings associated to the authors named for their teaching and in expressions such as 'the faith of the fathers of Nicaea'. Preaching and writing on the logical, (meta-)physical, and ethical notions at stake in the religious polemics was therefore variously understood and interpreted, creating multiple reactions. Especially in communications addressed to larger audiences stemming from a variety of educational and socio-economic backgrounds, concepts and values tended to be homogenised by association to a core (ritualised) vocabulary.

For most late-antique religions, scant evidence exists for the substantial intrareligious diversity or for the common flaring up of violence that occurred when individual or collective expectations about the people or institutions mediating or providing their religious concepts and rites were not met (Hezser 2005; Sizgorich 2009, 21–4, 121–34; Ando 2010; Mayer and Neil 2013; Drake 2013; van Loon 2014, 110f.; Dunn 2015b, 266–8; Kahlos 2015; Dijkstra 2015, 25–30). They are better attested in some Christianities because in these *topoi* of social and religious individualisation which engaged with Roman imperial values were frequently used. The conscious decision between irreconcilable theological views or against unacceptable misconduct fell between two or more discourses, each of which labelled itself as orthodoxy and orthopraxis and condemned the alternatives as unchristian (*pace* Otto 2017). Arguments on Christian matters were narratively referred to Roman jurisdiction, insinuating the possibility of imperial involvement in the form of recommendations, promulgation of laws, organisation

of synods, and invitations to debates. ‘Discourses of exclusion’ were widespread individual self-assertions of Christian religious identity, whereby self-awareness of belonging to the ‘one faith’ was expressed by pointing out moral and conceptual dissimilarities to followers of other discourses. Shaping the identity of others excluded these others from the social institution created by the narrative.

It is often assumed that early Christian synods and especially the Church Councils of Late Antiquity reached unanimous decisions which were actively promoted by the participants upon their orderly return. This seems to be corroborated by taking at face-value ancient documents, such as Eusebius of Caesarea’s historiographical-theological accounts of the aftermath of the Council of Nicaea, especially *De vita Constantini* 3.21–2 (Bleckmann and Schneider 2007, 96–101; Johnson 2014, 150f.). Actually, these narratives are part and parcel of the repertory of fragments of discourses created by subsequent authors. This chapter shows their version of the events becoming history, institutionalised by incorporation through quotation and allusion in works and collections written as evidence of the tradition and authority of the fathers, on which many historians still draw uncritically.

The chapter analyses the development of a religious landscape and literary environment which gave shape to a type of epistolography from bishops to their dioceses. It also shaped the social and political meaning intrinsic to these letters, which made them important documents about synodical proceedings and the identity of religious agents. Analysing Athanasius’ reception in *De decretis* of a letter of Eusebius of Caesarea about the meetings at the Council of Nicaea and its statement of faith sheds light on the inclusion of Cyril’s letter *CPG* 5320 in collections of documents about the Council of Ephesus in 431. It shows that the model of a bishop’s responsibility for his diocese and accountability to Roman administration, formulated by Eusebius in discourses assigned to the character of Constantine in the letter and in *De vita Constantini*, is mirrored in the character of his ego-persona and its self-effacing insertion in a collective past there outlined. The existence of the letter posits the fulfilment of this role, lending documentary meaning to the text. Eusebius’ process of religious individualisation promotes and defends his faith and piety, that is, his teaching and the uprightness of his character as bishop, teacher and citizen. Athanasius’ polemical engagement with it, shaping his ego-discourse and affecting the meaning of Eusebius’, shows nevertheless the relevance of Eusebius’ writings as well as the religious and narrative polemics associated with Eusebius’ persona and oeuvre. This step in the reception of Eusebius’ discourse is only stabilised in a subsequent moment, represented in this chapter by Cyril’s letter *CPG* 5320. Presupposing the patterns of religious individualisation typified in the literary personae of Eusebius and Athanasius, Cyril’s discourse lends them an authority which at that point was not yet simply a given. The rhetorical engage-

ment with the sacred history of these literary personae and with imperial identity ultimately illuminates the fourth- to sixth-century de-institutionalisation of religious practices and the pluralisation of Christian identities.

2 A scholar's letter

Written in the first plural person, Eusebius' letter blurs the boundaries of the views which are ascribed to the synodical bishops, Constantine, and the Eusebius-persona who argues for the acceptability of the emperor's statement of faith (Strutwolf 1999, 53–60; Lieu 2016, 176). The familiarity of Eusebius and the intended recipients with Constantine's *Epistula ad Nicomediensis* 1–2 (Opitz 1934, 58) should be taken for granted. For the readers of the writings of Eusebius and Athanasius, the existence of a theological discourse in an official public letter from Constantine was much more present and relevant than any hypothetical role Constantine was said to have had in the meetings and theological discussions in Nicaea. The presence of the emperor at the Council of Nicaea established a symbolic link consolidated by narratives and legislation (Noethlichs 2006, 117f.). The literary context which can be associated to Constantine's letters explains the gist of Eusebius' narrative, which uses the character of the emperor to voice a few full-length theological arguments. The extended account of tensions in the sessions and the details of a synodical controversy seem in line with Constantine's assertions but remain distinctively Eusebius' own.

The letter falls in line with Eusebius' literary creation of Constantine's religious individualisation. Thus, for instance, he credits him with the initiative of assembling an *oikoumeniké súnodos*, which decades later Philostorgius (*Historia ecclesiastica* 1.77) could still attribute to Athanasius (Chadwick 1972). The elements for the theological argument in *CPG* 3502 are placed in the mouth of Constantine and a number of bishops in a historiographic narrative along the lines of *De vita Constantini* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*. In all of these, Eusebius' emperor is imbued with a theological expertise which needs improvement by the hands of a master, in which role Eusebius paints himself into the narrative. Like *De vita Constantini*, the 'main point' of the letter *CPG* 3502 is the prominence assigned to the emperor in the procedures (Higgins 1966, 242). The scene is dialogical, with intervening reference to discussion and debate. This became a *leitmotiv* of the expectations of emperors about what bishops should do. *Sacrae* of convocation and reprimand mentioned it, as seen in Theodosius II's missives to the factions assembled in Ephesus in 431. Practices changed little but the discourse of Christians echoed the changes (cf. Graumann 2017a, 271–4). Eusebius

also created a type for the relation between emperor and bishop in which individual agency and culpability remains with the legislating emperor, while the bishop, although showing greater initiative and theological acumen, subsumes himself into the collective voice of a tradition which is Eusebius' own discursive creation. Demonstrating a collegial behaviour and showcasing the theological correctness, the letter grants Eusebius the qualities which he painstakingly tries to deny his opponents, such as Marcellus (Vinzent and McCarthy Spoerl 2017, 17). His literary and public activities tended towards a coherent authorial persona whose actions and thoughts would be representative of those common to them who, in the eyes of his intended audience, were the faithful and pious (Grafton and Williams 2006; Johnson 2014, 146–52).

In Eusebius' theological works before and after Nicaea, passages such as *Demonstratio evangelica* 5.1.13 (Heikel 1913, 212, 12–6) and *De ecclesiastica theologia* 2.14.4 (Klostermann and Hansen 1971, 115) contradict some of Constantine's arguments in *CPG* 3502. Familiarity with Eusebius' claims makes it possible to see that in the letter the character 'Eusebius' harmonises them by proposing a theologically imprecise variant (Strutwolf 1999, 58). Eusebius' statements apparently improve on Constantine's ('subordinationist and unorthodox', Higgins 1966, 242), strengthening them against gnosticising interpretations, but in practice they were equally likely to be misunderstood as sabellianism (Feige 1992, 289; Rizzi 2013).

Twenty-five or thirty years later, Eusebius' version of controversies at the sessions in *CPG* 3052 was appropriated by Athanasius. His dossier in *De decretis* conveys a polyphonic landscape of theology, religious leadership and Christian authorship in which his own actions and character are a point of reference. It resembles the first stage of the *Collectio Corbeiensis* (Dunn 2015a, 188), Sabinus of Heraklea's *Synagoge* (Hauschild 1970, 107–8), and the anti-Donatist group of seemingly authentic Constantinian documents in *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.5–7 (Carotenuto 2002, 68–73). Athanasius' editorial craftiness is well known from his handling of the citations of Asterius and George of Laodicea (DelCogliano 2015; Cassin 2015; Kannengiesser 2006; Johnson 2006) and of uncorroborated texts (Gwynn 2007, 74). The organisation of the supporting documentation in *De decretis* has, however, raised few suspicions. The information about the recipients of the letter in the heading of *CPG* 3502 is accepted at face-value, except for the description of Eusebius of Caesarea as *areianófrōn*, which is identified as Athanasius' authorial intervention. The adjective is part of Athanasius' casting of Eusebius as like-minded with Arius (Winkelmann, Pietri and Rondeau 2013, 89). It is also part of the narrative creation of 'Arianism', connecting proponents of alternatives to concepts associated with the fathers of Nicaea to the character and theses excluded from the institution which was, at that time, also being dis-

cursively defined in the reference to a ‘catholic’ ‘church’ as recipient of imperial letters, such as *De decretis* 38. The association of *katholiké* to *ekklēsia* was quickly gaining visibility in Constantine’s official discourses, particularly in his letters, universalising it. In Christian polemics, it was simultaneously associated to a qualitative connotation which cast dissident communities as alien to what was officially sanctioned as the only authentic religion and, therefore, the receiver of imperial largesse (Vincent 1999, 237–40; Winkelmann, Pietri and Rondeau 2013, 373). Athanasius discursively created ‘Arianism’ as the contrast to the communion with Nicene fathers, imbued with the faith he ascribed them, thereby amalgamating for polemical purposes their plurality of religious practices and interpretations (Gwynn 2010, 233).

Making his model explicit to the reader of *De decretis*, Athanasius assimilated to his theological argument the rhetorical *mise en scène* of the ‘original’, that is, he attributes his interpretation of *homooúsios* to that of the emperor and his implicit authorial-persona to the role of an instructing interlocutor with emperors previously played by Eusebius. So much for the discourse projected towards the future. Athanasius created a narrative of an ‘official’ imperially sanctioned understanding of Nicaea where there had never been one before by crafting references and traditions (Boyarin 2000, 27). Eusebius had used a similar rhetoric in his debates, for example that against Marcellus, and *CPG* 3502 casts ‘good’ piety and faith in a nutshell. Athanasius created the authority of Eusebius’ distinctive account of the Nicene controversial language, while reminding the reader of the limitations in Eusebius’ attitude. In the narrative, the letter polemicalises against *hoi peri Eusebious*, a category which Athanasius associates explicitly to Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea, as well as ambiguously to both or neither, in a number of works, including *De decretis* and *Epistula ad Afros*, almost all written after the deaths of both Eusebius (Stockhausen 2002, 194; Morales 2006, 288–90; Gemeinhardt 2011, 210–4; Bergjan 2017, 134). Furthermore, a well-informed reader might know of conflicts between the theology put forward in *CPG* 3502 and that defended elsewhere by Eusebius. Such contrasts encourage an interpretation of the letter as having a preemptive character, as if Eusebius tried to remain a step ahead of information and rumours about the discrepancy between the synodical decisions and his earlier teaching, or about incidents during the Council in which his orthodoxy had been questioned or situations in which he had committed or suffered anything that might weaken the authority of his discourse.

The heading turns the letter from proof of good citizenship into evidence that Eusebius had sown contention on theological minutiae among the population of the Roman Empire, since he had referred to and given detailed examples of the sort of religious disputation on words used by all factions to decry their critics. The letter would show Eusebius also working against the imperial wish to promote a

view of Christianity and of the imperially-designed synod of Nicaea as a harmonious gathering of like-minded individuals all in agreement with one another. It described the synod as a process and not as the confirmation of the bishops' agreement on the versions conveyed by synodical letters and in references to the events. Furthermore, Eusebius would have exposed the emperor's religious shortcomings to the recipients which Athanasius in *De decretis* described as the Caesarean *paroikía*. Read with the values of fourth-century Christian epistolography in mind, *CPG* 3502 communicated the intrinsic insufficiency of the Nicene statement of faith and its need of interpretation thereby inducing its pluralisation (Strutwolf 1999, 53).

2.1 Eusebius' historiographic and panegyric epistolography

The narrative coherence of a literary persona and the ideas being put forward by it should not be confused with the sincerity of the author (Ayres 2007; Drake 2014, 43f.; Frenkel 2017). Eusebius' portrayal of, and relation to, Constantine is clearly more ambiguous than a literal reading of his panegyrics might suggest. However, nothing indicates that he fomented public dissent (Johnson 2014, 151). By the time of the Council of Nicaea he had already established a significant authorial presence in the theological and exegetical landscape with which the letter is in dialogue and in which its direct or indirect readership placed it. Eusebius had inherited a multi-faceted role from Origen via Pamphilus and the school which he seems to have kept active also in Caesarea reflected this (Zamagni 2011, 158–73). The literary 'I' that Eusebius set out defended the interests of this milieu, stamped with imperial endorsement of its editorial output by the imperial letter exhibited in *De vita Constantini* 4.36, but also by the characterisation of Eusebius' persona and his rhetoric as expert advisor and interlocutor, as seen in *CPG* 3502. It should furthermore be plausible that this literary 'I' was the 'same' of Eusebius' persona in the *Commentary to Isaiah*, and *De ecclesiastica theologia*, for example (McCarthy Spoerl 2006, 41; DelCogliano 2011b, 41–5; Inowlocki 2011, 199; Penland 2013; Johnson 2014, 42–6, 144f.). His narratives of pastoral concern show that he tended the reputation of his authorial voice for the sake of the ongoing recognition of the validity of his teaching. They illustrate how in the empire projected by his historiography, erudition was a vital asset.

The narrative statement of Eusebius' zeal for the correctness of faith and piety according to Nicene and imperial decisions updated his authorial *persona*. Retrospectively plausible, the story neither indicates that he altered his view or that he endeavoured to actually spread the concepts and instructions mentioned in his historiography of conciliar organisation and authority. Eusebius did not dispute

the authority of the Council of Nicaea. Accordingly, he recognised the validity of the statement of faith on which the members had agreed as a suitable formulation for the issues discussed there. Nevertheless, he took for granted that bishops were entitled to articulate in other creeds the orthodoxy they claimed to share, and to try to convince their peers that they expressed the same faith (Campenhausen 1976, 128, cf. Kinzig 2017, 306, 317). When Eusebius affirmed the historiographical relevance of Nicaea for the characterisation of the empire and its relation to Christianity, the event did not yet have the religious referential character which Athanasius attributed to the faith of the fathers of Nicaea in later writings. Complemented by other authoritative sources, it became a yardstick that had to be verbalised as suited the time and the problem at stake (Stockhausen 2002, 2).

The performance of a letter conveyed the voice of the writer and letters addressed to just a few recipients were tailored to them specifically by the choice and arrangement of the arguments. Thus, detailed lines of reasoning should have been envisaged for small expert audiences. The letter-writer assigned them characteristics which may have overlapped or even corresponded to their actual identity. As shown in Higgins' recreation/paraphrase, Eusebius characterised himself less as a bishop who had the responsibility and entitlement to instruct on faith and piety (Bowes 2007; Elm 2015, 93, 99–105) than as a master/teacher and Roman citizen who engaged in disputations with non-Christians. Casting Eusebius' authorial voice as that of an irrefragable citizen, *CPG* 3502 seems to address expert readers who could be beyond the confines of Christian positions. The account of the Council of Nicaea in Eusebius' letter is centred on the agency and synodical authority of an unbaptised emperor. As in *De vita Constantini*, the narrative focus has a biographical and panegyric character (hypothetically) addressed to the emperor and aiming for a broad readership (Barnes 2007). Accordingly, Eusebius did not expect the recipients to know the wording of the statement of faith, which is a paradox if the rubric is assumed to be true (Campenhausen 1976, 129f.). The letter is a defense of Eusebius' persona in terms relevant to Roman legal and administrative procedures, not to his spiritual authority as bishop. Suggesting that Constantine was persuaded by his exposition of the Nicene statement of faith, Eusebius' letter claims that complaints, petitions and civic measures moved by or under the instigation of his opponents, even if they were the majority of the bishops or a synodical consensus, would be going against the imperial will and wish. In both *De vita Constantini* and the letter, synodical decision-making is subordinated to the pronouncements of a non-Christian, sidelining the relevance of the consensus among the majority of bishops who were disputing at that time the soundness of Eusebius' teaching. In *De vita Constantini*, *Historia ecclesiastica* and *CPG* 3502, Eusebius was knowingly adding a narrative to a *tabula rasa* of content and styles, not because

no socially recognised patterns or works portraying the relation of bishops to emperors or synodical proceedings existed but because proceedings varied and were often contentious and none of the available narratives had gained status. They present exemplary life patterns for inhabitants and officers of an empire ruled by a Christian emperor. As panegyrics, *De vita Constantini* and *CPG 3502* are naturally silent on Constantine's failures, especially on matters of faith, and compatible with his administration and legislation, which both favoured other groups and circumscribed Christian practices. They were part of a religious landscape characterised by dynamic pluralisation, not least by the superimposition of family traditions, education in lifestyle-informing schools, and regional religious institutions, as well as the changes that took place in each (Belayche 2013, 243; Humfress 2014, 22–9; Gordon in this publication). Reference to, and especially any digression on, the causes and characters who were involved in ongoing religious disputations and growing estrangements would denigrate actions of the *laudandus*.

The narrative of *CPG 3502* provides an example of a letter that contributes to the acceptability of the bishop's literary persona (on which depended also the reputations of those on whom he relied explicitly as authorities). Once accepted, this persona supersedes any images that may have arisen from rumours about him having been or become Nicene, which is therefore also of marginal relevance for the individualising effect the letter had. Eusebius' letter shows that statements of faith were dynamic discourses that offered public testimony of religious concepts and exposed the author to their refutation and condemnation but also to reception and interpretation. In these processes, the words which could be used to express the standard of orthodoxy shifted as quickly as in other scholarly engagements with religious notions (Abramowski 1982; Feige 1992, 290f.; Drecoll 2011, 470).

From a certain moment onwards, Eusebius' letter and his interpretation of the Nicene faith were deemed orthodox. His Christian historiography and his conciliar account were the winning narrative models, reinforced in the works of his continuators, late-antique chroniclers, Byzantine librarians, and, finally, the reception of his words at face-value in medieval history, modern history, and church history. The success of Eusebius' strategy is largely due to a (reasonably) independent ratification from an authorial voice which, despite a number of obstacles, gained great authority, namely that of Athanasius (Graumann 2002, 415–8; Graumann 2003a).

Athanasius shaped the context of the letter with his narrative, affirming, with caveats, Eusebius' orthodoxy. Attempts to identify the influence of Athanasius on the apprehension of *CPG 3502* effectively lead to circular arguments since all of its reception is apparently dependant of its transmission in Athanasius' *Life of Eusebius*.

nasius' works. The text of *CPG 3502* now found in Socrates Scholasticus has several different readings to those available in the extant sources for Athanasius' works, although Socrates drew on *De synodis* at the time he was revising the first two books of his *Historia ecclesiastica* and included Eusebius' letter (Hauschild 1970, 108; Hansen 1995, 1). The reader knows of no 'Eusebius' but the 'I' of the narratives which reach him in rumours, texts and discourses attributed to, speaking about, or alluding to Eusebius (*pace* Lieu 2016, 175). This authorial self-fashioning had to stand up to the scrutiny of the audience, which might be familiar with any subset of the true or invented information about his character, whether real or literary and of his own making or not. The endeavour to memorialise the past occurred in the elaboration of the ego-discourse and the moulding of dossiers and *florilegia*.

Eusebius' letters were only transmitted within other works by himself or other authors. If, on the one hand, they yield a biased picture of his epistolographic self-fashioning, on the other, the mediated transmission was decisive for the credibility of Eusebius' account. Thus, the letters on creeds present a theological expert as he instructs the recipient with the narrative of engagement with quoted statements of faith and further arguments. Also the transmission of fragments of a letter to Euphratius of Balanea (Apamea/Syria Secunda) was mediated by Athanasius as an explanation of Arian concepts (*De synodis* 17.3). His often vague references to Eusebius' letters do not imply that readers would be able to identify the text from which he drew an excerpt or allusion, nor that he expected or feared that they would have access to his or others' recensions of them. Even *De decretis* circulated without several or all items of the dossier (Heil 1999, 20f.).

Eusebius' and Athanasius' self-effacing self-fashioning and the weak links to the 'historical truth' of the texts do not belittle their importance. Rather they show the success of the texts in 'becoming true' beyond the scope of their contents and the control of the authors. The targeted audience was aware of the apologetic aim of the writings and engaged critically with them, to improve, appropriate, or refute them. Eusebius' *De vita Constantini*, *Historia ecclesiastica*, and letter were the entextualisation of his literary persona, and key elements in the textualisation of Constantine's participation in Nicaea. They also provided a type for synodical proceedings. Athanasius' dossier and especially the *Epistula ad Afros* operated the recontextualisation of the letter and, by the changing characterisation of 'Eusebius', effected the textualisation of his literary persona (Oesterreicher 2013, 142f.; Humfress 2014, 17; Morales 2017, 70). Later, Eusebius' letter was recognised as an accurate source for the events at Nicaea and for Eusebius' participation in the council, complementing the information in the *Historia ecclesiastica* and *De vita Constantini* (Quiroga Puertas 2015, 113f.).

3 Individualisation of narratives of religious institutionalisation

The received view of a homogeneous church, as attested in the literature and in figures of speech, did not correspond to the multiple forms of religiosity that can be deduced from the same texts and appear in the textual and archaeological evidence (Belayche 2013, 243). The late-antique religious landscape went through a fragmentation of authority due to the existence of conflicting discourses about the same religious referential, namely, the individual identity as Christian. Despite the proliferation of texts claiming normative value in their internal narrative, lived Christian religion remained a multiplicity of experiences, varying from the level of the individual to that of group and society (Rüpke in this publication; Gordon in this publication).

The jurisdiction and spiritual authority of bishops in all areas of the Roman Empire was not uniformly accepted. The normative and institutionalising discourses of regional power over, for example, the control of the see of Alexandria over Egypt and neighbouring provinces co-existed with tokens of individualisation in religious practices and notions. The development of Origenism, monastic and ascetic practices, and messianic narratives were further tokens of individualisation that contributed to the fragmentation in the landscape of monotheistic religions in Late Antiquity. In the later fifth century, narratives exposed the ongoing vulnerability of the bishops of Alexandria when they were unable to handle challenges or gain credibility for their narratives. The powerful bishops of the fourth and early fifth century were also threatened but the limitations of their control are hardly evident in the sources (Martin 1997, 173; Gemeinhardt 2011, 335–43; Gwynn 2013, 50; Wipszycka 2015, 135, 314–35). A living memory remained of the endorsement of the synodical depositions of controversial figures such as John Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Eusebius, and of imperial support for disputed views, including Arian, Eusebian, and Sabellian concepts. The cultural contacts between Christian and local cultures, such as the pre-Islamic tribes, also show the resilience of beliefs in the face of preaching and legislation (Shepardson 2008, 25–46; Millar 2009, 104). Stereotypes were reinforced by normative discourses and fuelled accounts of tensions which flared up during episcopal elections, controversies, and when bishops were vulnerable and displayed weakness (Crawford 2013, 253–7; Kristensen 2016). These social processes informed features of oral discourse reflected in narrative patterns, such as acclamations and the historiography of social unrest (Rammelt 2013; Piepenbrink 2014). More than processes of religious individualisation, they reflect late-antique mechanisms of reaction to representative bodies and nominated leadership. In this context, the authority

of elected post-holders or bodies and of endorsed leaders, such as bishops and emperors, existed only as long as it met public expectations. Their grip on power was intrinsically vulnerable (Humphries 2015; Kaldellis 2015, 147–50).

Local reaction to news about the depositions of bishops and about new appointments suggest that information concerning synodical events could spread quickly through oral and written narratives. These could range from assumptions, rumours, and calumnies to announcements supported by material evidence. The information would not reach everyone in all dioceses equally. The title Eusebius' letter *CPG* 3502 bears in Athanasius' dossier places it in this context. A pastoral letter should dispel rumours and calumny and restore the respect, confidence, and familiarity of the people. It should help to create a more homogeneous and receptive audience for the bishop, handling the expectations his engagement had created, possibly by his own instigation. Several narratives describe the risks bishops who left their dioceses might run when they returned there (Flower 2013, 156–62; Hillner 2015, 249–55). They might face an adverse reception, either because during their absence significant parts of the clergy or the people had risen up against them, or because they came back spreading an unwelcome discourse. The diverse social, religious, and educational background made the people in a diocese a locus for widespread individualisation. As with most classical narrative *topoi*, this story combines and modifies factual details of several moments and places that are part of the shared narrative culture. In this case, the story implies that it was incumbent on a bishop to coalesce his public somewhat so that those who thought of themselves as Christians, and had therefore their notion of 'we' (Christians) vs. others, did not disagree with him on the matter at hand. This dynamic of the performance of a letter sent to a diocese makes it plausible that Eusebius and Cyril wrote to their dioceses but gives no guarantee that the literary versions transmitted in the compilations were once de facto letters.

3.1 A letter to a diocese

The narrative setting derived from the rubric of Eusebius' letter shows him looking after interests that were his responsibility. It does this by asserting that he had engaged on behalf of the faith on which everyone in his school, in the diocese of Caesarea, and in the *kósmos* agreed until then. This he had laid out in his personal statement of faith. The narrative presents him showing to all in Church and Empire the compatibility of his and the Nicene faith. In the Christian *oikouménē* and the Roman *kósmos*, a bishop was responsible for his diocese insofar as it expected him to look after its interests and he bore responsibility for

what happened in it. At a synod, or in front of civic and imperial authorities, a bishop was a representative of the collective will of the people of his diocese, who ought to defend the interests of his see, therefore of the metropolis and thus of the city as well.

Most synods would issue synodical letters addressed to all dioceses but the chain of dissemination and enforcement of synodal communications was multi-channelled. Like governors, bishops entrusted with writings might not disclose them in their territories and communication of actions was contingent on local interests (Corcoran 2000, 245–53; Weckwerth 2010, 22; Allen and Neil 2013, 18–33). Subscribers to synodical decisions ought to abide by the decisions. In *CPG 3502*, Eusebius has Constantine and his ego-character echo the expectations that bishops should teach and foster the faith and piety. The rubric endows Eusebius' letter with a narrative of preparing the ground for his return, which suggests his commitment to putting into practice what the *Historia ecclesiastica* describes Constantine exhorting the bishops to do. To stop the promotion of topics condemned by synodical or imperial promulgations could also be expected, according to the common topos of episcopal diatribe of denouncing failures to do so. Bishops could be accused of neglecting their office if condemned practices, beliefs, and the teachers of such were identified in their dioceses (Crawford 2013, 237–40; Schor 2015a, 162–9).

Eusebius' letter claims it suffices to follow his pre-conciliar teachings. It lays out the compatibility of his private statement of faith and of the statement agreed on by every member of the Council. It exempts from any accusation his former doings and everyone who acknowledges them, even if they ignore the faith of the fathers of Nicaea. Casting the recipients as Eusebius' *paroikia*, the rubric presents Eusebius as proposing the creed and its explanation in the guise of bishop of Caesarea, that is, in the name of his diocese and, thus, of each Christian in it. It is an attemporal and universal representation of the faith and piety of the members of the church of Caesarea. There was, then, no need to alter or to actively promote the theological import of the Nicene faith. The writing guarantees that the Christians in Caesarea agree on either Eusebius' statement of faith or on that of Nicaea. Failure to do either befell then not the collective dimension of the diocese, but individual lived religion. It was not enough to accuse a bishop of the transgressions of members of his diocese if it could not be shown that he was somehow responsible for it. Eusebius' letter prevents any such accusation: he had an orthodox diocese and he was an orthodox bishop; any deviation thus had to originate either from outside forces or from faults of individual Christians.

This representation of a bishops' accountability for the homogeneity of the Christian faith in his diocese was relevant for Athanasius in view of imperial concern with the violence he and other Christian groups were deploying in Egypt.

The internal narrative in Athanasius' use of Eusebius' letter acknowledges the accusations that Eusebius was not Nicene ahead of the Council but blurs them, too, by endowing him and the theological content of the letter with positive qualifiers. It suggests that Eusebius could dispel the accusations by preparing a writing on the statement of faith of his diocese, which is also the theme of the work of Athanasius in which it is cited. Athanasius' rubric connects *CPG* 3502 to the task which, according to the historiographic narratives of Eusebius and Athanasius, Constantine gave the synodical bishops. In short, numerous processes of religious individualisation discussed as possible scenarios for the composition and primary reception of Eusebius' letter *qua* literature, *qua* private letter or *qua* letter to his *paroikía* probably occurred at his time but were not recontextualised and transmitted. Moreover, the processes that actually happened cannot be reconstructed accurately for any text, even when supported by plenty of details about its later reception, because it does not yield enough data. The text conveys only one key piece of information: Eusebius deliberately projected an ego-discourse into history that situates himself *viz.* the rulers of a wider religious landscape, which he depicted across his oeuvre. In his narrative creation, he obscured his agency by projecting himself into the reception of the past – a past created by his discourse which modifies the past conceived by the reader. Eusebius' ego-discourse was relevant for Athanasius as a precedent for advancing antiquity over majority, so that a hardly attested Synod of Rome would rank higher than the historical Synod of Antioch (Abramowski 1982, 263; Vinzent 1999, 388).

4 Eusebius' many letters

Although in Athanasius' (extant) writings *CPG* 3502 is only quoted in full in the *florilegium* in *De decretis*, he referred to or quoted from it in a number of other works as well. Some came from his later years when he was no longer antagonising Eusebius downright, in part through a selective appropriation of his literary output. If in the dossier the heading denounces the theological problems of the letter and casts the author as non-catholic, in the main text Athanasius offers little criticism of the letter itself (Ayres 2004, 352–5). That is, once it is 'improved'. Athanasius' arguments not only resemble their theological content, which is standard fourth-century fare, but also develop, respectively, the character of and relation to past and present authorities with similar rhetorical strategies. Reliance on Eusebius' authorship and epistolary voice goes so far as to leave implicit in *De decretis* 3 an argument stated in full in *CPG* 3502 about the dual function of the term 'from God', which serves to distinguish the Son from the creatures and to

demonstrate that the Son is from the Father (Ayres 2004, 353). However, when the metatext is not so obvious, as in *De decretis* 19 and *De Synodis* 4, the reasoning is restated. The similarity coexists with the disparity between the webs of reference for the terms the two authors are defining to use as ciphers. This is to say that concepts such as *homooúsios* inherit different meanings from the narratives and the authorial voice associated with them. Athanasius' confrontation with Eusebius' reputation and with the theological content of the letter are clearly derived from a scholarly engagement with the text that makes it likely that he worked on his own copy of the dossier, much like Sabinus assembled his *Synagoge* and Maximinus wrote scholia on Parisinus Graecus 8907 (Hauschild 1970, 124; McLynn 1996; Testa 2013).

Athanasius' recourse to Eusebius' writings on the faith of the fathers of Nicaea, in particular to his creedal formulations varied. It did not follow any clear pattern or development, as can be seen focusing on his major apologetic writings. He attached CPG 3502 to *De decretis* and described it as Eusebius' letter to his *paroikía*. In *De synodis*, which is considered a reworked and more polished improved version of *De decretis*, Athanasius referred to two different creedal statements by Eusebius. For one, he mentioned the creed found in CPG 3502 without identifying the source and, when referring to the letter, he did not specify to whom Eusebius wrote it. Athanasius furthermore referred to the statement of faith in Eusebius' letter to Euphratios of Balanea. Finally, in the *Epistula ad Afros*, Athanasius mentioned CPG 3502, describing it as Eusebius' letter to 'the same' which, in the context, might refer to a number of possible addressees but hardly to his *paroikía*. A reader of *Epistula ad Afros* who lacked access to texts such as those appended to *De decretis* was more likely to see in it a reference to Eusebius' school or more probably his sympathisers, the Eusebians, whom Athanasius was combatting (cf. *Ad Afros* 7.1). Athanasius furthermore included Eusebius on the list of fathers in *Epistula ad Afros*, while he had previously left Eusebius out of the analogous list in *De decretis* 25ff. and tarnished his name in the rubric of *De decretis* 33, only praising his *parádoxon* in the course of the theological argument of *De decretis* 3 (Stockhausen 2002, 50).

Eusebius projected in the ego-discourse, as well as in Constantine's sayings, an image of an 'intellectual' Christianity for which texts, exegesis, and instruction seem central. His contemporaries sometimes reacted negatively to this representation. Athanasius' irony about Eusebius' links to *lógoi* in *Epistula ad Afros* 6.4 is a case in point. Eusebius' partial depiction of the religious landscape remained controversial. For Socrates (*Historia ecclesiastica* 1.1.3), Eusebius' *sermo humilis* was not convincing and cast a shadow over the accuracy of his views (Wallraff 1997, 235–57; van Nuffelen 2004, 173–87; Bouffartigue, Martin and Canivet 2006, 40f.; Quiroga Puertas 2015, 111; Young-Evans 2016, 19).

Fourth- and fifth-century writers, especially Gelasius (Verdoner 2011, 6–7 on *De decretis* 4.4 and 5), still cast Eusebius in with the ‘Arians’, who are presented as insidious and contentious, propagating accounts that weaken the solidity and certainty of (imperial) institutions and of statements about faith. This echoed a negative characterisation of Eusebius’ contribution to the Council of Nicaea and of his theological inconsistency, reflected in Athanasius’ rubric. Nevertheless, they also qualify Christianity, Empire, their relation, and their members according to lines which were to be found in Constantine’s official letters and had been used by Eusebius. This resonates in Athanasius’ suggestion that Eusebius’ works were known and were becoming the sources for later authors.

This overview of the reception and spread of these works in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, offers a very different picture of the impact of Athanasius’ writings on the reception of Eusebius’ letter and reputation than the incautious modern reader would gain from the apparatus of Opitz 1934, *ad loc.* There, the anteriority and the presence of the ‘whole’ text give *De decretis* a status it never had. *De synodis* succeeded in superseding *De decretis* and both works were less copied and cited than *Epistula ad Afros*. This can be seen in the following summary of the secondary transmission of Athanasius’ works, limited to a list of the authors, regardless of their religious or geographic status (cf. Brennecke, Heil and Stockhausen 2006, lxxvii–lxxxiii; Heil 1999, 8–21):

1. *De decretis: catena in Epistulam ad Hebraeos* (Cod. Parisinus gr. 238); Severus of Antioch;
2. *De synodis*: Socrates Scholasticus; Severus of Antioch; Euthymius Zygabenus; *Doctrina patrum*;
3. *Epistula ad Afros*: Theodoret; Severus of Antioch; Timothy Aelurus; Leontius of Byzanz; Eulogios and a Syriac translation.

This list shows the limited engagement with *De decretis*, which would have contributed to the reduced availability of this texts and its dossier. At the same time, the quotation in Theodoret’s *Historia ecclesiastica* (with the mention of it being a letter ‘to the same’) and the Syriac translation indicate a preference among fifth- to eighth-century authors for the *Epistula ad Afros*, which contrasts with the invisibility of the text for almost a hundred years, one of the points used to argue against its authenticity (Stockhausen 2002, 27–32). Thus, the information about Eusebius’ letter and its narrative was received primarily under the bias of *Epistula ad Afros*. Furthermore, positive characterisation of Eusebius is more frequent in the *b*-type (‘Antiochene’ in Opitz 1934; Opitz 1935c, 98–104) transmission of Athanasius, which predominates in the extant manuscripts (Tetz et al. 1996, 18; Heil 1999, 3–8).

5 A bishop's letter

Eusebius' appropriation of authority by claims of filiation to a number of characters would have evoked the characteristics of ego-discourses in biographic and historiographic works familiar to his public. Despite ancient and modern attempts to identify the genealogies of authority to which Eusebius referred in *De decretis* 33.13, such as the glossator of Socrates' *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.8.51, it is their very ambiguity that allows Eusebius' ego-discourse to appropriate information about experiences of religious individualisation known to his reader. Indeed, it is possible he conflated this information with the reader's awareness of Eusebius' narratives of people and events in *De vita Constantini*, *Historia ecclesiastica* and treatises. This argument of filiation moves into focus in the later works in which were received texts by Eusebius linked to his involvement in the events of, and controversies surrounding, the Council of Nicaea. Athanasius' writings which point to CPG 3502 and other letters by Eusebius are a seminal case in point. Patristic filiation is not only expressed in the text (for example in *De decretis* 25.1) but also underscored by the quotation of a passage of CPG 3502 as Eusebius 'steadfast' addressing 'his own', which later many translators have paraphrased as his *paroikía* from the vantage point of our access to the late-ancient texts.

The reception of the literary personae of Eusebius and Athanasius further shaped the processes of Christian individualisation and institutionalisation. Eusebius' *topoi* of moral and theological accountability viz. expectations associated with the Roman emperor resonate in the redaction and edition of synodical proceedings and supporting documents. However, the perception and expectations concerning the letters a bishop might send to his diocese while away at a synod or ahead of his return were decisively shaped by Cyril's letters and treatises. The modern, largely unquestioning, acceptance of the trustworthiness of the information in the heading of CPG 3502 given by Athanasius in *De decretis* 33 was preconditioned by the inclusion of pastoral letters by Cyril in edited works about later events, especially in the *acta* of Ephesus 431. A case in point is the influence the *Epistulae ad clerum populumque Alexandrinum*, CPG 5320 and 5321, (ed. Schwartz 1914ff. I I/1, 116f.) have on the characterisation of the main religious and political agents and the interpretation of texts and events mentioned elsewhere in the collections of conciliar documents. The discovery of a cameo of daily life in the synodical collections may surprise the modern reader. The text in the modern editions of *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* is, however, part of the editor's narrative creation of Cyril's good character, governance, and episcopacy. The agency of the ego-character fades into its narrative of past or unnamed actors who give no clue about Cyril's contested situation. The difference between the depth of the theological exposition of the letters of Eusebius and Cyril parallel the

diverging views on erudition and education which Eusebius assigns to Constantine, and for which Socrates Scholasticus faulted Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica*.

Few aspects of late-antique synodical and imperial literature have received so much attention in the current source-critical scholarship than the flaring up of the Nestorian controversy and the June 431 Cyrillian session. They paraphrase and harmonise the texts to create further convincingly plausible accounts, which remain hypothetical (Fraisie-Coué 1995; Graumann 2002, 357–98; Barnes 2011, 121–7; Frenkel 2015; Amirav 2015; Bevan 2016). Unlike the abundance of theological arguments in Eusebius' *CPG* 3502, Cyril's letters seem to dwell on mundane matters interspersed with common-sense exhortations expressed as Christian admonishments adorned with Scriptural quotations. Cyril's letter to the 'people' of Alexandria supports the trustworthiness of the synodical historiography conveyed by the compilation and the uprightness of the characters within. Albeit filled with plausible minutiae from travel literature, the letter rehashes formulae which could serve as a reminder of who the bishop was, that he was alive, and that, in his view, he was still in control of the see. It would counter tentative usurpers and be written proof to disqualify the authenticity or authority of reports and documents announcing his deposition, even if they were true. For those who recognised the authority of Cyril's narrative persona, the writing would void any later rumours or disqualify measures and actions such as Theodosius II's later acceptance of the conciliar decision to depose Cyril.

The historical and narrative context in which developed the relevance of literary engagement with oral or written discourses of earlier authors and the sanctioning of narrative patterns which led to the initial redaction of *acta* of Ephesus is convoluted. It was influenced by the later Cyrillian sessions, the imperial endorsement of the decisions of the sessions of the so-called Oriental bishops whose contacts with the Roman administration were far less murky than Cyril's, his own deposition and imprisonment, and the little understood events in Chalcedon and Constantinople where, with the direct involvement of Theodosius II, the synod was finally dissolved. The Cyrillian synodical documentation does not acknowledge any insufficiency in the ecumenicity of its conciliar proceedings, nor the validity of the proceedings and decisions of other groups of bishops. The reader of *acta*, however, would be aware of the physical and intellectual ridicule of Nestorius, the Orientals, and other recognisable narrative personae associated to deviating practices or beliefs. Invective concerning moral and theological shortcomings was a common tool to dissuade the internal and real audiences from incurring or persevering in disciplinary or theological heresy. 'Mere rhetoric' contributed to stabilise and give cohesion to ancient empires, especially the late-antique Roman empire (Diefenbach 2012, 64–9; Wienand 2012, 163–75; Pfeilschifter 2013, 330f.; Humfress 2013, 84–92; Mattheis 2014; Börm 2015, 18f.).

Perhaps, for Roman taxation and legislation, enforcement of imperial measures was more relevant than the social effect of the rhetorical didactic trope found in their narratives, which informed the Roman imperial identity of the ruler stylised as a *pater familias*. However, in general formal announcements and physical violence alone did not alter the faith and piety of Roman audiences, as reflected in discourses about Christianity. Cyril's narrative oriented the Alexandrians towards a Christian way of life purged of what was incompatible with it, including even rulings of synods on orthopraxis and jurisdiction.

The rhetoric of the letter *CPG* 5320 (cf. *CPG* 5321), including the images of storm, care, and concern, contributes to the narrative context of the minutes and synodical letters the strength and unassailability of its leading character. This contrasts with Cyril's vulnerability in the narrative found in imperial legal documentation, which recognised the condemnation of those presiding over the synods (Cyril, Memnon and Nestorius) but not of their followers or of the subscribers. This was a legal and imperial narrative circulating independently of Cyrillian literature and a piece of material evidence that could be used as a precedent for future accusations. The reader, commentator or scrutiniser of the *acta* and of collections of Cyril's letters who reads-over-the-shoulder of the people of Alexandria sees Cyril's concern for his diocese. He also interprets anew images of storm and navigation, which were *topoi* for the Roman state and its relation to Christianity too.

The soft and most gentle winds of Cyril's crossing of the great and wide sea echo his participation in the synodical sessions. Cyril is a passenger and no reference is made to crew or captain, just as the minutes of the session craft the impression that the proceedings unfolded autonomously, without leadership or any organisation standing in the wings. Nothing hints at the shortcomings, suffering, and illness which wreaked havoc on the preparations, nor at the violence employed by Memnon's imperial soldiers, just as the Cyrillian documentation is silent about the existence of meetings by a group of bishops who likewise considered themselves to be the Council of Ephesus. The letter documented Cyril's serene punctuality, which was a counterpoint to the prolonged delay of the Oriental bishops. Belittling this, the letter addressed the criticism waged against the Cyrillian sessions for having happened without waiting for the arrival of all, since all should participate in the synodical session. The representation of a relatively harmonious unfolding of the Council of Ephesus given by *CPG* 5320 and other conciliar documents contributed to the characterisation of synodical collections as more authoritative than imperial compilations, such as the legal codes.

Cyril's works conferred authority on Athanasius' literary persona, affirming the reliability of the content of Athanasius' works (for example, the representation of Eusebius as an orthodox and good bishop). Eusebius, seen through

Athanasius' discourses, which were, in turn, endorsed by Cyril's narrative persona, is the reference for Cyril's orthodoxy and for synodical historiography. Alongside the conciliar sermons of Theodotus of Ancyra and Acacius of Melitene, the letter contributed to equate Cyril with Athanasius and, especially, with Eusebius, that earlier great New and Old Testament commentator, major letter writer, keen interlocutor with the administration, and meddler at court. Praising Cyril's interpretation and appropriation of the past, the narratives endorse the authority of his discourse, which exhorts the reader to adopt his model of individualised lived religion (Graumann 2009, 39). Since Cyril seems to make use of the Fathers correctly, his doing what Eusebius did in writing a letter to his diocese when travelling because of a synod as a token of pastoral concern would have the same effect as a textual guarantee of orthopraxis and creedal orthodoxy, according to Athanasius, whom Cyril lays out as an authority.

The validity of this process of religious individualisation depended of the social endorsement of circular arguments which gave historiographical accuracy to narratives, by accepting that texts which owed their existence to them, as citations and allusions, and around which the works had been composed, corroborated them. Similar processes of religious individualisation involving *inter alia* imperial and Christian narratives increased the pluralisation of Christian identities in the Roman Empire. The rhetoric of self-assertion by exclusion of others fostered the rejection of non-orthodox rule. However, the late-antique rulers whose faith was not considered orthodox by parts of the population conflicted with the prevailing concepts of rulership, still influenced by Roman republican and imperial narratives which informed the ongoing, albeit modified, imperial cult. Athanasius' contemporaries, for example, had living memory of pre-Nicene, Arian, and Nicene emperors. Historiography and hagiography monumentalised examples of Christian self-assertion viz. Roman emperors. The conscious decision in support of religious heterodoxy or heteropraxis, unrealisable in the first centuries, started to become an option in the period leading up to Justinian's reign in the East as well as in Western kingdoms and dioceses, when normative and legislative definitions of heresy gained visibility in discourses, praxis, and legislation (Meeder 2015, 104f.; Dunn 2015b, 282–5; McKitterick 2016, 255–8). The processes of institutionalisation in Latin, Byzantine, Syriac, Jewish, and Arabic traditions countered this with the endorsement of the truth-value of certain narratives that were warranted by reciprocal corroboration and their reception in late-antique antiquarianism. Gradual validation of reading these ancient texts at face-value made real the concepts of a well-defined institutionalised Christianity, the events and characterisation of individuals, their agency and individualisation, and the antiquity and tradition of the theological ideas presented in the text.

It seems obvious to the incautious curious contemporary reader with whom the chapter began that a Christian leader should act and speak of his initiative self-deprecatingly and let his conciliar activity be subsumed in a collective voice. Athanasius' use of Eusebius' letter is typical of fourth-century intranarrative processes of individualisation. The admonishments and concepts of semiotics and communication in meta-literary and programmatic works were strategies to cope with living memory and existing textual evidence of former views, without having to acknowledge and reject them openly (Stroumsa 2016). The status of Eusebius' rhetoric was shaped by the selective reception of Athanasius in Cyril, Socrates, Ephrem, Theodoret, Maximus, Rufinus, Jerome, Gregory etc., who engaged with Athanasius' narratives much as he had with those of Eusebius. The tendency to present Christian polemics and synodical 'solutions' in the terms and conditions of imperial identity, focusing on unity and the avoidance of stasis had, in Eusebius' *CPG* 3502, a relevant *vade mecum* to represent dialoguing with an emperor and improving his opinions.

6 Concluding remarks

The chapter has focused on oral and written discourses of fourth- and fifth-century bishops addressed to a synod or to their dioceses in which they defended their participation, their stance towards its collective decision, and legitimacy. Allegedly arguing for the interests of the people and properties of a bishop's see, the discourses present agonistic and cohering processes of Christian individualisation, respectively by the exclusion of deviant beliefs and behaviours and by the conscious assimilation of the faith. They reveal the diversity of apprehensions of the numinous even when promoting a de-individualising engagement within Christian faith. Thus, what seem to be homogenising decision-making and communication processes actually attest the spread of patterns of self-practice superimposed on Roman and regional individualised customs, countering the idea that pre-modern religions are collective phenomena. The discourses reveal the diverse cultural and metaphysical concepts that shaped Christian appropriations of religious agency, insofar as the relevance of the arguments depended on education, profession, and engagement in religious life. The texts and discourses which seem to be proof of an enforcement of homogeneity were apologetic writings which advocated at their inception for a range of moral, ethical, cultural, political, and metaphysical behaviours or beliefs, and participation in rituals and adoption of observances with which individual practices and social spaces should not be incompatible.

Narratives related to synodical decisions were a prominent agent of change in the fourth- to seventh-century legal pluralism of the Roman Empire and bishops were vulnerable to them. The material or textual evidence of effective enforcement of synodical decisions is rather scarce. At first sight, the supporting texts of conciliar documentation, such as letters and homilies, seem to be witnesses of processes of institutionalisation. Their making, however, reflects individual narrative institutionalisations of the past in the form of an appropriation of available narratives which modifies the past and makes it available for individual engagement with the religious beliefs and practices. Editorial interventions consolidated written evidence for the defence and construction of authority or for its disavowal. The narrative 'institutionalisation' seen in legal, historiographical, and religious accounts and compilations proposed textual landmarks which contributed discourses with inbuilt claims of authority as 'historical documents'. They construed traditions about the authors as 'fathers' and consolidated religious, behavioural, and theological arguments and historiographic content anchored in the authority of the literary persona or the repository of the collection. Showing Eusebius' pastoral concern, the rubric in Athanasius and Socrates effectively makes him into the first of the *pateres ekklesiastikoi* (church fathers) according to the criteria which he had laid out in *Contra Marcellum*, in what amounts to the first occurrence of the expression, spontaneously used in the argumentation about the relevance of earlier authors (Graumann 2003b, 883–7).

Eusebius' letter was preserved and gained its historiographical status by a process of religious individualisation through Athanasius' selective appropriation of earlier narratives, sometimes inserting them as written proof in his text, but not necessarily *verbatim* and possibly adding new passages to the literary memory. The transmission of Eusebius' letter does not reveal its relation to his works and whether the public of the other accounts had access to it. Athanasius' use of it in his treatise on the Nicene faith and, especially, in the *Epistula ad Afros*, gave it a prominence among those aware of either work. It was, then, prone to circulate, possibly as a stand-alone piece, and be received as an authoritative text, as a writing to be agonistically analysed and eventually refuted. Sabinus, Gelasius, Socrates and Cyril exemplify the wide range of engagement with it, with impact on the transmitted text.

Athanasius' evaluation of Eusebius' letter imparted on it a finality it never could have had as mere physical written evidence of an individual discourse, not supported by further guarantees of its use and effectiveness. The reception of Athanasius and the consolidation of his authority in most Christianities lent trustworthiness to Eusebius' letter and credibility to its account. It set a precedent for letters on participation at synods to be addressed to dioceses, offering a token of pastoral concern, acknowledgment, and communication of collective and imperially endorsed faith and piety.

The self-effacing discourse can easily seem a notion of individualisation focused on the self, so that the authorship of theological arguments and texts would now be characterised as creativity, in conflict with classical notions of authorship which still prevailed in Late Antiquity. The fact that it was plausible that they sent the letters to their dioceses indicates the theological and disciplinary individualisation of the lived Christian religion in the dioceses by which the local population or significant groups could react against their bishops if they seemed to fail to protect their interests or were accused of apostasy. The reception of the texts imputed a marked degree of agency to the authorial voice in the letters of Eusebius and Cyril (Ando 2006, 127). Historicising the authorial *personae* creates a focus on the individual which usually exaggerates the past reality. Actual agency is rather to be seen in the authoring of a persuasive narrative of the past which succeeds in establishing traditions and the reputation of the characters.

Eusebius of Caesarea's *Epistula ad Caesarienses* and Cyril's *Epistula ad clerum populumque Alexandrinum* are representative of the two main material narrative processes of religious individualisation, namely, quotation and compilation. An author or an editor created a narrative by the material appropriation of the narrative culture (Urban 1996). The arguments aimed to avoid rejection grounded on accusations of siding with condemned beliefs, or prevent impediments to return to or stay in their sees because of collective actions motivated by local cultural and religious interests. The self-effacing effort of a bishop to assert authority in his diocese or to persuade fellow bishops included merging in an imprecise collective notion of church, of company of the fathers, of assembled bishops, and was concomitant to an effort for distinctiveness from religious authorities who in his view expounded a deviant faith. Socrates Scholasticus' criticism of Eusebius shows that this effort was central to his rhetorical presentation of the data and arguments. Once 'improved' through the lens of Athanasius, Rufinus, Sozomen, Theodoret, and others, Eusebius' narrative became history.

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Asaph Ben-Tov

Early modern erudition and religious individualisation: the case of Johann Zechendorff (1580–1662)

1 Introduction: an invitation to a funeral

On 1 January 1630,¹ a baker by the name of Zacharias Zechendorff from the small Saxon town of Schneeberg in the Ore Mountains (Erzgebirge) wrote to his brother. After wishing him and his wife good health and peace for the coming year and commending them to God's care, he turned to the matter at hand:

I cannot withhold from my heavy heart that God Almighty, whose council is secret and who alone is wise, has summoned our dear mother from this world on 31 December at the sixth hour, following her infirmity and numerous illnesses since Christmas Eve, and has released and redeemed her from this vessel of fear. Together with friends and relations, I have decided to bring her blessed corpse to burial, as is the custom (üblichen brauch nach) on Sunday 3 January and wish my dear brother and sister-in-law to attend this final show of respect and Christian duty. I also wish to convey my brotherly request that you both come to our late mother's house tomorrow or the following day, if possible, at the eleventh hour to pay your last respects. I would much rather be of service to my dear brother and my sister-in-law under happier circumstances than this tearful occasion and faithfully commend them, together with ourselves, to the divine protection of the Almighty.

The recipient, Johann Zechendorff (1580–1662), was headmaster of the Latin school in nearby Zwickau, where the letter is now preserved in his *Nachlass* at the Zwickau Ratsschulbibliothek.²

1 Old Style.

2 Ratsschulbibliothek Zwickau (RSBZ) MS 172.6 fol. 38^{r-v}. *Meine willige Dienste neben Wunschung von Gott dem Allmächtigen eines glücklichen, friedt vndt freudenreichen neuen Jahres frisches gesundten heiles sambt aller ersprießlichkeit an leib vndt seele bevorn EhrenvehsterAchtbarer vndt wohlgelehrter herr bruder, so wohl auch Erbare vndt Ehrentugendsamer frau Schwägerin, Derenselben kann ich aus betrübtem hertzen nicht vorhalten, wie Gott der Allmächtige nach seinen geheimen vndt allein weisen rath unsere liebe mutter nach ihrer großen vndt vielfältigen leibes schwachhait am heiligen Abendt iungst als 31 Decembris zu abendt umb 6 hora auß dieser welt abgefordert vndt aus den angst karren ausgespannet vndt erlöset. Wann i[c]h dann neben den andern freunden vndt Muhmen gänzlichen entschlossen bin, solches ihren seeligen leichnam künfftigen Sonntag als den 3 Januarij üblichen brauch nach zur erdten bestatten zu lassen, vndt aber den L[ieben] bruder sampt der frau Schwägering ganz gerne bey solcher letzten ehrerzeigung vndt christlichen dienste ganz gerne sehen wissen vndt haben wollte, als glanget an dieselben mein*

Death notices and invitations to funerals are not an obvious place for historians to search for manifestations of religious individualisation. Read almost four hundred years later, the baker's letter to his brother offers us one of those archival moments when persons, long dead and forgotten, are 'given a voice'. Yet the relevance of this voice to the present publication may seem far from obvious. The baker of Schneeberg was inviting his brother to their mother's funeral. Whether or not the latter attended (we do not know), there is no reason to assume that the ceremony and the expressions of grief and solace surrounding Anna Zechendorff's death would have been performed and expressed in any fashion other than in conformity with seventeenth-century Lutheran practice. Through the accident of preservation among his brother's papers, Zacharias Zechendorff's voice has been preserved – in itself no mean achievement, as seventeenth-century bakers rarely leave a paper trail other than in parish registers and occasional legal records and wills. Unlike the doomed Meursault of Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*, the baker's reaction to his mother's death was embedded in a belonging to his society and its ritual and emotional norms. In terms of religious sentiment, his intention and wording, though personal, are unoriginal – nor was he aiming at originality or individualisation in any meaningful sense.

For the present inquiry, it is the recipient of the letter who is of interest. Johann Zechendorff, Zacharias' elder brother, was headmaster of the Latin school in Zwickau from 1617 until his death at the age of eighty-one in 1662. While his younger brother has subsided into posthumous oblivion, Johann Zechendorff has fared slightly better. In his fiftieth year, when he received the letter, the Zwickau schoolmaster was a respected, albeit minor, member of the Republic of Letters. He was, at the time, the author of several short works but above all was an enthusiastic student of oriental languages. A brief account of his scholarly pursuits will suffice, in order to shed light on this case of scholarship and religious individualisation.³

brüderlich vndt schwägerlich bitten, wo es muglichen, sich morgen, oder folgendtes Tages umb 11 hora in der mutter seeligen behausung einzustellen, vndt Jhr inn diesen den letzten ehren dienst erzeigen vndt beweisen, [fol. 38^v] worfür ich dann den L[ieben] Bruder vndt frau Schwägering, iedoch lieber in frölichern, als solchen betrübtten zustandt dienstwillig vndt sie neben uns allen Göttlicher protection vndt Allmacht ganz treulichen befehle. Datum Schneeberg Den 1 Jan: A 1630. / Der L[iebe] Bruder / Williger / Zacharias Zechendorff / Bürger vndt Becker / Daselbst.

³ The following short account of Zechendorff's life is a much abridged version of that offered in Ben-Tov 2017a.

2 Johann Zechendorff: a seventeenth-century schoolmaster and Arabist

Johann Zechendorff was born in 1580 in the Saxon town of Lößnitz in the Erzgebirge. His father, Michael Zechendorff, was a school teacher (in Lößnitz and later in nearby Schneeberg) and his mother Anna, née Hannauer, was the daughter of the mayor of Schwarzenberg. After the death of Zechendorff's father she remarried (Melzer 1716, 581). At first tutored by his father, Zechendorff commenced his studies at a series of Latin schools at the age of nineteen, visiting Aschersleben, Braunschweig, Eisleben, and the Latin school in Zerbst, before being recalled back home by his father. It seems that it was at the Latin school in Schneeberg that Zechendorff made his first significant acquaintance with oriental languages studying Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac. An acquaintance with Arabic, which was to prove his great passion, came only when he was in his early forties. After studying in Leipzig (1604–1608) he was appointed in 1610 as co-rector of the Latin school in Schneeberg, becoming its headmaster in 1614. In 1617 he was invited to head the municipal Latin school in Zwickau, where he remained headmaster for the rest of his long life, although in his final years he does not seem to have attended in person. At his death in 1662 he was survived by his second wife, Marien-Salome, née Götsen, but by none of his children. After some dealings, Zechendorff was succeeded as headmaster by his former pupil Christian Daum (1613–1687), a prominent scholar and pedagogue in his own right (Mahnke 2001; Ross 2015).

When Zechendorff assumed his post in Zwickau in 1617 he does not seem to have known any Arabic. His first works, extant in manuscript, deal with the instruction of Latin and bear the unlikely titles *Methodus Cabbalistica*, and *Cabalah Nova-Antiqua*. Despite appearances, these dry manuals have nothing to do with Jewish mysticism but with a stringently systematic instruction of Latin, in the firm belief that such an approach would enable its swift and easy acquisition (*schnell und leichtlich* as Zechendorff puts it in his German writings). Though instruction in oriental languages was occasionally offered at German Latin schools⁴ – mostly Hebrew, with occasional instruction in Aramaic (Chaldean), and Syriac – Zechendorff's belated but enthusiastic discovery of Arabic and its instruction in Zwickau are exceptional. It is to his study of Arabic, and of the Koran in particular, that Zechendorff owed his reputation in the seventeenth-century Republic of Letters. In 1638 he published his *Specimen Suratarum*, the Arabic text of two short Suras (61 and 78) with an interlinear Latin translation and brief commentary, followed several years later by two further short Suras (101 and

⁴ See Ben-Tov 2017b for the Gymnasium Illustre in Hamburg.

103) accompanied by a commentary based on the thirteenth-century Tafsir by Nāṣir al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar al-Bayḍāwī.⁵ These slim publications may seem unimposing to modern Arabists. However, they were a pioneering undertaking in an age when the Arabic text of the entire Koran was available in Europe only in manuscript (and these, for most scholars, not easily obtainable) and European students of Arabic like Zechendorff in Zwickau had very little in the way of reference books, with the important exception of Thomas Erpenius’ Arabic grammar of 1613. Not surprisingly, Zwickau presses were not in possession of Arabic types. Instead of producing the Arabic text of Koranic specimens in Hebrew transliteration – a common practice among orientalists at the time – Zechendorff had one of his pupils prepare wooden types for him.

There is much to say about these two slim and pioneering scholarly publications (see Ben-Tov 2017a and 2017c); in the present context it will suffice to note that Zechendorff claimed in his correspondence to have translated the Koran in its entirety and that he had not been able to find a patron willing to pay for its publication. Clearly, Zechendorff’s patrons had more urgent concerns on their mind during the Thirty Years War, which ravaged Saxony, and Zwickau in particular, whilst the town’s schoolmaster was busy studying the ‘Turkish bible’. Zechendorff occasionally mentions this complete Latin translation of the Koran to fellow scholars but it remained unpublished and, to the best of my knowledge, does not seem to have had an impact on contemporaries – if any indeed had read it. This led me, initially, to treat his claim with seasoned scepticism. A full Latin translation of the Koran, made directly from the Arabic original, whatever its philological merits, would have been a remarkable achievement at the time and was unlikely to disappear without a trace. The Zwickau schoolmaster, I thought, was neither the first nor the last scholar to exaggerate his scholarly achievements. I was wrong. Zechendorff’s claim has recently been vindicated with Roberto Tottoli’s discovery of the bilingual (Arabic/Latin) Koran manuscript held today at the Egyptian National Library and Archives in Cairo (Tottoli 2015).⁶ Zechendorff’s translations of the four short Suras and his several other published works represent only a modest portion of his scholarly output. If we wish to understand his scholarship *in situ* and gauge its significance for an understanding of the possibilities of religious individualisation opened up by early modern erudition, we must turn to his manuscript *Nachlass* held at the Zwickau Ratsschulbibliothek. With this in mind, we return now to the letter he received from his brother in January 1630 informing him of their mother’s departure.

⁵ Ben-Tov 2017a, 2017c; on the broader context see Malcolm 2012.

⁶ I am grateful to Roberto Tottoli for kindly allowing me access to a copy of this manuscript.

3 Scholarship and religious individualisation

The relevance of this letter to the question of religious individualisation becomes apparent when one views the manuscript itself rather than a ‘clean’ transcript of its content. Like so many other letters addressed to him, Johann Zechendorff adorned the original with marginalia. The letter with its sad tidings reached Zechendorff about four years after he had acquired his own copy of the Koran. As mentioned above, this was no trivial acquisition. Until the printing of the Arabic text of the Koran by the Hamburg pastor Abraham Hinckelmann in 1694 and the epochal bilingual commentated edition by the Roman priest Ludovico Marracci four years later, European scholars wishing to study the Koran in the original had to procure a manuscript. There were various routes allowing for such acquisition, ranging from spoils from wars with the Ottoman Empire to trade in the Levant. We do not know how Zechendorff acquired his own copy. We do know, from comments he makes in passing in his works, that he had purchased it at great cost – an enormous investment for a badly paid schoolmaster. Regrettably, this copy is no longer to be found in Zwickau. We may assume either that Zechendorff sold it in his later years or that it was later sold by the school library, which had inherited his papers. Koran manuscripts in seventeenth-century Europe were valuable and, since the early modern study of the Koran in Zwickau did not outlive Zechendorff, there must have seemed little point in allowing an expensive codex to gather dust. On receiving the letter from his brother, his first Koranic publication was still eight years in the future (1638) but Zechendorff was already immersed in its study. At the bottom of the letter’s first page, he noted in Arabic:

[...] He hath guided this woman on the road of the righteous and she believed in Allah ‘Isa and sought refuge in him.

And further down:

He, in His mercy, helped her from this world into the Hereafter. And therefore, O all ye Turks, and O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion and do not say of Allah except the truth.

These Arabic notes are in fact a medley of paraphrased Koranic verses. What catches the eye at first glance is Zechendorff’s assertion that the deceased woman believed in Allah and sought refuge in him, amended in an afterthought to ‘Isa (the Arabic for Jesus). Of particular interest is also the closing exhortations to ‘all ye Turks’ to say nothing but the truth about God. This is a thinly disguised paraphrase of the Koranic verse 4:171: ‘People of the Book, do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about God. The Messiah,

Jesus son of Mary, was no more than God's apostle and His Word which He cast to Mary: a spirit from Him'.⁷ Sura 4, from which he was paraphrasing, is entitled *The Women* and opens, appropriately, with a call on believers to treat orphans justly. Zechendorff, it will be remembered, had just become an orphan himself – albeit a middle-aged one. Sura 4:171 is one of the central anti-Christian verses in the Koran, calling on the people of the Scripture (*ahl al-kitāb*), here meaning Christians, to not commit falsehoods about God, and thus not to claim that the pious prophet Jesus of Nazareth was the son of God, and to desist from referring to the Godhead as three-fold – unthinkable blasphemies from a Koranic point of view. Scribbled on the invitation to his mother's funeral, Zechendorff turns the tables on the original verse by calling the 'Turks' (a common Early Modern metonym for Muslims) to claim nothing but the truth about God – for a pious Lutheran a call to recognise Incarnation and the Trinity. If this was a dialogue with Muslims, it was one confined to the schoolmaster's own mind, a note penned on the notice of his mother's death. Above all, this and countless other notes in Arabic, made for personal edification, reveal that Zechendorff's study of the Koran, his visiting-card to the Republic of Letters, also had a personal and devotional aspect to it.

To stress the obvious: I am not suggesting that Zechendorff was in any way a crypto-Muslim nor that his enthusiastic and pioneering study of the Koran was an outlet for heterodox convictions or practices – e.g. an implicit endorsement of the antitrinitarian teachings of his Socinian contemporaries (cf. Mulsow 2010). The evidence we have suggests that he was a conformant seventeenth-century Lutheran, that he never intended to be anything else, nor was he mistaken for anything else by his contemporaries. And yet, when one examines his manuscripts, it becomes clear that his preoccupation with the Koran was (also) of a devotional nature – Lutheran but unconventional and profoundly individual.

There is more to this than a clever scribble by a self-taught Arabist. A comprehensive study of Zechendorff's Arabic marginalia and palimpsests, mostly in the letters preserved among his papers, may shed further light on his scholarship and its uses. It can here be noted that in some cases, as with the letter informing him of his mother's death, the Arabic notes are directly related to the content of the letter, while in other cases (probably most) he seems simply to be making use of free space on the letter page and unused versos. A case in point for the latter are his extensive Arabic quotes from the Arabic New Testament, preserved over numerous verso-pages of letters he received – beginning with Matthew 12:6,

7 All quotes from the Koran are taken from the English translation of N. J. Dawood 2006².

Jesus' critique of the Pharisees and their 'hypocrisies' (Ms 172.6 fol. 110).⁸ In the same palimpsested letter convolute, we find Zechendorff paraphrasing Sura 33:1: 'Prophet, have fear of God and do not yield to the unbelievers and the hypocrites'. Ending with an Arabic paraphrase that lends the verse a Christian twist by reaffirming the Incarnation, this pious paraphrase is headed by the Latin title *Alcoranus Christianus* (Ms 172.6 fol. 70^r). Elsewhere, in the margins of an invitation to a wedding, we find a passionate address calling on the Jews (*ahl al-yahūd*) in pseudo-Koranic Arabic to embrace Jesus Christ as their saviour. Such outpourings of Christian piety scribbled on letters and ephemeral notes can, quite literally, be expanded a hundred-fold.

4 The Koran and Lutheran personal edification

Both in his miscellaneous notes, as well in works published and unpublished alike, the Zwickau schoolmaster is unequivocal in his commitment to his native Lutheranism and there is no reason to question the sincerity of his rejection of the Koran's antitrinitarian teaching. Yet his papers also reveal the profound affinity he felt to the Koran – if not to portions of its teaching then to its forceful expressions of monotheistic piety. Time and again we find Zechendorff marvelling at the language of the Koran and its expressive religious prowess.⁹ It is clear that he found Arabic, which he taught himself in his early forties, a congenial medium for expressing religious sentiment. Paraphrasing Koranic verses as expressions of Lutheran piety was something of a preoccupation of his and his papers also reveal his fondness for quoting the New Testament in Arabic. Most of all, we find him formulating his own prayers and rambling meditations in Arabic, ranging from a few sentences jotted down in the margins of invitations to weddings (and bearing no apparent relevance to the invitations) to religious 'essays' spanning the versos of several letters.

Zechendorff's discovery of Arabic and the bulk of his work as an orientalist coincided with the miseries of the Thirty Years War to which the inhabitants of Zwickau were repeatedly subjected – fighting accompanied by hunger and outbreaks of the plague (Herzog 1845). A virulent bubonic outbreak in 1626 claimed

⁸ The Arabic version of the New Testament was published in 1616 by the great Dutch Arabist Thomas Erpenius, *Novum D.N. Iesu Christi Testamentum Arabice* (Leiden, 1616).

⁹ From Zechendorff's comments elsewhere it is clear that he was also well aware of the poetical nature of the Koran. For the European discovery of the Koran as a work of religious poetry, see Loop 2009.

the lives of 375 victims and occasioned an order from the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I for weekly penitential sermons and Catechism exams for adults as well as schoolchildren (Herzog 1845, 409).

Zechendorff's elaborate response to one bubonic outbreak, possibly that of 1626, is preserved in his *Nachlass*. Convinced, like many contemporaries, that the plague was an expression of divine wrath, the pious schoolmaster turned his attention to the Seven Penitential Psalms, which he read with his pupils in numerous languages. At the time, Zechendorff was offering Arabic lessons and was eager to introduce his pupils to the style and vocabulary of the Koran.¹⁰ This outpouring of piety at a time of dire affliction coupled with the eagerness of a learned Arabist to offer his pupils instruction in this language – a rarity at Europe's great centres of learning in the early seventeenth century, let alone at a Latin school! – gave birth to a striking work which was never published, and in all likelihood was never meant for publication: *An Arabic paraphrase of the seven penitential psalms, i.e. in the style of and taken from the system of the Quran, which contains CXIII chapters,¹¹ or rather from the Arab Cicero and in the Ismaelitic and regal Solomonic language: in pure and unadulterated speech set down rhythmically, with an interlinear Latin translation for the benefit of German students of Arabic, to allow them an easier access to the Quran.*¹² Zechendorff's German introduction to the work makes it clear that it is meant as a work of scholarship. He quotes some of the great scholars of his day, most notably the Leiden Arabist Thomas Erpenius, states his disagreement with others, and positions his work within the broader context of European scholarship since Robert of Ketton's twelfth-century translation of the Koran. Zechendorff was a fully-fledged member of the Republic of Letters and not unreasonably proud of his achievements. Yet at the same time, his 'Koranic paraphrase' of the Penitential Psalms, is clearly a devotional work, which fits in perfectly with his devotional Arabic practices scribbled at the margins of countless letters and notes.

As with almost all contemporary Europeans writing on the Koran, Zechendorff opens the introduction to the paraphrased Penitential Psalms with some

10 Possibly in private lessons (*collegia privata*).

11 This is a rare slip. As Zechendorff knew, the Quran has 114 chapters. In an undated letter to the Jena Orientalist Johann Ernst Gerhard the Elder (1621–1668), Zechendorff even offered an analysis of the short concluding Sura. Forschungsbibliothek Gotha (FBG) Chart. B. 451, fol. 132^r.

12 *Septem Psalmorum poenitentialium Para-Phrasis Arabica id est stylo, & ex Alcorani Systemate quod cxiii capita continet sive ex Cicerone Arabico & Ismaelitica atque Lingua Salomonis regia: puris, merisque Loquutionibus appronatis Rhythmicis* [marg. add. *Cum versione interlineari Latina*] *In Usum Arabicantium Germanorum: ut ad Alcorani Lectionem Aditus facilior patescat. Diligenti Lectione ac Meditatione a Iohanne Zechendorff LL^{arum} Orientalium Cultore Conscripta.*

hostile comments. He notes that there is more eloquence (*Reden v[nd] Wortt*) and substance (*Res oder Realia*) in the Psalter than in the ‘monotone droning’ of the ‘book of the deluded Muhammad’ (a book, it will be remembered, which he was studying intensively in those years). This stands in contrast to his subsequent assurance that the paraphrase, using Quranic verses as mosaic stones, ‘[...] is magnificently beautiful and ornate, set and recited in the regal Arabic tongue, as it [Arabic] is attributed to King Solomon, as its inventor, through the wisdom with which he was endowed by God. So, for the sake of this language, it is not to be contemned’.¹³

At the bottom of each page, Zechendorff quotes the ‘paraphrased’ psalm verse in Luther’s German rather than in the original, stressing, to my understanding, the devotional nature of the work – he was certainly capable of quoting the psalter in the original Hebrew had he wished to. This is accompanied by several couplets of rhyming Arabic verses (made up by Zechendorff but attempting to emulate Koranic verses, sometimes using common Koranic phrases) which more or less approximate the tenor of each verse of the Penitential Psalms. To this is added an interlinear Latin translation.¹⁴ The resulting unpublished work was a mixture of devotional literature (however unusual) and an unconventional textbook to help pupils better understand the difficult language of the Koran – in itself an uncommon pedagogical goal in seventeenth-century Saxony!¹⁵ The work, not surprisingly, was never printed nor am I acquainted with any contemporary or later references to it. Despite the didactic background, the carefully written and nicely bound octavo volume has the air of a work of private devotion to it. Zechendorff’s contemporaries, whether Protestant or Catholic, would have certainly understood the appeal of the Penitential Psalms – what is remarkable is that the Zwickau headmaster saw in the Koran, or in its phraseology, a kindred spirit which, to his mind, well expressed the sentiment, if not the content, of these Psalms. Nor is this elaborate work an isolated case. Thus, in writing to console the Marburg pastor Georg Teucher, whose wife Maria (a relative of Zechendorff’s) had died in childbirth in 1654, Zechendorff concludes with a ‘Koranic paraphrase’ of Ps. 40.17: ‘But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God’. He quotes in Arabic (in Hebrew transliteration) and in Latin translation what purport to be

¹³ Ibid. fol. 220^v. *Aber will es herlich schön, v. zierlich nach Arabischer königlicher Sprach / wie sie denn dem könig Salomoni, als dem Erfinder, nach seiner vom Gott verliehenen Weißheit, zugeschrieben wirdt / gesetzt, v. geredetdt, so ist es der Sprachen halben, an ihr selbsten nicht zuverwerffen.*

¹⁴ For a consideration of an example of this, see Ben-Tov 2017a, 58–60.

¹⁵ *Septem Psalmorum poenitentialium Para-Phrasis Arabica*, 223^v.

corresponding snippets from Suras 59:33 and 25, which, arranged together, read ‘My misery lies heavily upon me, but my Lord prepares a feast in my honour. In him I have a guide. He suffices me as helper’.¹⁶ Further Arabic quotes from the Psalter are scattered among Zechendorff’s myriad notes (e.g. Ms 172.6 fol. 98^r) and in the margins of his unpublished bilingual Koran there are numerous references to Psalm verses.

A further expression of Zechendorff’s unusual approach to the Koran is offered by his first publication on the topic: a festive Latin oration he delivered at a graduation ceremony at the Latin school on 13 August 1627, with the title *Fabulae Muhammedicae sive nugae Alcorani* (Mohammedan Fables, or the Trifles of the Koran). The work offers a summary of and commentary on a number of episodes in the Koran that relate stories also known from the Old Testament. Both the account of the Koranic episodes and the schoolmaster’s comment on them are delivered in Latin hexameter.¹⁷

The ostensible purpose of this work was to expose the mendacities of the Koran by presenting its version of several Old Testament events, in Latin verse, and pointing out the discrepancies. It is, however, hard to overlook the fact that most of the ‘lies’ Zechendorff excoriates are fairly trivial – e.g. censuring the unbiblical appearance of a raven in the Koranic account of Cain and Abel (5:27–31). Such instances arguably do more to stress what the Biblical and Koranic accounts have in common. It is also noteworthy that Zechendorff avoids here the numerous passages in the Koran which offer a religious point of view genuinely and significantly different from the understanding of religion he shared with his Zwickau audience. In the introduction, he likens the Koran to a work of oriental tapestry, striking in its colourful splendour and the variegated material from which it is woven.¹⁸ Put less colourfully, the Koran for Zechendorff was a medley

16 *Miseria mea gravis mihi! Sed parat escsm honorem Dominus meus, mihi in eo director, sufficit ipse mihi auxiliator.* באסי שדידן לי אלא אעתר ארזוק אלכרים רבי לי בה האדיאן כפי הן לי נעיראן. Zechendorff ends his condolences with a similar exercise on Ps. 4:17: ‘I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety’, excerpting verses from Suras 7, 18 and 12.

17 A charming reminder of the immediate context, i.e. a graduation ceremony attended by local notables but also by talkative teenagers, is offered by Zechendorff’s final remark before embarking on the first ‘fable’. Ibid. B2^v. *Has ego dum refero strepera dictante Minerva/ Omnes nunc faveant, sint tranquillissima tecta:/ Garrula lingua suam non intermisceat odam.*

18 Ibid. A2^v. *Quod sunt perstromata Babylonica, sive ut vocant tapetes Turcici, varietate quipped colorum a Phrygionibus variegata & aucupicti: Jllud etiam est ALCORANUS ARABICUS, sive Liber ille, ex quo Turcae verbum Dei, & suam Religionem se haurire sibi persuasum habent; per quem pie & honeste hic vivere gestiunt, & quo in tandem creduli se beari confidunt.*

of truth and falsehoods.¹⁹ True to form, the work is prefaced by an impassioned address to Muslims in Arabic and Latin, much akin to Zechendorff's marginal note to the letter of 1630 informing him of his mother's death:

O Turks and Arabs! If only you would separate that which is false from the book which you study, which are the fabulous parts, I have shown to you, and have written it down for you in Latin. [If you do so] you shall live in uprightness and shall be united with us in faith.²⁰

The sentiment may have been sincere but at the same time I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that Zechendorff ever engaged in any missionary effort whatsoever or had any real interest in so doing. Apart from the obvious fact that converting Muslims would have been an unlikely undertaking in seventeenth-century Zwickau, if this piece of metric rhetoric were composed with an eye to proselytising, even beyond war- and plague-ridden Saxony, he would not have composed it in Latin hexameters. What captivated Zechendorff here were the parallels and affinities between the Koran and the Bible. This line of thought also informed his bilingual edition of and commentary on Suras 61 and 78 (1638). In the commentary to these short Koranic chapters, he offers an assessment of the truth value of each verse, depending on its conformity to teachings in the Christian Bible. In itself a standard way for seventeenth-century Christian scholars to study Islam (and indeed any foreign religion), what is striking is the considerable number of 'Christian truths' Zechendorff claims to have found in these two Suras.

Several years later Zechendorff would discover the importance of Muslim commentaries to the understanding of the Koran and would publish a further Koranic specimen, availing himself of the thirteenth-century commentary by Bayḍāwī, which he had recently obtained. This in itself is a significant development in his scholarship but his sustained fascination with the Koran, which is attested repeatedly in his manuscripts, was based rather on a sense of affinity than on a desire to study Islam in its own terms.

We turn finally to Zechendorff's most ambitious work, his unpublished translation of the entire Koran, recently discovered by Roberto Tottoli (Tottoli 2015; Gleis 2016). An in-depth analysis of Zechendorff's approach to the task of translating the Koran is the subject of an ongoing research project in Bochum (Gleis 2016).

19 Ibid. *Sic modo vera & sana invenimus posita: modo falsa & mendacijs referta, nulloque sensus acumine aut argumentorum pondere, quod hominem Christianum vel leviter movere possit instructa: modo fabulosa atque absona veris sunt immista; modo de his, modo de illis confuse agens nomina tractat. [...] Illis omnibus hactenus in authentico, & autographo quodam Manuscripto Arabico cognitit a me eius gratia primum, ut linguam Arabicam aliquot modo (quum meo cortice natandum, viva Praeceptoris voce, destitute) familiarem mihi redderem.*

20 Ibid. A4^v.

The volume comprises the Arabic text, carefully copied out by Zechendorff, along with his interlinear Latin translation. The manuscript volume also contains a fair number of marginalia in the schoolmaster's distinctive handwriting. Many are of a philological nature, while others bear witness to a more personal, even devotional, reading. I would like to conclude with a brief consideration of a few instances.

The volume opens with several passages from other works of scholarship, which Zechendorff copied in his own hand by way of a preface to his ambitious work. Among these, interestingly, is a lengthy quote from Martin Luther's *Table Talk*, in which the Reformer discusses his translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to German, stressing that 'I am no Hebrew according to grammar and rules' and that knowledge of languages was not in itself sufficient for the art of translation, which Luther sees as a particular divine gift and grace.²¹ What this is meant to indicate to readers about Zechendorff's Koran translation is open to speculation.

Not surprisingly, most of Zechendorff's marginalia to his Latin Koran translation are themselves in Latin. The few exceptions deserve special attention. One such we find in the margins alongside the opening verses of the fourth Sura (*The Women*):

You people! Have fear of your Lord, who created you from a single soul. From that soul He created its spouse and through them He bestrewed the earth with countless men and women. Fear God, in whose name you plead with one another, and honour the mothers who bore you. God is ever watching you.²²

Zechendorff added a German paraphrase in the margin: *Ihr sollt Gott anbeten mitt forcht. Er hatt den ersten Mann erschaffen v[nd] von ihm das erste Weib, daher*

21 Luther, *Tischreden: Ich bin kein Ebreer nach der Grammatica v. Regeln, denn ich las Mich nirgent anbinden, sondern Ich gehe frey hindurch, Wenn einer gleich die Gabe der Sprachen hatt, v. versteht sie, doch kann Er darumb nicht eine in die ander so bald bringen vnd wohl verdolmetschen. Dolmetschen ist ein solderliche Gnad vnd Gabe Gottes. Die 70. Griechische Dolmetscher/ so die Ebreische Bibel in die Griechische Sprach bracht haben sin im Ebreischen vnverfahren und vngeübt gewest/ ihr Dolmetschen ist sehr leppisch vnd vngeimpt / denn sie haben die Buchstaben / Wort vnd art zu reden verachtet / also/ das auch S. Hieronymi Versio vnd Verdolmetschen ihnen fürzuziehen ist. Wiewohl wer Hieronymum für ein Ebreer schilt / der thut ihm gewalt vnd vnrecht. Denn nach der Babylonischen Gefengnis ist diese Sprach so corrupiert vnd verderbt/ das man sie nicht at widerumb können zu recht bringen/ Wenn Moses vnd die Propheten jetzt wider aufferstünden / so würden sie ihre wort / wie sie jetzund verdrehet sind / selbs nicht verstehehn.*

22 Zechendorff translates this as: *Eja homines, timete Dominum vestrum, qui vos creavit ex anima sola & creavit ex illa conjugem suam & diffudit ex illis duob[us] viros multos & mulieres ergo colite Dominum quem petietis/interrogabitis [] eo & matrices nam DEUS est vobis explorator.*

ihr alle herkommet, derwegen sollet ihr nicht hartt, noch vndanckbar sein gegen Ewern weibern, v[nd] weill gott v[nd] die engell den Waisen günstig sein, so sollet ihr Euch dieselben befohlen sein lassen. Esst von den ewrigen, v[nd] nicht von dem, das ihnen zu gehöret, thut – here Zechendorff breaks off in mid sentence.

A tiny note scribbled in German over the title of Sura 70 is easily overlooked but instructive. Sura 70 (*Al-Ma'ārij*, The ladder/ascending stairways) describes the Day of Judgment, with the evil doers' punishment and the reward of the just recounted after calling on believers to be patient ('Therefore conduct yourself with becoming patience. They think the Day of Judgment is far off: but We see it near at hand' 70:5–7). Over the Sura's title, Zechendorff jotted a note in miniscule German: *Wie lang muß einer haben ehe er gen himmel steigt* (How long must one wait, before one may ascend to heaven). This was probably added by an infirm, world-weary Zechendorff in his old age. Zechendorff, it is worth remembering, lived to be eighty-one – a feat of uncommon longevity in the seventeenth century. At his funeral in February 1662, his eulogiser, the Zwickau superintendent Gottfried Siegmund Peißker, admitted that Zechendorff no longer attended the Latin school in his final years but stayed at home praying all day, a sign of spiritual vitality in Peißker's eyes. Was Zechendorff pouring over his unpublished *magnum opus* as an act of the individualised piety of an unusual Lutheran Arabist? The countless pious ruminations scribbled in pseudo-Koranic Arabic on the versos of letters he had accumulated over the years suggest that at least some of the old schoolmaster's prayers, uttered while impatiently awaiting his ascent to Heaven, were spoken in Arabic.

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Amit Dey

Islamic mystical responses to hegemonic orthodoxy: the subcontinental perspective

1 Setting the scene

From the early thirteenth century down to the 1830s, Persian was the official language in major parts of the Indian subcontinent despite the fact that most common people could not read or write this classical language. Paradoxically, and despite its elite dimensions, as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon Persian posed a challenge to the hegemonic orthodoxy that revolved around Arabic, the language of religion (Islam). Indeed, the Sultans of Delhi, who were mostly of Turkic or Afghan origin (note that the Afghan language enjoys a striking similarity to Persian), realised the potential of Persian for use as a quasi-secular and flexible language. Later on, Akbar, the greatest Mughal Emperor (Mughals were originally Turks), also tried to check the ascendancy of ambitious Turks and the Arabic-knowing *ulama* (Muslim clergy) by patronising Persian. In this context, it is useful to remember that the Sufis who migrated to medieval India were primarily Turks and Persians. The Sufis were well versed in both Persian and Arabic but they mainly wrote in Persian and composed their Sufi music (*Sama*) in the same language, in order to make themselves intelligible to the ruling elite (both Muslims and non-Muslims), who knew Persian due to its role as the official language. This convergence of imperial and Islamic mystical endeavours marked the triumph of Persianate tradition, which represented heterogeneity, as opposed to the process of Arabisation, which is often associated with homogenising propensities (compare the Arabisation of North Africa with subcontinental Persianate traditions).

This paper aims to contextualise and analyse some leading Persian texts (such as *Akhbar ul Akhyar*, which appeared in the sixteenth century, and *Safinat ul Awliya* and *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, both from the seventeenth century) in order to explore elements of the implicit, and at times explicit, challenges posed to the hegemonic orthodoxy, which was often identified with the Arabisation process. We are not using the term Arabisation here exclusively in the linguistic sense. Rather, the term is used to represent a religious-cultural process with homogenising propensities that are contrasted with the Mughal cosmopolitanism associated with Persianate tradition. In the eighteenth century, with the decline of Mughal political power, we notice the resurgence of the hegemonic orthodoxy which launched its assault against the Persianate tradition and against aspects of

the mystical traditions allegedly associated with it. Paradoxically, the assault was not exclusively exogenous, because some of the very products of the Persianate tradition, such as Shah Waliullah of Delhi, became critical of the tradition and gravitated towards reform based on 'Arabisation'. Such individuals believed that the Persianate tradition and aspects of the related mystical traditions contributed to the decline of Mughal political power and the degeneration of Muslim society throughout the subcontinent.

In the subcontinent, Friday prayers, centring around the mosques, are characterised by the overwhelming visibility of males. In other words, hegemonic orthodoxy is also represented by a form of masculinity. The gatherings in Sufi shrines, by contrast, are characterised by the presence of women and children, (both Muslims and non-Muslims) the marginalised elements in society. Indeed, mystical traditions often represent feminine dimensions in predominantly masculine cultures. Unlike the scripture- or mosque-based hegemonic orthodoxy, mystical traditions placed emphasis on the local symbols of Islam, such as the Sufi shrine, veneration of Sufi saints, pilgrimage to the local shrine (as if competing with the universal annual pilgrimage to Mecca), etc. In the Persian texts mentioned above (also known under the broad categories of *tazkira*, or Sufi hagiography, and *malfuzat*, or table talks involving a Sufi saint), we notice the representation of the mothers or daughters of illustrious Sufi saints as pious ladies. We also notice women acting as Sufis themselves (*pirani*). Many of these pious women are shown as possessing the power to perform miracles (*keramat*) or to shower blessings (*Baraka*) on their disciples. As a counterpart of the *ulama* (Male Muslim clergy), they were even entrusted with the sacred job of disseminating knowledge relating to ethics (*Akhlaq* literature) and right conduct or behaviour (*Adab*) among the masses. This newfound role for women in the practice of Muslim piety was unique and is an example of the individualisation of religious experience.

However, we should not exaggerate the role of this individualisation process as this experience was very much restricted to a small number of special women who occupied lofty positions in the mystical hierarchy and, hence, could easily be distinguished from ordinary women or the masses. The legitimising process involving these special women or spiritual elites is interesting. For example, their genealogy is often traced from the *Sayyids*, or the Prophet's family. Or at least they were depicted as the mothers, sisters, or daughters of illustrious male Sufis. In Weberian terms, these elite women enjoyed both hereditary and acquired charisma, which easily differentiated them from the masses of devotees. In the formation of this counter-hierarchical setup, which posed a challenge to the masculine hegemonic orthodoxy, we therefore notice a de-individualisation of religious experience.

2 Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlawi: a theologian Sufi or a Sufi theologian?

Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlawi (1551–1663) was one of the most illustrious scholar-sufis (*alim-sufi*) of Mughal India. He compiled *Akhbar ul Akhiyar* (in Persian), which is recognised as a leading source on South Asian Sufism.¹ His name gives us a first insight into his life. We can see that he was based in Delhi (*Dehlawi*) and that he was well versed in *hadis*, for which he earned the title *Muhaddis* (someone learned in *hadis*). In spite of being based in Delhi, he was also an extensive traveller and travelled as far as *Hijaz* (Saudi Arabia) to study the *hadis* and Islamic law. In addition to being thoroughly exposed to Islamic scholarship, he was also initiated into various Sufi orders and it is for this reason that he is appropriately termed a scholar- (*alim*)-Sufi. This remarkable and charismatic scholar-Sufi needs to be studied in the context of his various entanglements, which were both religious and mundane in nature. We have discussed the fact that Abdul Haq was celebrated both as an *alim* (Muslim theologian) and a *muhaddis* (someone well-versed in *hadis*). These qualities enhanced his status among other Muslim scholars, some of whom were supporters of scriptural fundamentalism. Even during the Islamic revivalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, after his death, the reformists were unable to denounce him, despite his strong connections with the Sufis. Seen from this perspective, he enjoyed a unique position in South Asian Islam. In spite of his profound knowledge of Islamic theology, he was also interested in mystical experiences, which kept the door of religious individualisation open for him. Due to his reputation as an *alim* and *muhaddis*, he was not ostracised by the custodians of hegemonic orthodoxy for his inclination towards Islamic mysticism. His de-individualising qualities (a *muhaddis-alim* cannot easily be distanced from the sharia or the canon law of Islam) shielded him from potential danger. To confirm our hypothesis, we may cite the examples of the Mughal Prince Dara Shukoh and his close associate Sufi *Shahid* (Martyr) Sarmad, whose religious views had individualising potential. These men were executed by the Mughal State under Emperor Aurangzeb, who used their religious views as a pretext for their elimination. During their tragic deaths, we notice a convergence of hegemonic orthodoxy and hegemonic polity.

¹ A copy of the Persian text is available at the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Abdul Haq was well versed in *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Arthur Buehler, in his seminal work on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, has used the term 'Jurisprudential Sufism', which is also applicable in the case of Abdul Haq, see Buehler 2011.

Through the event of execution of Sufi Sarmad, Indian Sufis got their ideal martyr and he is regarded as the Mansur Hallaj of India.²

The linguistic dimension of Abdul Haq's religious individualisation also demands our attention. Like other theologians, Abdul Haq was well versed in the Arabic required for reading the written scripture. He could, then, have written about Sufis and Sufism in what is recognised by Muslims as the language of religion. The importance of the original language can be seen in the widespread resistance to attempts to translate the Quran from Arabic into any other language. The eighteenth century reformist Shah Waliullah of Delhi showed his guts and gumption when he became the first Indian to translate the entire Quran into Persian. Since Persian was the official language in the subcontinent, even Hindu nobles cum administrators had to learn it. The translation of the Holy Book into Persian thus gave educated non-Muslim Indians access to the Quran, which created a favourable environment for interfaith dialogue. This pioneering translation of the Holy Book had the potential to emancipate religious discourse related to Islam from the monopoly of the *ulama* and to incorporate multi-religious South Asian elements into the process of discourse. In this context, the eminent theologian Shah Waliullah emerged as an active agent of religious individualisation in eighteenth century South Asia. What about those scholar-Sufis (*alim*-Sufis) or Sufis involved in compiling the *malfuzat* (table talk involving Sufi saints), *maktubat* (letters exchanged between Sufi saints), and *tazkiras* (biographies of Sufi saints) in the Persian language from pre-Mughal times onwards? Since Sufism in the subcontinent had both Muslim and non-Muslim followers, and the educated among the latter read Persian, the situation was amenable to interfaith dialogue. This was a process that was not particularly attractive to the *ulama*, who were keen to establish the superiority of Islam in comparison to other religions. A section of the *ulama* in pre-Mughal India went so far as to express their views in favour of the forced conversion of non-Muslims. However, wise and farsighted Turko-

² Mansur Hallaj was martyred for uttering the individualising words *Anal Huq*, meaning 'I am the Truth' or 'I am God'. Due to a mystical experience, he refused to differentiate himself from God. In short, only God prevailed in his successful mystical experience. For boldly uttering this truth, representatives of the hegemonic orthodoxy in West Asia cut him into pieces several centuries before Sufi Sarmad. From then on, all the persecuted Sufis argue that they are afraid of divulging the mystical Truth because their fate could be like that of Mansur Hallaj, who is recognised by the Sufis as one of the earliest martyrs in the history of Sufism. His plight is compared with the tragic battle of Karbala, during which the Prophet's grandson Husain attained martyrdom. Husain's death marks the beginning of a tradition of individuals regarded as the martyrs of love (for God). This category represents the highest form of religious individualisation in Sufism. Still, we must not overlook the political agenda behind the execution of the Mughal Prince Dara and his associate Sufi Sarmad.

Afghan rulers such as Iltutmish dismissed proposals of this kind and aspired instead to counter the arrogant *ulama* with the Sufis, who represented a more liberal, human, spiritual, and to a great extent pragmatic, outlook in the context of challenges faced by the early Muslim empire builders in South Asia.³ While the Mughal and pre-Mughal Muslim rulers in South Asia played a significant role in promoting Persian as the official language or language of administration, at the socio-cultural level this classical language was virtually institutionalised by the various Sufi orders who used it to produce and circulate their religious manuscripts, as mentioned earlier. Largely because of this conscious selection of the 'other' (a language other than Arabic), Persian was able to flourish as an important vehicle for the spread of mystical knowledge in the subcontinent. This Persianisation also facilitated the democratisation of mystical knowledge, in the sense that Hindu nobility or administrators who knew Persian could now access Islamic texts. However, it is important to remember that this process of Persianisation, which elevated Sufi knowledge or mystical knowledge to the status of shared knowledge by incorporating the non-Muslims who knew Persian, fell short of truly domesticating mystical knowledge because Persian was not the language of the masses in India.⁴ Even the *sama* (sufi music) was composed in Persian.⁵

3 Nurul Hasan 2005, 67 and Rizvi 1986, 135f. Non-Muslims far outnumbered the Muslims in Medieval South Asia. The farsighted Muslim empire builders more or less followed a policy of non-interference as far as the belief pattern of non-Muslims was concerned, an approach that enhanced the legitimacy of those rulers. While a section of the *ulama* showed interest in conversion, the Sufis in general exhibited a liberal, human, and spiritual outlook, which sustained India's eclectic traditions. In order to gain greater acceptance among a heterogeneous population, the rulers in South Asia often patronised institutions, such as Sufism, which reflected multi-religiosity or multi-culturalism.

4 I have borrowed the term 'domestication' (of knowledge) from Rahul Parson's article on Banarasidas, which he wrote for the Erfurt Research Group (2013–2015). Arthur Buehler (2011), in his monumental work on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, has shown that there were only 3% of the entire population ruled by Emperor Akbar were *ashraf* (aristocratic Muslims who claimed foreign origin). So we can argue that the Persianisation of Sufi texts not only implied their democratisation but also their *de-ashrafization*, or the emancipation of mystical knowledge from the monopoly of the Arabic-speaking *ashraf*. It created a situation in which non-Muslims who knew Persian could also access knowledge related to Islamic mysticism.

5 As demonstrated by the famous medieval court poet Amir Khusru (d. 1325), who was the *murid* (disciple) of the illustrious Chishti Sufi saint Nizamuddin Awliya. Chishti is the name of the popular Sufi order that popularised Sufi music. The heterogeneity of Sufism is confirmed by the fact that the Naqshbandi and the Suhrawardi orders discouraged music. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the *bauls* (philosophical folk singers of nineteenth and twentieth century Bengal) trace a spiritual connection with the music-loving Chishti Sufis. Hegemonic orthodoxy within Islam is opposed to poetry, philosophy, and music, and Sufi and folk poets have been the target of orthodox criticism. Recently, a statue of charismatic *baul* singer Lalan Shah was destroyed by

In other words, the individualisation of religion in South Asia should be studied in the context of the convergence between the Islamic mystical tradition and the Persianate tradition.⁶ This is why the Islamic revivalist/reformist movements in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century South Asia launched their assaults against the Persianate tradition, for this tradition had, according to them, contributed to the degeneration of Islam, culminating in the political decline of Muslim states.⁷

Regarding the multiple entanglements of Abdul Haq, we need to remember that the entry point of his religious individualisation was actually his father who was intensely mystical. In spite of this, his father Shaikh Saifuddin prescribed for his son the *sharia-tariqa* trajectory, in line with the established tradition.⁸ To satisfy the spiritual urges of Abdul Haq, his father had him initiated into the Qadiriya Sufi order (*silsilah*), and Shaikh Musa, who was living permanently in the court of Emperor Akbar, became his *murshid* (spiritual guide).⁹ Some of the Qadiriya Sufis are extremely intriguing figures, with a number of them going so far as to even study the Vedas and Upanishads.¹⁰ It should be noted that Emperor Akbar's policy of *sulh-i-qul* or peace with all was actually introduced by the Qadiriya Sufis in the pre-Akbaride period. In this context, it is worth recalling that Prince Dara Shukoh was also initiated into the Qadiriya order and that he ventured to translate the Upanishads into Persian. We have also mentioned Abdul Haq's *murshid*, who had strong connections with the Akbaride court, a bastion of religious experimentation in sixteenth century India. It appears that these multiple entanglements with the forces of religious pluralism played a significant role in making Abdul Haq's magnum opus *Akhbar ul Akhbar* (which is an account of Sufi saints) a non-sectarian work. This particular feature also enhanced the authenticity of his work. Here, Abdul Haq, in spite of being an *alim* (theologian), stands apart not only from the sectarian *ulama* but also from sectarian Natha

the custodians of religious fundamentalism in Bangladesh. All these examples challenge Samuel Huntington's thesis of a 'Clash of Civilisations' and indicate that there is, rather, a clash within civilisation. This clash within represents the clash between liberal, spiritual, and mystical Islam, on the one side, and hegemonic orthodoxy or scriptural fundamentalism, on the other. The former sustains the forces of religious individualisation.

6 For a detailed discussion of the Persianate tradition in India, see Robinson 2001, chapter one.

7 Ibid.

8 Hanif 2000, 41–50. Sharia means the canon law of Islam and *tariqa* is the mystical path of the Sufis. The most illustrious Sufis of South Asia first mastered the sharia and then traversed the Sufi path or *tariqa*. For the sake of convenience, I have called this the sharia-tariqa trajectory. Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlawi was one of the greatest *alim*-Sufis of South Asia to have followed this trajectory.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

Panth and Siddha literature. Jain Hindi literature is also instructional and sectarian.¹¹ Treading amongst these various orthodox traditions, Abdul Haq's stance was neutrality, not only in religious matters but in the case of imperial politics as well.¹² In fact, he was too submerged in mystical experiences to be a sectarian.¹³ It is in the context of his intense inner mystical urge that we notice the dynamics of the individualisation of religion. In spite of his thorough exposure to sharia and scriptural Islam, he felt that it was important to transcend this frontier. Another important point that demands our attention is the evolution of the term *murshid* or spiritual preceptor. In the early phase of empire building in which Turkic sultans such as Iltutmish were involved, the term *murshid* faced many challenges, even within the Muslim community. During the thirteenth century, the *ulama* became particularly jealous about the increasing popularity of charismatic *murshids* such as Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. The *ulama* wanted to drive him out of Delhi but were unsuccessful due to the intervention of Sultan Iltutmish, who venerated the Sufi saint.¹⁴ Nevertheless, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the heyday of the Mughals coincided with the lifetime of Abdal Haq, a *murshid*'s position in society was reasonably consolidated. The *murshid* was, by that time, recognised as an alternative source of authority, a divergent voice in the wider society, if not a direct challenge to the *ulama*. We use the term 'wider society' because a *murshid*'s position was not confined to a particular community. In the South Asian context a charismatic *murshid* might be venerated by Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs alike. Therefore, the social base of the *murshid* could be broader than that of the *ulama*. Whereas the *ulama* represented a rigid, formal, and external form of religion by putting emphasis on the universal symbols of Islam such as Mecca, the place of pilgrimage, the Holy Book or the Quran, the *hadis* (sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), and the Prophet, the *murshid* emerged as the 'imaginaire'¹⁵ Muslim who indulged in creativity and improvisation, reflecting his appropriating nature which culminated in the recognition of local symbols of Islam, such as the Sufi shrine or the

11 Rahul Parson discusses this in his article, mentioned in n. 4 above, by citing Ramachandra Shukla. In this context, one must also remember the disenchantment of Abdal Haq's father with the greedy and mundane *ulama*. See Hanif 2000, 41–9.

12 Hanif 2000, 41–9.

13 In the context of *bhakti* or Jain experiences, Rahul Parson calls this *anubhava* (inner self experience).

14 Rizvi 1986, 3–8, 11f.

15 I have borrowed the term 'imaginaire Muslim' from the international workshop held in Raleigh, USA in 2002. The title of that workshop, organised by the Triangle South Asia Consortium, was 'The Work of the Imaginaire in South Asian Islam'. The term 'imaginaire' implies someone who is creative and improvisational and hence capable of transcending the narrow confines of scriptures.

murshid himself. The nature of Islam in South Asia has to be understood in the context of the subtle tension between the universal and local symbols of Islam. The appropriating and accommodating nature of the Sufis often borders on Indianness. For example, Muinuddin Chishti, the doyen of the Chishti order in India used to advise his followers: 'Develop river-like generosity, earth-like hospitality, and sun-like wisdom'.¹⁶ While uttering these words he was aware that river, earth, and sun are venerated by the people of India. In spite of being a pious Muslim, he had no difficulty in using idioms and symbols that were intelligible to the Indian people. In this way, in the early Sultanate era, he represented a shift from extra-territoriality to Indianness. Extra-territoriality characterised *ashraf* behaviour (that of aristocratic Muslims who claim foreign origin). Seen from this angle we can conclude that some Sufis were associated with the de-*ashrafisation* process. Individualisation of religion involved all these intriguing developments, which do not merely indicate the blossoming of the inner self but a creative and meaningful identification with local symbols and alternative ritual patterns (such as veneration of the *murshid*, pilgrimage to the sufi shrine, taking part in *sama* or Sufi musical ritual on the anniversary of a Sufi saint's death, known as *urs* in Sufi terminology, or considering the composing of *maktubat*, *malfuzat*, and *tazkira* as acts of piety)¹⁷ without formally renouncing the Islamic identity. The *ulama* led a group or a local community. The preaching of the *ulama* was instructional in the sense that he expected his followers to observe the basic tenets of Islam against the threat that those who did not would be punished by God on the Day of Judgement. Therefore, the God of the *ulama* was often God the punisher.¹⁸ But the Sufis project a different image of God. God to them is benign, loving, and forgiving. The Sufi is also known as *wali* (plural: *awliya*), or the friend of God, or even the lover of God.¹⁹ Instead of terrorising the Muslim masses through pamphleteering, the Sufis advise the common man to select carefully the *kamil murshid*, or

16 Cited in De 2004, 1–15.

17 In mainstream Islam memorisation of the entire Quran (the person who achieves this is respected in the community as *hafiz*), writing *tafsir* (commentary on the Quran), or copying the Quran in beautiful handwriting are regarded as pious acts. So the Sufis managed to develop a parallel sense of piety through the compilation of Sufi texts in a language other than Arabic.

18 Thanks to the utilisation of printing technology in India since the nineteenth century, we find hundreds of pamphlets or booklets in the vernacular languages, with a deliberate admixture of Arabic and Persian words, which were used to terrorise the Muslim masses and deter them from any deviation from the basic tenets of Islam. The *ulama* considered the *pirs* (*murshids* or spiritual guides) as a potential threat in terms of their capacity to influence the masses. The *ulama* often denounced the *pirs* as *bhanda faqir* (Bengali) or pseudo *pirs*. The instructional pamphlets circulated by the *ulama* were known as *nasihatnama*. See Dey 2006, chapters 2, 3 and 4.

19 Aquil 2017, chapters 1 and 2.

perfect guide, in order to experience the mystical Truth.²⁰ Thanks to the systematic and sustained efforts of the Sufis, the *–pir-muridi* (spiritual preceptor and disciple) relationship had been institutionalised within the Sufi movement. Thus, unlike the *ulama* who interacts with the local community or group, Sufis could enjoy a special interaction with a special disciple. The specially chosen spiritual successor of a *murshid* is called the *khalifa* or deputy. In short, all *khalifas* are *murids* (disciples) but all *murids* are not *khalifas*. All this points towards the creation by the Sufis of a counter hierarchy. We know that collective (community) is very important in Islamic identity. But the success of the Sufis lies in the fact that they could create a spiritual space for the individual within the broad framework of Islam. Of course, that space is perennially threatened by the custodians of hegemonic orthodoxy.

3 Religious individualisation, Sufism and the discourse on women

Many Muslim writers speak with contempt about the incapacity of women in religious matters and of their lack of intelligence and morals.²¹ An early writer says, ‘The majority of women are lacking in religion and virtue and that which prevails in them is ignorance and evil desires’.²²

However, Sufis were well aware of the positive aspects of womanhood. Some of the Quranic tales serve as beautiful illustrations of the role of women in religious life. The most famous example is that of Potiphat’s wife, as told in *Sura 12*: this woman, completely lost in her love of Joseph, is a fine symbol of the enrapturing power of love, expressed by the mystic in the contemplation of divine beauty as revealed in the human form. It can even be said that Sufism was more favourable to the development of feminine activities than were other branches of Islam.²³ The sympathy of the Prophet for women, and his four daughters in

²⁰ Dey 2006, chapter 4.

²¹ In the discussion of this intriguing sub-theme, we shall rely heavily on the Persian Manuscript of Abdul Haq Dehlavi entitled *Akhbarul Akhiyar*. Dehlavi devoted one entire chapter in this manuscript to female Sufis, a rare gesture in the history of South Asian Sufism.

²² Abu Talib, *Qutal-Qulub* II, 238. Cited in Smith 1928, 133.

²³ The persecution and, at times, the elimination of the Sufis during the last hundred years in West Asia, North Africa, Afghanistan, parts of Bangladesh, and Malaysia has often meant less freedom for women in the public space. The evolution of feminine attire in these regions, particularly during the last fifty or sixty years, is indicative of the attempt to restrict the visibility of women in public space. In the early 1970s it was hard to find women in the capital city

particular, excluded the feeling of dejection so often found in medieval Christian monasticism. The veneration of Fatima in *Shia* circles is indicative of the important role assigned to the feminine element in Islamic religious life.²⁴ Before Sufism arose, women were recognised as saints, including Amina, the mother of the Prophet, and Fatima, his daughter, who enjoy the veneration of all Muslims because of their relationship to Muhammad.²⁵ So it is not surprising that Shaikh Abdul-Haq Muhaddis Dihlawi (1551–1642) devotes a separate chapter to women saints in his famous Persian work, the *Akhbaru'l-Akhyar*.²⁶ Being an expert on *hadis* (the recorded sayings and deeds of the Prophet), Abdul Haq knew the importance of the leading women in the family of the Prophet. The question is why most other writers were silent about the role of women in religion? This was because discussions about Muslim women in the public space were simply not common. Getting entry into the manuscript implied entry into the public space in one form because the manuscript could move from hand to hand. Veneration of the women in the Prophet's family is not only common in *hadis*, in *sirat* (biographies of the Prophet) literature too we find these women treated with respect. So, in the genre of Sufi literature, Abdul Haq's treatment of the topic was pioneering and bold. He did not want to end his responsibility just by mentioning them. If we carefully read his chapter on women Sufis,²⁷ it is impossible to miss the degree of enthusiasm on the part of the pioneer author. Silently but clearly, Abdul Haq aspires to convey the serious message to the readers that women could acquire mystic-spiritual knowledge and that under such circumstances they should be elevated in the spiritual hierarchy just as their male counterparts were. This argument climaxes when citing an example he is allegorically posing a question before the audience/readers: 'Is not the lioness dreadful?'²⁸ Given such a context, it is reasonable to propose that the production and circulation of Sufi texts (in

of Dhaka covering their heads but this practice is now quite common in many parts of West Bengal. In March 2017, I interviewed two highly qualified Bangladeshi ladies domiciled in the Western world. Both covered their heads and strongly opposed Sufism as a deviation. One of them would not allow her close relatives to sing before strangers under normal circumstances. One of the reasons underlying their dislike for the Sufis is the latter's fondness for *sama* or Sufi music, currently known as *qawwali*. However, we should remember that the Suhrawardiya and the Naqshbandiya Sufi orders do not encourage music. The Chishtiya order encourages *sama*.

24 Schimmel 1975, 426.

25 Smith 1928, 137.

26 Dehlawi 1605 (?), 280–3.

27 Edward Said, in his *Culture And Imperialism*, would call it 'reading between lines'. See Said 1993.

28 For the exact words, please see the next footnote. The Sufis used to respond to queries indirectly and in an allegorical manner. This apparently camouflaged the process of religious individualisation, making them immune to the assault of the custodians of hegemonic orthodoxy.

Persian) in medieval India institutionalised the allegorical responses of the Sufi masters (*murshids*). The pattern not only betrayed their sense of humour but was crucial to the enhancement of their charisma among their followers, much to the consternation of the *ulama*.²⁹

In fact, women continued to play an important role in the Sufi movement in India, both as Sufis and as mothers of leading Sufis. Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din Auliya used to say:

When the lion emerges from a jungle, none raises a question about its sex. The descendants of Adam should adopt piety and obedience to God whether they be men or women.³⁰

It is instructive to consider the role of mothers in Sufi biographies. Many religious leaders admitted that they received their first religious instruction, and even their preliminary training in the mystical path, from their mothers. The Prophet said: 'Paradise lies at the feet of the mother'.

Whether it be Baba Fariduddin, Ganj-i Shakar's mother, or Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din Auliya's mother, there is no doubt that many elderly women contributed to the spiritual formation of some of the great Sufi saints through their familial ties.

Bibi Sara is one of the earliest women saints mentioned in the *Akhbaru'l-Akhyar*. She was the mother of Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din Abu'l Mu'id, an important contemporary of Khwaja Qutbu'd-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki. The *Akhbaru'l-Akhyar* (in Persian) provides an interesting story involving Bibi Sara. People used to visit Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din Abu'l Mu'id to get rid of their problems, both spiritual and material. On one occasion, there was a drought (*imsake baran*) in Delhi. Everybody began to pray for rain (*baran*) and the Shaikh was requested to do likewise. The Shaikh then took a thread (*rishla*) from a garment (*daman*) worn by his mother. He held it in his hand and began to pray: 'Oh God the chastity (*hurmat*) of my mother is well-known. She has never unveiled her face before strangers, and I am praying on behalf of this pious lady, please send rain for us'. 'Az Shaikh in *haraf guftan, az Khuda baran ferestadan*' – After hearing the Shaikh's appeal God sent rain for them.³¹

Shaikh Abdul Haq Dihlawi clearly mentions the name of Bibi Zulaykha, the venerated mother of Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din Auliya: '*Bibi Zulaykha walida-e Shaikh*

²⁹ In the South Asian context, the *ulama* represents rigid, formal religion, and are not necessarily known for their sense of humour. On the contrary, the Sufis are known for their smiling image, their sense of humour, which is often associated with their spiritual wisdom.

³⁰ Abdu'l Haqq, *Akhbar*, 280: 'Sher az bisha birun ayed kase pursid ke an sher nar ast va mada farzandane Adam ra ta 'at wa taqwae baid khua mard bashad wa khua zan.'

³¹ Dehlavi 1605 (?), 280.

Nizamu'd-Din Auliya ast'.³² Nizamu'd-Din Auliya had deep respect for his mother. He used to say: '*Walida mara ba Khuda Ta'ala asna'i bud'*,³³ – 'My mother was the way towards the Kingdom of God'. When the Shaikh's mother was faced with any problem, she could discover the solution in her dreams. According to *Sufi* belief, such a power was exclusively reserved for *Sufi* saints. In this context, it is not difficult to form an impression of her place (*maqam*) in the history of Sufism. Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din had to pass his early days in poverty. When the house was bereft of food (*ghalla*) his mother consoled him by saying that: '*Imroz ma mehman-e Khudayem*'³⁴ – 'Today we are the guests of God'.

One day, in a similar situation, the Shaikh's mother uttered these words and suddenly the Shaikh observed that a man appeared in front of their house with foodstuffs (*ghalla*) worth one *tanka* (silver coin). This experience brought about enough spiritual satisfaction to the Shaikh. Later on, whenever he was in a time of need (*har hajati*), the Shaikh would visit his mother's grave (*khake walidai-e khud*) and offer prayers.³⁵

We have already referred to the *ziyarat* (religious visitation) of Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din Auliya to his mother's tomb. In this connection, the *Akhbaru'l-Akhyar* provides interesting information, the importance of which cannot be ignored if we are to come to a better understanding of the nature of relationship between the state and Sufism. Sultan Qutbu'd-Din Mubarak Shah (1316–1320) was jealous of Shaikh Nizamuddin's popularity and expected that, along with all the Shaikhs and Ulama, Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din should also visit the mosque in the fort of Sipri (*qilae Sipri*) for the Friday (*juma*) prayer. But the Shaikh replied: '*Masjid nazdik darem wa in ahaqq ast'*.³⁶ 'There is a mosque nearby, and it is more worthy'. Now according to the Sultan's order, the entire religious community of Delhi assembled at the palace on the first day of the lunar month (*darghurra har mahi*) to offer congratulations (*tahni-at*) to him. The Shaikh further antagonised the Sultan by sending a loyal servant (*iqbal-e khadim*) as his deputy. The vainglorious Sultan (*gharur-e badshahi*) made it clear to the Shaikh that if he failed to pay homage to the Sultan in person, he would be forced to do so. Ignoring the threat, the Shaikh quietly prayed at his mother's tomb and returned home. Divine dispensation (*qaza'i Ilahi*) led to the assassination of the Sultan by his favourite and protégé Khusraw Khan before the first day of the next month (*ghurra mahe ayanda*) and

³² Ibid. 'Bibi Zuleikha is the mother of Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya'.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Dehlavi 1605 (?), 282.

the Shaikh was saved from humiliation.³⁷ Thus the mother of Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din not only contributed significantly to the later brilliance of her son but, even after her death, continued to remain a constant source of peace, solace, and inspiration to the greatest fourteenth century Sufi (d. 1325) in India.

So we notice that not only the *murshids* (spiritual guides) but also their pious mothers were presented as an alternative source of religious authority, perhaps as a plot to take the wind from the sails of the mullahs (*ulama*).³⁸ This representation also served another purpose. By projecting stories in which the pious mothers played a pivotal role, such those mentioned above, people were advised to respect their parents and their mothers in particular. In this way, the Sufis virtually institutionalised *akhlaq* (ethical) literature in medieval South Asia. This genre emerged as a parallel literature, if not the direct counterpart of the scriptures.

Another great woman Sufi was Bibi Fatima Sam of Delhi. Baba Farid (d. 1265) often referred to her piety and sanctity. Her spiritual qualities were equal to those of the greatest male Sufis of her time. It was for this reason that Baba Farid used to say: '*Fatima Sam marde ast*'.³⁹ She regarded Baba Farid and his brother, Shaikh Najibu'd-Din Mutwakkil, as her own brothers.⁴⁰ Some important information about Bibi Fatima can be found in the *malfuzat* (conversations or discourses)⁴¹ of Shaikh Nizamu'd-Din Auliya (1238 – 1325). The Shaikh heard her saying: '*Az berai anke para'e nan wa kuza 'e ab bakase dehand neyamathaye dine wa duniya wai nisar'e yu kunand ke sad hazar roza wa namaz na' tuwan yaft*'.⁴² This implied that feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, and distributing money amongst the poor on festive occasions, were more meritorious than hundreds and thousands of *namazes*

37 Ibid. 282f.

38 Envisaging parents as substitutes for gurus is not uncommon in South Asia. In the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of people travelled to Western Bengal due to the Liberation war in Bangladesh, coupled with political turmoil and the related economic crisis. Under such circumstances, many people or families sought the intercession of gurus or so called religious guides. Some of those who refused to follow this practice stated 'we do not need gurus, parents are our greatest gurus'.

39 Ibid. 280: 'Fatima Sam is a man.'

40 In the conservative society of South Asia, it is very uncommon for a Muslim lady to treat men who are not her blood relatives as her own brothers. Fatima Sam's decision to do so reflects her independent spirit or man-like nature.

41 The discourses delivered by a leading Sufi to a select gathering of Sufi disciples and visitors gave rise to a distinctive genre of Persian literature. This was known as *malfuzat*, which also contained didactic poetry, anecdotes, and pithy sayings. For more information on *malfuzat*, see Rizvi 1986, 3–8 and 11f.

42 Abdul Haq, *Akhbar*, 280.

(prayers) and many days spent in fasting (*roza*). Here, an independent spirit found expression through the criticism of rigid, formal, or external religion. Emphasis was explicitly placed on the humane aspect of religion. After her death, Shaikh Nizamud-Din Auliya used to go to his mother's tomb (*rauza*) to offer prayers and he always received spiritual satisfaction in doing so: '*Sultan-ul-Mashaikh* (Shaikh Nizamud-Din) *dar rauzae Fatima Sam bisiyar mushghul bude*'.⁴³ Again this is very significant. The great saint, instead of always visiting the mosque filled with devout Muslims, at times would seek spiritual satisfaction in the solitude of the graveyard. Indeed, the act of visiting the *majar* (grave) has been institutionalised by the Sufis. The Wahhabis⁴⁴ are vehemently opposed to such practices.

The Chishti attitude to manual labour and prayer comes through clearly in a story related by the Shaikh.

One day the Shaikh visited the tomb of Bibi Sam, which was near a pond (*hauz*). A man appeared with a basket filled with *khiyar* (a vegetable resembling a cucumber) and dropped them near the tank, where he performed *wazu* (ablution) and then calmly said his prayers (*du rikat-namaz*). After that, he washed the *khiyars* one by one (*yagan yagan khiyare shust*) and then recited three blessings for the Prophet Muhammad. Being deeply impressed with the man's piety, the Shaikh offered him a silver *tanka* (coin) but this was refused. The Shaikh asked the man, who was a lowly paid labourer, how he could afford to refuse the offer. The man replied that his father was also a vegetable seller who died leaving him very young. After that, his mother was able to teach him the most elementary rules for formal prayers. When she was dying, she advised him: "*Tu niz khiyare wa sabze ba-faroshi*" – "You should also continue as a vegetable seller." In short, his dying mother instructed him not to depend on anything or anyone else for his living.⁴⁵

After the man stopped talking, it appeared to the Shaikh as if he was listening to the words of a saint (*awaze abdal ast*). So manual labour was not looked down upon by the *Chishtis*. On the contrary, they were prepared to appreciate the qualities of a common man or woman if he or she was aware of the value of self-reliance and followed some basic rules for formal prayers. This was one of the reasons for the popularity of the *Chishti silsilah* (order) among the common people. Unlike the vainglorious and greedy *ulama*,⁴⁶ the Chishti Sufis aspired

⁴³ Ibid. 280. *Sultanul-Mashaikh* means 'king of the saints'. *Mashaikh* is the plural form of Shaikh (saint). The conscious borrowing of the political term *sultan* (king) seems significant for it poses a challenge to temporal authority.

⁴⁴ For the sake of convenience, I have used this term, meaning, rigid, orthodox, and often militant Muslims, or self-appointed Muslim reformers.

⁴⁵ Hamid Qalandar, *Khayrul Majalis* 227–78. Also see Abdul-Haq, *Akhbar*, 281.

⁴⁶ Eighteenth century Punjabi Sufi poet Bullhe Shah's compositions are replete with such images of the *ulama*.

to move closer to the everyday life of the common people and by emphasising the dignity of the common man, they reflected their de-ashrafising approach to society, very much in tune with the *hadis*.⁴⁷

It is evident from the *malfuzat* (conversations or discourses) of Shaikh Nizamud-Din Auliya that the *nazms* (verses) of Bibi Fatima Sam were of exquisite beauty, delicate but full of spiritual thought. Shaikh Nizamud-Din had memorised a famous *misra* (hemistich) composed by her: ‘*Ham ishq talab kuni wa ham jan khuahi, har du talbi wale mir nashawad*’⁴⁸ – ‘A person, who is a seeker of “Divine Love” (*ishqe ilahi*), but at the same time concerned with the safety and security of his personal life, cannot become a true lover’. Religious individualisation acquires a new dimension here with the differentiation between Divine Love (*ishqe ilahi*) and human love (*ishqe majazi*).

Bibi Fatima’s tomb was in the old Indraprastha. After many years, it became a deserted place (*kharabah*). The memory of Bibi Fatima also fell into obscurity and she became known to the local people only as Bibi Saima or Bibi Sham.⁴⁹ From the perspective of religious individualisation, this geographical isolation of her grave is symbolic.

Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dihlawi mentions the name of Bibi Auliya, a female Sufi who lived at the time of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. Shaikh Abdul-Haq says ‘*Bibi Auliya az salihat waqte khud bud*’⁵⁰ – ‘Bibi Auliya was one of the most pious ladies of her time’. She led a withdrawn life (*khalwat*) meditating in her *hujra* (chamber) for untold hours. She was also known for constant fasting. However, her reclusive life did not make her indifferent to the sorrows and sufferings of the common people. In the month of *Muharram* she actively engaged herself in charitable works which included the establishment of a *langar* (an alms house) for the distribution of free food among the poor. It is said that Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq had deep faith in her.⁵¹ Shaikh Abdul-Haq wrote, ‘*Qabre wu birun qulae Alai ast*’⁵² – ‘Her grave is situated outside the fort of Sultan Alau’d-Din Khalji (Ala’i)’. Her sons and grandsons apparently also became saints. When Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dihlawi (1551 – 1642) was writing his *Akhbarul-Akhyar*, the descendants of Bibi Auliya were still alive and they were

47 The Chishti Sufis, in particular, wanted to get rid of the infamous *ashraf* (high born Muslims of foreign origin)-*ajlaf* (converted Indian Muslims) divide in Indian society. I have called this the *de-ashrafisation* process.

48 Abdul Haq, *Akhbar*, 280.

49 Ibid. 281.

50 Ibid. 283.

51 Ibid. 283.

52 Ibid. 283.

popularly called *himams* (high-minded).⁵³ Among them, Shaikh Ahmad probably became the most famous. He was also well informed about many Sufi saints.⁵⁴

4 Mughal prince Dara Shukoh and individualisation of religion

Eclectic traditions both pre-existed and outlived the scholar cum mystic Prince Dara Shukoh. In this context, it will be useful to discuss the Sufi doctrine of *Wahdat – ul – wajud* or pantheism, which can be regarded as the entry point for the individualisation of religion in the Islamic mystical context. The Sufis use the term '*Hama Ust*', meaning everything is 'He', which implies that God is reflected in everything. Using this doctrine some Sufis went so far as to claim that God is also reflected in a heathen or a Hindu and, given this, a Hindu cannot be denounced as a *kafir* or infidel.⁵⁵ Mulla Daud, the author of *Chandayan*, who was linked to the famous fourteenth century Sufi Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi, praised Muhammad as the beloved of everyone. At the same time, he referred to the Vedas and Puranas as revealed books, like the Quran.⁵⁶ Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan, a Sufi poet of the Naqshbandi order, came to the same conclusion as Dara, viz. that the Vedas were revealed books and Hindus could not thus be identified with the *Kafirs* of Arabia. He even argued that there was little difference between idol worship and *tasawwar-i-shaikh* (common among those who venerate a Sufi saint) or concentration on the mental image of the preceptor.⁵⁷

Dara was a sound scholar, poet, and calligrapher with an artistic bent. However, unlike his great forefather Akbar, he was not adept in the art of statecraft. It is said that Emperor Shah Jahan advised his eldest son Dara to acquire the knowledge available in the Greek, Roman and Persian worlds alongside the knowledge prevalent in India. After completing this process, Dara should, according to his father, launch his career like a second Alexander (*Sikander Sani*). However, it was not Dara's desire to be another conqueror; he wanted instead to be a thinker.⁵⁸ It appears from his famous work *Majma-ul-Bahrain*

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Abdul-Haq, *Akhbar*, 283.

⁵⁵ Hughes 1999, see *Wahdat-ul-Wajud*. Also, Chandra 1996. While the *ulama* is interested in proselytising, the Sufis are interested in the spread of love for each and every human being.

⁵⁶ Chandra 1996, 139.

⁵⁷ Ibid, cited on page 151.

⁵⁸ De 1983, 294.

that he believed in *Ijtihad*, or the right of the learned to interpret scriptures according to changing circumstances. In other words, he put emphasis on *Aql*, or reason, like his predecessor Akbar and his cultural successor Raja Rammo-hun Roy. The clash here is not, in fact, between different civilizations or languages but, rather, it is within Islam itself, between *Ilm* (here the term *Ilm* or knowledge has been used in a narrow sense, meaning scriptural knowledge) and *Aql* (Reason). The door of *Ijtihad* being partly closed, *Aql* (Reason) appears to have taken a back seat within Islam. But, till the tenth century, when the Mutazila (rationalist school) was still around, the term *Ilm* was used in the broad sense as it allowed *Aql* (Reason) to be its integral part. Through different phases, spanning several centuries, Islam experienced the reassertion of orthodoxy, which reduced the term *ilm* virtually to the status of literal fundamentalism or scripturalism. The eminent historian Muzaffar Alam has implied in his scholarly work that with the advent of western political dominance from the late eighteenth century, the nervousness of the *ulama* increased and they renounced and denounced the spirit of experimentation which had originally made Islam a world religion. In this way, the door of *ijtihad* (the right of the learned to interpret scriptures) was partly closed during the colonial milieu, culminating in the decline of *Aql* (Reason) in Islamic societies.⁵⁹ A majority of Muslim theologians still believe that if experimentation is allowed to continue then Islam could be overwhelmed by the ‘other’. This situation poses a serious threat to India’s eclectic traditions, which are intrinsically interweaved with the dynamics of religious individualisation.

Dara was only twenty-five when he produced his very first work in Persian, entitled *Safinat-ul-Awliya (The Notebook of The Saints)*. He mentions in the introduction to this work that he used to venerate the Sufis and the religious divines. He had studied their lives closely but was disappointed to find that the details of their lives were scattered in the pages of so many different manuscripts, so he decided to produce this work in order to provide, within a very small canvas, the details regarding the dates of birth and death, the places of burial, and other important particulars of the saints of Islam.⁶⁰ Without being sectarian, Dara wrote in this book about various Sufi orders. However, the most significant part of this work is the author’s focus on women, as he deals with the wives and daughters of the Prophet and with a number of female mystics.

⁵⁹ Alam 2004, 20–51.

⁶⁰ *Majma-ul-Bahrain* by Dara Shukoh, edited in the original Persian with English Translation, Notes and Variants by M. Mahfuz-ul-Haq. The Asiatic Society. Kolkata, first published 1929, reprinted in 1982, 5.

Bikrama Jit Hasrat, in his scholarly work *Dara Shukoh: Life and Works* (1979, reprinted 1982), has shown that Dara was not only respectful to female mystics but was also in favour of his talented sister Jahanara acquiring spiritual knowledge (see also, Dey 1996, 1–20). In *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, there is clear evidence to prove that Dara acquired knowledge about *Tauhid* (monotheism) and *Irfan* (divine knowledge). The latter is a Quranic word and the selection of such a word by Dara is significant but not surprising. Dara did not renounce Islam officially. However, his rivals tried to denounce him as an infidel, which served their narrow political interest.

Dara's Sanskrit learning enabled him to explore and appreciate Upanishadic monotheism, which was, according to him, no different than Quranic monotheism. From 1065 A.H. (?) onwards, he was more deeply interested in the study of Hinduism. In 1066 A. H. he had the *Jug Bashist* translated into Persian. Shortly after, he himself translated the *Upanishads* into Persian prose. He also most likely had one of his courtiers translate the *Bhagvat Gita* (*Majma*, 28).

In his *Hasanat-ul-Arifin*, which he completed in 1064 A. H., Dara included the name of Baba Lal – the only Hindu whose aphorisms he quoted. Dara also includes the name of this saint, whom he calls Baba Lal Bairagi, in the *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (*Majma*, 24), alongside those Muslim saints and divines who were the best representatives of Islamic mysticism. The inclusion of the name of a Hindu in such an exclusive list of Muslim divines shows unmistakably the high esteem in which this devotee was held by Dara. Indeed, Dara invited the saint to meet and had conversations with him. It appears that Dara's private secretary, Chandar Bhan, was present on the occasion of these interviews and, perhaps, acted as an interpreter (*Majma*, 24). It is useful to note that Dara's eclectic mind was so broad that he did not confine his efforts to exploring the commonalities between Hinduism and Islam only. He also thought about including other religions in his project, such as Christianity. This inclination was manifested in the year 1640–1641, when he carefully studied the Bible (see De 1983, 294).

We can wind up the discussion by considering a few examples from the *Majma*. This book begins with an interesting verse: 'Faith and Infidelity, both are galloping on the way towards Him [...]'. 'Apparently Abul Fazl had this verse inscribed on a building which Akbar had built for the common use of the Hindus and the Muslims' (*Majma*, 37). This was a clear manifestation of the fact that Dara derived inspiration from the eclectic spirit, which was sustained and enhanced by the policy put into action by his great grandfather. In the pages of *Majma* (38), Dara portrayed himself as a *faqir* endowed with esoteric knowledge (*Ilm-I-Batin*) with which he aspired to know the tenets of religion of the Indian monotheists. Dara was elated to find that the difference between Indian monotheism and Islamic monotheism was only verbal.

5 Significance of the endeavour and concluding remarks

In religious individualisation, the power to select or reject a topic or to differentiate between topics according to their relative importance is crucial. All the topics in a religious text or religious tradition may be known to the practitioners of the religion. But in a particular socio-economic or political context, one or a few of them might assume a special significance. The charismatic theologian Sufi Abdul Haq successfully exercised that capacity to identify issues according to their relevance.

Symbols, idioms, terms, allegories, and particular short sentences can be extremely significant in Sufism. These assume a special meaning when we aspire to study religious individualisation. We can develop a method of negotiating Persian mystical texts. Like joining the dots, we may endeavour to link the symbols, idioms, terms, allegories, and particular short sentences dealing with a specific issue. For example, we can apply this method to Abdul Haq's narration of the life and philosophy of Bibi Auliya, a female Sufi. We instantly realise that this approach enriches our understanding of the dynamics of religious individualisation as they relate to a great woman Sufi, becoming more comprehensive and meaningful. On this particular occasion, we have linked *'Bibi Auliya az salihat waqte khud bud'* – 'Bibi Auliya was one of the most pious ladies of her time'. She led a life spent in withdrawal (*khalwat*), meditating in her *hujra* (chamber) for untold hours. She was also known for constant fasting. In the month of *Muharram*, she actively engaged herself in charitable works, which included the establishment of a *langar* (an alms house) for the distribution of free food among the poor. It is said that Sultan Muhammad bin *Tughluq had deep faith on her* Shaikh Abdul-Haq wrote *'Qabre wu birun qulae Alai ast.'* – 'Her (Bibi Auliya) grave is situated outside the fort of Sultan Alau'd-Din Khalji (Ala'i)'.⁶¹

Regarding the comparison between the homogenising Arabisation of North Africa and the heterogeneous Persianate tradition of South Asia, I would like to mention a meeting that occurred while I was attending a programme on religious

⁶¹ The italicized terms or words confirm her exclusive and elevated position in the hierarchy of Sufis. The woman Sufi preferred to carry out her charitable works during the month of Muharram, which is significant. Because Husain, the beloved grandson of the Prophet attained martyrdom in that month. He is regarded by the Sufis as the first martyr of love (for God). Secondly, the *langar* or free kitchen played a significant role in the institutionalisation of Sufi rituals. Muharram is celebrated by the Shia Muslims with gaiety and fervour. However, the majority of Sufis are Sunnis. Still, they prefer to use Shia symbolism to express their marginalisation by the hegemonic orthodoxy.

pluralism in Santa Barbara, USA in the year 2010. There I met a lady professor from Cairo who told me that she had never visited the museums or pyramids in Egypt because the items from the age of *jahiliya* (ignorance of the pre-Islamic Arab world) are preserved there. This professor not only acted as a representative of the hegemonic orthodoxy with her statement but also, interestingly, applied the term *jahiliya* outside its original context, the geo-cultural frontiers of the Arab peninsula. By contrast, a self-educated Muslim lady of India, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, who died in the 1930s and was never directly exposed to western academic institutions, had no problem in celebrating the Indian civilisation of the pre-Islamic era. Does this mean that early modern personalities such as Abdul Haq and Dara Shukoh, or early twentieth century personalities such as Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, are likely to have been more cosmopolitan, liberal, and modern than their twenty first century counterparts?

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Asaph Ben-Tov, Amit Dey, Luise Marion Frenkel, Angelika Malinar, Jörg Rüpke

Afterword: pluralisation

This group of chapters addresses the ways in which authorities are established and operate in relation to processes of pluralisation in case-studies drawn from very different cultures, geographical zones and periods. It is, above all, textual sources that are used to reconstruct discourses and practices related to pluralisation. These stretch from classical epic in Angelika Malinar's chapter to reports about church councils in Luise Marion Frenkel's, and from biographical and philosophical texts in the context of subcontinental Sufism as analysed by Amit Dey to language textbooks and marginal notes in Asaph Ben-Tov's chapter on an early modern European teacher of language. Material objects, sometimes bearing inscriptions, sometimes not, have to be added to these sources, as shown by Jörg Rüpke. When oral forms of communication and the diffusion of knowledge are important for religious identities, the very materiality of letters and texts and the problem of accessibility to generic forms are significant (Frenkel, see also Henderson in III.2). Against this background, the dissemination of visual practices and the aesthetics of religious communication through material objects and sites mediate processes of both pluralisation and homogenisation.

A comparison of the chapters leads to a distinction between different dimensions of pluralisation. The selected cases and approaches suggest starting such differentiation from a basic distinction. What we observe first is the broadening of the range of ways in which participants engage with religion. The mere multiplication of practices used in communicating with the divine, as well as the media used in such activities, need not imply the criticism of existing forms, need not imply crises or even conversion, but opens up the possibility of individual selection on the basis of inclinations or preferences (see also Murphy in I.2). An inhabitant of the ancient Mediterranean might just feel an aesthetic attraction to a new form of votive, a learned man from the early modern period might just be fascinated by an unfamiliar semantics of theistic belief, or an ancient Indian householder might study monotheistic devotional texts while continuing with his polytheistic practices. The observation of such a multiplication might, however, also lead to a more conscious, or even critical, appraisal of what we refer to as the pluralisation of religious practices and beliefs. In particular, polemical innovations, articulating differences between old and new or right or wrong, also mobilise contemporary observers and responses. Spatial proximity among intel-

lectuals of the same city or attentive administrators or weak authorities might make a crucial difference in this respect in so far as it could quickly sharpen such differences and accelerate the formation of groups.

Pluralisation is intimately related to social and economic differences, as many chapters in this publication demonstrate, such as those on differences in degrees and forms of deviance in fourth century BCE Athens or late ancient asceticism (see also Bremmer in IV.1 and Ramelli in III.1). Highly visible temple architecture and quickly buried clay deposits were options available to and congenial for people of very different social and economic positions. In processes of developing or authorising mechanisms of pluralisation, gender, ethnic distinctions and social distinctions turn out to be sensitive issues. While, on the one hand, the pluralisation of religious options gave new opportunities for the excluded to engage with religion, they were, at the same time, met with resistance. Their roles in religion were contested. The debate about such persons offered also an arena, in which contestations of new practices and concepts found a favourite place. While ascetic religion in ancient India opened up pathways for male householders, it is much debated whether this also happened for women. The multiplication of the latter's religious practices was more acceptable when they continued their traditional social roles. A number of female Sufi saints are known but they were never given authorial or foundational roles, other than in the case of certain religious practices that were addressed to their graves. In several cases, male saints acted or were seen as spokespersons for the female saints. Here, *bhakti* traditions seem more accommodating to female initiative, as is attested by the inclusion of women in spiritual lineages in the late medieval period. The characteristic opening up of *bhakti* to social groups otherwise excluded was precarious and marked by phases of canonisation and prolonged closure. The same hold trues for early and late antique Christian and medieval Indian nunneries, as well as European nunneries respectively grouping of female *religiosi* (see also Mulder-Bakker and Ramelli, III.1). All of this is attesting to the diverse historical constellations that either allowed to consolidate female agency or restricted it.

The detailed analyses offered by our chapters make the important point that innovation and change must not be looked for only in specific social groups or positions. Very different positions could emerge even within social or professional, ethnic or denominational, groups which shared interests. Pluralisation – to use this as the overarching term – can be seen as a phenomenon within established groups and frameworks as much as between more clearly articulated groups. It can be internal as well as external.

The gradation of ways in which *bhakti* can be practiced is extremely diverse already in the earliest texts, allowing for intellectual quests or the seeking of

relief from economic suffering. Female sufis could be found in family roles as mothers of sufi saints, thus acting within established lines of tradition, or they could be isolated spiritual personalities themselves (Dey). Late ancient bishops could take very pronounced theological positions, but that did not hinder them to display a large variety of attitudes towards the (again highly diverse) ways, how the population in these bishops' jurisdictional districts lived Christianity on a day to day basis (Frenkel). Such discrepancy can be observed elsewhere. Even the intensive appropriation of Quranic terminology and imagery made the early modern learned Zechendorff never expect his pupils to change their religious allegiances from Christianity to Islam (Ben-Tov). When parameters of orthodoxy exist, the gap between internal variation and heresy is narrow. The fuzziness of shared practices and discourses of Sufism was subject to very different classifications around the fringes of Islam by different actors or observers. It clearly emerges from the chapters in this section that "religions" are lived by their followers in ways that question their norms as closed systems. Religions are lived by individuals and are, accordingly, fragmented (Rüpke).

This also means that authority in religious matters is much more fragmented and contested than is usually assumed. Our chapters suggest that assertions of *religious* authority are intimately related to processes of pluralisation. Not being able to rely on social or political authority, these claims are competitive. Authority is not simply given but is, rather, based on acceptance, with complex discourses dedicated to establishing its criteria. To start with, rhetorical devices are employed to characterise the status, the reliability and the trustworthiness of the self in ego-narratives (Frenkel, see also Henderson, III.2, and Bashir, II.2). Agency in religious pluralisation is, therefore, found in the creation of narratives about the past and its actors, or the description of the characteristics and characters of the present with which new religious practices and concepts, or new combinations of these, can be described as being ancient and traditional, or common, respectively. With different modes of communication, or even of intellection, agents of pluralisation try to establish criteria of plausibility for which the tools of enforcement available to political authorities are not sufficient. Philosophy tries to establish impersonal criteria, epic narrative contextualises the "opinions" of individual "I's" by a faceless or withdrawn narrator. The readerships and audiences, however, know of alternative authorities to those claimed by the texts with which they are confronted (cf. again Henderson and Gordon, IV.1). Different teachers, other saints, and nearby monasteries offer alternatives (Frenkel, see also Ramelli, III.1). Uttering doubts about doctrinal matters also questions authority (see Casteigt and M. Vinzent in II.1). Doubt might be fundamentally endorsed, as, for example, in Indian philosophy, thus engaging with claims that are built only on trust. As such, it could be employed as a medium of

control, in particular in relation to the truth claims about invisible powers and authority built on such truth claims. Other cultures have an ongoing discourse about doubt. This discourse could be fed by the narration of stories about periods and contexts that rigorously excluded doubt, for instance about ancient Athens (see Bremmer, IV.1) or medieval Islam.

Evidently, there are limits to pluralising agency. Again, the contexts limit the social spaces for religious initiative and authority. Setting out on the path of pluralisation through a process of exceptional deviance is a high risk, possibly life-threatening strategy for the agent. The process is ultimately successful when the initiator's deviance establishes an exemplary behaviour as a new norm, extrapolating from former systems of value. The very character of religious authority, that is the claim of tapping an extra-social or trans-local divine source in miracle working or improving ritual and thus proving that you are a "friend of god", is relevant here – with quite different consequences for the various social groups. The renouncing of sexuality is frequently implied, in particular for males. The formulation of authority as an existing group consensus, usually proved by referring back to texts that are claimed to prove the existence of such consensus, is in most scenarios a low-risk form of pluralising agency. Again, the question of whether new groups are thus created or internal splits obliterated, thus hiding internal pluralisation, has been answered differently by each of us.

Religious practices are spatial practices. This fact has remained implicit in our chapters for the most part. Extrapolating from this observation, one can assume that processes of multiplication or pluralisation created new religious spaces in proportion with the frequency of variation. This might start from the small place given to a sacred character by a votive dedication and then intensified by a second such offering. Religious diversity or homogeneity inside houses was visible only to the few inhabitants and occasional visitors. The rise of ascetic homelessness resulted in the increased visibility of many practices. The new religious engagement of individuals in the ancient Mediterranean or in India produced religious bodies in plain sight of many people. Other initiatives led to their visual concealment, with the establishment of various physical sites, such as monasteries, caves, Sufi lodges and tombs, and commemorative spaces, just within walking distance of the traditional households. Sufi saints offered religious services to be applied to new fields; yogic practices rendered the body into an easily reachable but at the same time highly complex micro-topography in need of permanent care.

New religious spaces were not only created by practices but also by texts. These texts themselves changed, when they were brought into new spaces and pronounced or read there. Texts themselves were sites in which quotations of other texts could be found. Pluralisation meant that the topography of religious

sites became much more complex and polyvalent, a phenomenon that did not apply only in urban contexts. Mosques, as highly controlled spaces, could be supplemented and even contested by shrines. Moving from one space to the other could involve significant shifts in religious identity or authority. These could be related to social or gender roles: the child who accompanied the mother to the shrine became the boy who accompanied his father to the mosque.

Language is another crucial site for the negotiation of religious pluralisation. The linking of bodies of religious knowledge to specific, and above all erudite, languages could be used to restrict access. Multilingualism and the ability to address audiences from diverse linguistic backgrounds facilitated pluralisation and the empowerment of individuals, but might also be used restrictively to mark religious authority. Being able to understand, copy, and comment upon authoritative texts is a competence that enables barely visible micro-pluralisation or produced consequential changes. Switching language to a more accessible idiom likewise leads to pluralisation, as in the case of Persian in the 16th and 17th centuries. Zechendorff used the teaching of another language, Arabic in his case, to transport religious ideas. Specific terms could be used to create borders and negotiate pluralisation – or to hide advanced internal pluralisation. In classical India, the acceptance of individuals as sources of religious knowledge modified the understanding of the role of language, which had been seen as a closed system of collective knowledge. “Trustworthy persons” emerged as a new category of verbal reliability and evidence for religious truth claims (Malinar).

By way of conclusion, we would like to emphasise that pluralisation and individualisation are intertwined and intrinsically connected to determining the function of religious authorities. Accordingly, processes of individualisation are as precarious, temporary and reversible as are the complex processes of pluralisation. Access to, and dissemination of, media of religious communication are as crucial for individuals in manifesting the multiplication of religious signs and practices as they are in stabilising them. Coping with and regulating pluralisation affects the place of religion in society in many respects. It calls for ascribing religious authority to individuals in new ways, opening space and defining its limits. Legal and political frameworks, as have been addressed in our chapters (see also IV.1), are existent, accepted and invoked – or newly developed. The concepts of individual religious agency entertained by the political, legal and economic (for instance in the role of patrons) actors are part of the negotiation of pluralisation and the recognition or rejection of individual religious authority.



Section 4.3: **Walking the edges**

Cristiana Facchini

Understanding ‘prophecy’: charisma, religious enthusiasm, and religious individualisation in the 17th century. A cross-cultural approach

1 Introduction

But the mind of man is also subject to an unaccountable elevation and presumption, arising from prosperous success, from luxuriant health, from strong spirits, or from a bold and confident disposition. In such a state of mind, the imagination swells with great but confused conceptions, to which no sublunary beauties or enjoyments can correspond. Everything mortal and perishable vanishes as unworthy of attention. And a full range is given to the fancy in the invisible regions or world of spirits, where the soul is at liberty to indulge itself in every imagination, which may best suit its present taste and disposition. Hence arise raptures, transports, and surprising flights of fancy; and confidence and presumption still encreasing, these raptures, being altogether unaccountable, and seeming quite beyond the reach of our ordinary faculties, are attributed to the immediate inspiration of that Divine Being, who is the object of devotion. In a little time, the inspired person comes to regard himself as a distinguished favourite of the Divinity; and when this frenzy once takes place, which is the summit of enthusiasm, every whimsy is consecrated: Human reason, and even morality are rejected as fallacious guides: And the fanatic madman delivers himself over, blindly, and without reserve, to the supposed ellipses of the spirit, and to inspiration from above. Hope, pride, presumption, a warm imagination, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of ENTHUSIASM. (Hume 1987 [1741])

When Hume wrote these few lines, he was in good company in assessing the perils of certain Christian groups who had influenced Western Christendom since the Reformation. In the ground-breaking multi-volume *Tous les cérémonies du monde* (1723–1743), Bernard Picart and Jean-Frédéric Bernard, Huguenot exiles in Amsterdam, described with a certain amount of criticism a recent religious phenomenon which had spread to Paris at the beginning of the 18th century. A group of followers of a Parisian Jansenist and ascetic, François De Paris, became known by the name *convulsionnaires de Saint Medard*. After De Paris’ death, his gravesite in Saint Médard became a place of pilgrimage where followers had visions and were miraculously healed (Hunt, Jacob and Mijnhardt 2010, 270–95). Mainly composed of women, this movement was characterised by embodied religious practices, some of which were rooted in biblical traditions. They spoke in tongues, danced, prayed, and sang.

Some decades earlier, persecuted French Huguenots from the Cavernes, a region in the south of France, began roaming around the country while preaching the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. Besides sermonising, they performed miraculous healings, sang, and spoke in tongues. When, through the network of Calvinist support, they moved to England, they attempted to resume this religious enthusiasm in an urban setting (Laborie 2015).

From the 1650s to the 1660s, many Jews, some of whom were of Christian descent, became caught up in the frenzy of a messianic movement led by a ‘messiah’ figure who heard voices and then fell into a trance-like sleep, in which they acted against established religious norms (Scholem 1973; Idel 2000; Goldish 2004). In roughly this same period, some of the most radical groups of the English dissent appeared: they spoke only when possessed by the ‘Spirit’ that enabled them both to be reached by God and to speak His word.

While many examples of practices such as these flourished in the context of the Protestant Reformation, it is important to consider other, earlier and parallel, historical cases that culminated in highly individualised religious experiences represented by imposing personalities, who were imbued with prophetic agency.¹ A number of earlier examples can be found in the lives of Gioacchino da Fiore (1130–1202 ca.), Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), and Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639). Their millenarianism was combined with utopian imagination and visionary experiences that exerted a meaningful influence across many areas of thought for many centuries to come.² The joachimite tradition embedded among the Friars Minor is just a case in point. Indeed, this tradition travelled different cultures, as European countries built their overseas empires, influencing religious movements imbued with prophetic and apocalyptic imagination (Travassos Valdes 2011).

These religious phenomena are usually linked to Christian millenarianism, Jewish messianism, apocalypticism, and the broad cultural phenomenon of ‘prophecy’, which is rooted in biblical traditions. These terms conceptualise complex religious experiences that often overlap and that do not appear exclusively in biblical religions, but also in other non-Christian environments, and throughout the wider religious context of antiquity (Aune 1983).

1 This article is part of my research period at the Max Weber Centre in Erfurt in 2014–2015 within the context of the Research Group in “Religious Individualisation in Historical Perspective” (FOR 1013). For the use of this notion, see Rüpke 2013; Fuchs and Rüpke 2015; Otto 2017.

2 These are only paradigmatic examples. The bibliography on these themes is extensive since some of these personalities exerted enormous influence in many areas, as in the case of Joachim of Fiore. In other cases, they became national heroes and, accordingly, played a growing role as mythical figures of anti-clerical national narratives. For references, see Weinstein 2011; Popkin 2013.

In this chapter, I focus my analysis on cross-cultural religious phenomena that were defined by the negative notion of 'religious enthusiasm'. Although the term itself was used specifically to describe the practices of a number of Christian groups, and appeared more frequently in certain cultural contexts, such as those found in England and the German territories, religious enthusiasm was, in fact, a key feature of the early modern period and crossed all possible religious divides.³ In the English parlance of the early modern period, 'enthusiasm' was a term that described religious behaviour that was considered inappropriate and dangerous to the wellbeing of society.⁴ Criticism of the alleged 'gift of prophecy' appeared in the immediate aftermath of the Protestant Reformation and was primarily directed at Anabaptism. Later, the term 'enthusiasm' was applied to different realms, from medicine to philosophy, becoming a label through which to disapprove of and dismiss certain traditions as well as enemies (Heyd 1995).

A great deal of research has been conducted on this topic, with many scholars attributing the rise of the Enlightenment and criticism of religion to the repression of enthusiasm (Laborie 2015). However, religious enthusiasm persisted, both through space and time, and it is therefore problematic to assert its demise, even in the age of Enlightenment (Lovejoy 1985). Visionaries and prophets never disappeared; indeed, their practices and worldviews, as much as their cultural strategies, were replicated into the twentieth century.⁵

Religious enthusiasm encompasses a set of 'religious experiences'⁶ often linked to visionary episodes, which may be rooted in biblical tradition, or, to be precise, to the textual tradition that described ancient prophetic practices, both in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Visionary experiences can also be found in texts commonly referred to by scholars as 'apocalyptic literature', a genre that spread throughout the ancient Jewish world and became exemplified in the *Revelation* of John, the apocalyptic text that closed the canon of Christian biblical scriptures.⁷ Religious enthusiasm among Christians was both 'restorative', in the sense that it aimed to reinstall a form of primitive Christianity as the truest form of religion, and 'redemptive', meaning that it aimed to establish heaven on earth.

3 For a first systematic historical genealogy, see Knox 1950, although we find an attempt at a genealogy in Johannes Hornbeek (1653), who associates 'enthusiasm' with the 'libertines' (Heyd 1995, 21). For the Ibero-Hispanic world, see Silvério-Lima and Torres-Megiani 2016.

4 Hume 1987; Gibbon 1994; Foster 1997. For a historical assessment of the phenomenon in the 19th and 20th century, see Taves 1999.

5 Religious enthusiasm is still very much alive, especially in the form of charismatic Pentecostalism: Alexander 2009; Anderson, Bergunder, Droogers and Van der Laan 2010.

6 For this notion, see Martin, McCutcheon and Smith 2012.

7 The literature on this textual and religious tradition is vast. I list the most relevant references: Collins 1998; Himmelfarb 2010; a controversial text is Cohn 1970.

In analysing biblical prophecy, Max Weber labelled these religious currents as traditions of ‘charismatic authority’, a notion which was destined for great success and was systematically applied to many other cultural and political contexts. Charismatic authority indicated, in Weber’s definition, a quality of the individual that set this individual aside, that endowed him/her with special ‘gifts’ stemming from extra-ordinary powers (Weber 1978).⁸

Visionary experiences vary according to their function. If apocalyptic visions were typically linked to eschatological fantasies and imbued with images of violence, death, and war, then prophetic visions tended to be more nuanced, as they also conveyed hopes of justice and redemption, and overlapped with other sensory experiences that scholars tend to describe as ‘mystical’. Jews and Christians held similar attitudes, although with different connotations, towards these visionary experiences and their imagination of the end of time. For Jews, prophetic notions foretold the coming of the messianic age whereas for Christians it meant the *parusia*, the second coming of Christ on earth and the Kingdom of God.⁹ Prophetic behaviour and social criticism were often linked therefore enhancing political millenarianism, which could cross many cultures (Subrahmanyam 2001).

There were at least two forms of religious experiences that overlapped in many written records. One is better describe as mystical journey, which is often depicted in autobiographical narratives as well as texts written by disciples. In general, these texts are rife with portrayals of emotion and descriptions of the path that leads to a profound encounter with God. This personal encounter sometimes prompts a person’s particular ability to be empowered and to perform religious deeds.¹⁰

The other religious experience we find in these narratives is linked to a form of ‘spirit possession’, which, if properly performed, affects both the body and the mind and supports a highly individualised religious experience. The body inhabited by the supernal force is always empowered: the experience might lead to the formation of a small group of disciples or to the organization of a movement. It could also incur a condemnation for insanity or witchcraft, and therefore in

8 ‘A certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader [...] How the quality in question would be ultimately judged from an ethical, aesthetic, or other such point of view is naturally indifferent for the purpose of definition’ (Weber 1947 [original 1922]).

9 There is a large body of literature on millenarianism and chiliasm: see Goldish, Kottman, Force, and Laursen 2001.

10 See especially James 1902; Otto 1926; De Certeau 1987 and 2013.

some jurisdictions, the death penalty. Medical scrutiny of religious behaviour is not a new practice, especially for Catholics and Protestants, and became particularly meaningful in the first half of the 18th century. This was when it specifically targeted the religious phenomenon of enthusiasm, either as a form of superstition or illness of the mind and/or body (Laborie 2015; but especially addressed in Burton 1621; Heyd 1995). The Catholic Church's medical examinations followed specific instructions, devised to identify true holiness, to establish sainthood, and ultimately exercise a form of discipline over uncontrolled personal religious experiences.¹¹ Likewise, powerful and controversial mystical experiences were examined to detect inappropriate behaviour or to eliminate practices that were deemed dangerous. The most emblematic case is of course that of the arch-mystic Teresa of Avila, whose emotional experience of her encounter with God inspired numerous depictions in representational works of art. She herself kept a diary of her visions, at the suggestion of her confessor, who was able to both address and discipline Teresa's inner responses.¹²

Being possessed by any sort of extra-ordinary power entails the use of the body to convey a religious message. My goal in this chapter is to pinpoint how the body was empowered in order to convey a message, to pursue a political goal, to strengthen group identity, or to break the legal constrictions of society. Moreover, my interest is in investigating how the empowerment of the body through an altered state of mind worked across gender and class divides.

What is fascinating in analysing these religious experiences through the prism of different faiths is that, from a certain perspective, they employ a common pattern of religious individualisation. This form of individualisation involves both a strong volition and a gradual process that leads to a separation of the self, the formation of a temporary divided or estranged ego, since episodes of spirit possession do provoke altered states of consciousness. On the one hand, spirit possession, prophetic behaviour, and visionary experiences have in common a similar structural pattern vis-à-vis the functioning of the mind. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews referred to culturally prescribed models that defined acceptable psychological behaviour, the proper way to induce visions, and the appropriate mode for reaching unity with the divine power. The transformation of these highly personal and individualised experiences into religious movements varied greatly and often depended on social settings, strategies of communication, and the intersection of the societal and psychological needs of the group. Therefore,

¹¹ There is an extensive bibliography: I refer here specifically to Malena 2015; Luzzatto 2007.

¹² For her biographical work, see Weber 2009. Female mysticism was kept under control by the presence of the confessor and the established relationship between the spiritual director and the person (who is usually part of a Church order).

as some scholars suggest, visionary and/or mystical experiences should be understood not just as a psychological experience but as an embedded part of a complex religious system (Harmless 2008).

In this chapter, I focus on marginal traditions and the question of how they might be viewed through a contemporary lens. In particular, I discuss George Fox and the rising movement of Quakerism, and Sabbetai Zevi's messianic Jewish movement. Besides their chronological proximity, there are a number of features that make these two movements suitable for parallel analysis. To begin with, in both cases we find a compelling religious leader, a highly distinct character with the power to become part of shared memory of a specific group. Second, the followers of both movements faced similar social difficulties in finding that they were often subject to persecution. Third, in both cases we can identify an interaction between collective enthusiasm and personal ecstatic or mystical experiences. My analysis will therefore focus on: the use of the body to induce an altered state of the mind, as, for example, through ascetic practices (§ 2); the significance of place in informing mystical experiences and inducing spiritual possession (§ 3); and the relationship between the individual and the social setting (§ 4).

2 George Fox, the 'twice born'

In his influential work on 'religious experiences', William James described a psychological type, the 'twice born', as consisting of those who were likely to undergo feelings of despair, melancholia, and distress in search of a plentiful experience of God (James 1902, lectures VI and VII). James made ample use of Quakers' 'autobiographical' accounts, amongst which was the *Journal* of George Fox. George Fox (1624–1691), a weaver, dissenter, and founder of the Society of Friends, which became later known as Quakerism, lived during the period of great religious conflict that struck English society in the mid-17th century (Hill 1972; Dandelion 2008). Fox recorded much of his religious journey in his *Journal*, the first edition of which was published shortly after his death and was heavily edited in order to make it resonant with the Quaker establishment.

The *Journal* is a written testimony that follows the structure of a conversion narrative (the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine are one of the most influential examples of this type of narrative). A narrative of the self is, of course, a very specific literary genre and should be analysed, among other ways, as an ego-document.¹³

¹³ For the study of ego-documents see: *Center for the Study of Egodocuments and History* (<http://www.egodocument.net/egodocument/who-we-are.html>, last accessed 15th August 2018).

Many Christian narratives about mystical practices also document the experience of religious conversion, that is, an account of a psychic transformation which symbolizes a radical transformation of personal life, a radical 'conversion', in the parlance of William James (James 1902, lectures VIII and IX). Although not all conversion narratives are mystical in content, some do provide information about a number of practices that describe the state of the soul striving for an encounter with God. These can be described as 'biographies of the soul'.

Fox was a preacher, a person who exploited the oral dimension and its performative effects to preach the word of God. The oral dimension is a remarkable feature of Christianity since its inception. Many of the leaders who were dubbed enthusiasts were preachers and their activity extended to various places, some of which were public spaces. Although preaching was regulated by the rules of classical rhetoric, it often gave an opportunity for extraordinary examples of religious individualisation, because preaching was linked to fame and success (Facchini 2017).

Christian preaching conveys two distinct elements of religious practice: the mimetic, which refers to the historical Jesus and the early Christian community, and the psychological, connected to the very act of preaching, with ecstatic results occurring through the performative effect of the uttered word. Fox's *Journal* describes both the development of the group and the interior story of his religious selfhood. God is omnipresent in Fox's account. He indeed describes an encounter with him at the young age of eleven, which can be interpreted as an early rite of passage:

When I came to eleven years of age I knew pureness and righteousness; for while a child I was taught how to walk to be kept pure; the Lord taught me to be faithful in all things, and to act faithfully two ways, viz. inwardly to God, and outwardly to man. (Jones/Fox 1904)¹⁴

But then, according to his account, he spent several years attempting to escape the worldly temptations of Satan, fighting bouts of despair and depression. 'Temptations and despair' are two recurring words that have led to a wealth of publications about the intrinsic bond between religion, enthusiasm, and melancholia.¹⁵ The *Journal* is permeated by a recurring trope of darkness and light, a dualism devised to describe mood swings, from melancholy and depression to enthusiasm and optimism. Overall, Fox seems to opt for an optimistic outlook, a trust in humankind. One phrase captures some of this religious ideology

¹⁴ James observed how personal crisis affected young boys at this age, which was often conceived of as a moment of change. For this ritual stage, see Durkheim 2013 and Van Gennep 1981. It may also be analysed in the context of the biological changes that occur with the onset of puberty.

¹⁵ This theme has been thoroughly explored: Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl 1964; Schiera 1999.

particularly well: 'I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but also an infinite ocean of light and love which flew over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God' (Jones/Fox 1904, 87).

In Fox's narrative, the Christ-like life examples are templates for his own personal transformation: 'priests' and 'temples' are not means for communicating the power of God. God does not dwell in 'dreadful places' (churches) or with priests and theologians; God lies within the heart of every man and woman, dwelling with the people (according to his own reading of Paul and Stephen). His 'openings' – that is, a type of revelation – come from reading the Bible and questioning traditional knowledge. But nothing seems to provide the answers he is searching for, nothing seems able to heal the pain of the soul (Jones/Fox 1904, 90f.).

After roaming, exploring, asking the preachers and the priests, and finally acknowledging that 'there was none among them that could speak to my condition', he heard the voice of God.

When all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, oh, then, I heard a voice which said 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition'; and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.

Fox's search seems to alternate moments of solitude with moments of socialisation, made up of encounters with people who are to become his followers and supporters. Following in the footsteps of Gospel narratives, open spaces indicate the ritual setting for meditation and individual prayer. He often spends time with people inside, while seeking loneliness outside. The voice he hears comes directly, in his imagining, from Jesus. One might be tempted to speak of a sort of Christ-mimesis, which is a common occurrence among Christians, although in many cases this is rooted in Jesus's suffering and death, as seen in many Catholic spiritual exercises, from Loyola to Catherine von Emmerick (De Certeau 2010; also Luzzatto 2007).

In one passage that, according to Jones, is emblematic of Fox's religious psyche, this model is clearly described:

I was very much altered in countenance and person, as if my body had been new moulded or changed. My sorrows and troubles started to wear off, and tears of joy dropped from me, so that I could have wept night and days with tears of joy to the Lord, in humility and brokenness of heart. I saw into that which was without end, things which cannot be uttered, and of the greatness and infinitude of the love of God, which cannot be expressed by words. For I had been brought through the very ocean of darkness and death, and through and over the power of Satan, by the eternal glorious power of Christ; even through that darkness was I brought, which covered over all the world, and which chained down all and shut up all in death. The same eternal power of God, which brought through these things, was that which

afterwards shook the nations, priests, professors and people. Then could I say had I been in spiritual Babylon, Sodom, Egypt, and the grave; but by the eternal power of God I was come out of it, into the power of Christ. (Jones/Fox 1904, 87f.)

The *Journal* went through substantial editing, both at the end of the 17th century and later, when a philological edition was published (Villani 2003; Smith/Fox 1998). There is no space here to reflect upon the significance of the writing phase that, as we mentioned above, plays an important role in defining truth claims and establishing an authoritative tradition. Fox founded a religious group in which contact with the power of Christ was continuously sought and experienced, both by men and women. His followers became missionaries, and enthusiasm was an outstanding feature of their practice, shaking and trembling an integral part of their ritual gatherings. Quakers were certainly 'fanatical': they embarked on dangerous missions, as with those who went to Italy with the purpose of converting the Pope, or those who were imprisoned in Malta (Villani 1996). But beyond this, they challenged theological authorities and political powers, refusing to pledge oaths and to serve in the army. As the movement flourished in the second half of the 17th century, it reached America and became established there, where it lost some of its original features. As suggested by Max Weber, the routinisation of charisma was finally institutionalised.

3 When the body speaks: prophecy and messianism of Jews

The religious zeal of the Iberian Jews was influential in the rise of the phenomenon increasingly known as spirit possession, as well as in fuelling the messianic frenzy that erupted with Sabbetai Zevi, the 'mystical messiah', around 1665–66. Mysticism, messianic enthusiasm related to the Sabbatean movement, and altered states of the mind are ideal points of departure for analysing forms of individualisation.

While Gershom Scholem attempted to reconstruct the history of Sabbetai through a phenomenological approach, recent literature has emphasised instead the general historical contexts in which Christian millenarianism and apocalypticism overlapped with Jewish messianism (Yerushalmi 1971; Goldish 2004). It is notable that one of the most important supporters of Sabbetai, Abraham Miguel Cardoso, was a former New Christian and made ample use of Christological exegesis to justify Sabbetai's conversion to Islam (Halperin 2007; Ruderman 2010, 163–6; Maciejko 2011).

Messianism can be interpreted against a backdrop of messianic doctrines, ideas, and practices with a comparative approach that connects the Jewish and Christian realms. In the phenomenology elaborated by Scholem, Christian messianism is especially antinomian and critical of authority, whereas Jewish messianism points toward the restorative dimension (a restoration of ancient political power). This is because rabbinic agency aims to control apocalyptic leanings and, in Scholem's interpretation, all potential anarchic cultural tendencies associated with 'apocalypticism' (Scholem 1973). Sabbetai Zevi was described by Scholem as a 'mystical messiah', and he implied that mysticism explained both his action and his disruptive antinomian attitude (Scholem 1971). But there is more: When Scholem conducted his extensive research, the subject of Jewish mysticism was not yet fully established in the academy. Mysticism and kabbalistic lore had been under attack since before the early 19th century and many scholars denied that Judaism had a deep and widespread mystical tradition. Moreover, Scholem and others inferred that the kabbalah disseminated through the 16th and 17th centuries was responsible for two major historical processes: one related to a new conception of the self, through the idea of a personal conversion, a self-redemption, an inner form of salvation (Liebes 1993). The second is linked to pathways of secularisation that I shall not discuss here, as they are quite outdated according to recent reassessments of 'secularising' theories. Suffice it to say that Scholem's aim was to identify an internal religious secularising pathway in order to prove that Judaism had both the power required to modernise and its own methods for undertaking the process.¹⁶

Since the inception of the sciences of religion, ascetic practices have attracted scholarly attention, although they are usually associated with Christian traditions and oriental religions (Harpham 1993; Wimbush and Valantis 1998; Flood 2004). For a better understanding of messianic agency, a perspective that can be offered is one that comparatively analyses different forms of mysticism induced by ascetic practices. Ascetic practices among Jews are already detectable in ancient rabbinic sources, although many historians claim that ascetic practices were always regulated (Diamond 2004). These practices usually affect the body deeply, thus inducing a modification of the mind's setting, and hence a modification of the relationship between the self and the Godhead. Kabbalists and ascetics made ample use of visions as a way of empowering themselves with authority but, in order to do so, they had to subjugate their bodies. But not all mystics

16 It is not possible to elaborate here on this interpretation of Jewish messianism, which is, in other words, a theory of modernity and secularisation. Historiography on Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism seems to accept it without critical inquiry. See Maciejko 2011 and 2017; Engel 2017.

were destined to inspire religious movements or enthusiasm as did Sabbetai Zevi. For a long period, visionary experiences were only shared among disciples and guarded within small esoteric groups of adult males.

The case of Yosef Karo, whose mystical practice reveals certain interesting features related to textuality in both the oral and written dimensions, sheds light on some of the religious attitudes that were to reappear in the 17th century, when the messianic movement emerged. Yosef Karo was born in Spain and was an exile from 1492. He moved to the Ottoman Empire and eventually settled in Safed, the holy city of the kabbalists. He became one of the most important legal authorities through the compilation of the *Shulkan arukh*, a legal codex he authored. He also experienced ecstatic moods, which were induced through bodily practices that had an impact on the brain. I now draw from a description written by 'eye witnesses':

Know that the saint Karo and I agreed to stay up all night in order to banish sleep from our eyes on Shavuot. We succeeded thank God so that you will hear we ceased not from study for even a moment [...] all this we did in dread and awe, with quite unbelievable melody and tunefulness [...] No sooner we had studied two tractates of the Mishnah than our creator smote us so that we heard a voice speaking out of the mouth of the saint, may his light shine. It was a loud voice with letters clearly enunciated. All the companions heard the voice but were unable to understand what was said. It was an exceedingly pleasant voice, becoming increasingly strong. We all fell upon our faces and none of us had any spirit left because of our great dread and awe. The voice began to address us, saying: 'friends, choicest of choice, peace with you, beloved companions [...] Behold I am the Mishnah, the mother who chastises her children and I have come to converse with you.

(Artzy and Idel 2015, 94; for translation Jacobs 1978)

This is an extraordinary excerpt. According to Moshe Idel and Shahar Artzy, this is an 'experience of trance', the outcome of deep study sessions and sleep deprivation. It is performed within the frame of a liturgical moment, the festival of *Shavuot*, a celebration that is part of the yearly calendar and is a commemoration of the Torah being received by Moses on Mount Sinai, in which the tradition is to remain awake and study throughout the night. It is a public experience shared by a small group of devotees, which indicates the esoteric element of collective mystical practices. The experience is a positive manifestation of 'a voice' (the *maggid*), which is allegedly linked to the extra-ordinary realm. It is based on auditory perceptions, embodying the whole of the oral Torah. The written word of the 'oral Torah' is heard. The body of the 'saint' is the means through which the voice manifests itself. This voice is, as the Mishnah/Torah (the Law), a feminine character: it is melodic, pleasant, strong, the mother, the friend, who comes and speaks out. Furthermore, if we follow the description of Shlomo ha-Levi Alkabetz (the author of this account), the experience affects the body of the saint (Karo)

and the bodies of those who witnessed the event. Although the saint has the auditory hierophany, the group is struck by the same experience: their bodies are immediately drained of strength. We may assume that the ecstatic experience is contagious (as also happens in other religious groups).

Maggidic experiences became widespread and were sought after; they varied to an extent, although they were usually reached through bodily practices, which combined sleep deprivation and mind concentration, and through games of memory' (letters, prayers, cognitive concentration, textual exercises). Often, this experience was conducted in solitude. It would then be 'remembered' and written down. Sometimes, it was described by disciples/witnesses and from that moment it became socialised.

Let us turn briefly to the testimony of another rather well-known mystic from late 16th century circles. This interesting account describes the ecstatic experience of Hayyim Vital, one of the most prominent representatives of Lurianic Kabbalah (Scholem 1941). The dynamic here is between the teacher (who left no written sources) and the disciple. Vital was allegedly instructed to fast for forty-eight hours and perform a practice of 'unification' (*yichud* – a combination of Hebrew letters and prayer). Then, before the High Holy Holidays, he was sent to 'the cave of Rabbi Abaye and Rava', where he stretched over the tomb of one of them, performed *yichud* (of mouth and nose), and fell asleep. He awoke and nothing had happened, so he performed a second *yichud*. He became confused and ceased. A voice in his consciousness spoke to him, inviting him to try once more, which he did. He concentrated and succeeded.

Afterwards, a great and exceeding fright and trembling seized me in all my limbs and my hands were trembling, knocking against one another, and also my lips were trembling in an exaggerated way and were moving rapidly with forcefulness exceedingly fast [...] And the sound exploded in my mouth and tongue and said more than 20 times 'the wisdom, the wisdom'. Then it went on to say, the wisdom and knowledge, many many times [...]. All this was with great wondrous speed, many times in the waking state. And I have fallen on my face, spread out on the grave of Abaye.

(Artzy and Idel 2015, 95f.; Kallus 2003, 408–13)

In this case, as we will see also in instances of spirit possession (*dybbuks*), there is an interesting added element concerning the significance of 'place', as the experience occurs on the grave of a rabbi in a holy city, Safed. Rituals performed at grave sites share a similarity with cults associated with Muslim holy men. In this case, the gravesite is linked to the ancient sages who were held in high esteem and were considered to be the founders of the kabbalistic tradition, such as rabbi Shimon bar Yohai (Chajes 2003).

If we now turn to participants in the 'messianic frenzy' of the 17th century movement, we are able to trace new attitudes. We will refer to internal narratives

generated by members of the Sabbatean movement and will not take into consideration those composed by critics of the movement.¹⁷ I will describe the experiences of Nathan of Gaza (in 1665) and some of the followers of the movement before Sabbetai converted to Islam.

When the holiday of Shavuot arrived, Rabbi Nathan called the scholars of Gaza to study Torah with him the entire night. And it occurred that in the middle of the night a great sleep fell on Rabbi Nathan; and he stood on his feet and walked back and forth in the room and recited the entire tractate Ketubot by heart. He then asked one of the scholars to sing a certain hymn [...] meanwhile he leaped and danced in the room, shedding one piece of clothing after another until his underclothes alone remained. He then took a great leap and fell flat on the ground. When the rabbis saw this they wished to help him and to stand him up, but they found he was like a dead man [...] Presently a voice was heard, a voice emitted from his mouth, but his lips did not move. And he said: 'Take care concerning my beloved son, my messiah Sabbatai Zevi'; and it said further: 'Take care concerning my beloved son, Nathan the prophet.' [...] Afterwards he rested a great rest and began to move himself. His colleagues helped him to stand up on his feet and asked him how it had happened and what he had spoken. He replied that he did not know anything. The sages told him everything that had happened, at which he was very amazed. (Artzy and Idel 2015, 97f.)

This case suggests both a trance and spirit possession. Although there are some contradictions between the narrator – who knows the content of the voice that spoke through Nathan – and the lack of understanding of the witnesses, what is interesting here is the process that leads to the consecration of the messiah and his prophet. Language, study, and chanting are linked as means to produce an emotional reaction, suggesting a bodily possession that is manifested through alteration of the body, dancing, and disrobing, leading to a loss of conscience. No memory of the experience is left, as is known to happen in cases of spirit possession (Halperin 2007 with a different translation; Artzy and Idel 2015). The report also mentions a strong scent coming from Nathan as he became increasingly possessed by the extra-ordinary force.¹⁸ In this account, we read that Nathan undressed himself, although within the safe, closed context of followers. Christian enthusiasm often ended with 'disrobing' in public spaces, which contributed to the perception of their madness and social dangerousness (Heyd 1995).

¹⁷ Criticism of these experiences was voiced but remained quite marginal due to the success of the movement. After the conversion of Sabbetai critics became more vocal and persecutions of alleged Sabbatians were widespread, see Carlebach 1990.

¹⁸ 'Then did the rabbis come to realize that the aroma they smelled had emanated from the same spark of spiritual holiness that had entered into Master Nathan and spoken these words' (Halperin 2007, 36).

As the movement gained traction among Jews of the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, prophetic symbolical acts spread and antinomian activities increased. The *Memorial* describes many instances of prophesying through trance (*tar-demah* – becoming weak, almost falling asleep, as with Nathan).

This was the manner of prophesying in those days: people would go into a ‘trance’ and fall to the ground as though dead, their spirit entirely gone. After about half an hour they would begin to breathe and, without moving their lips, would speak scriptural verses praising God, offering comfort. All would say, Sabbetai Zevi is the messiah of the God of Jacob. Upon recovering, they had no awareness of what they had done or said. (Halperin 2007, 36)

This form of prophecy also affected women who, we can assume, had limited access to the study of ritual laws. Nevertheless, they were very active, both through the organisation of confraternities or the cultivation of their own charismatic behaviour, as is suggested by some cases among former Christians of the Ottoman Empire (Chajes 2003). Trance and spirit possession became widely practiced during this period of enthusiasm and were accordingly recorded across the diaspora (Scholem 1973 and Villani 2015).

4 Spirit possession

The religious movement that gave rise to Sabbatean messianism was characterised by the phenomenon known as spirit possession, which, superficially, resembles practices pervasive among Christian enthusiasts (Knox 1950). This experience was pursued, indicating a strong volition, and empowered the body with new forms of religious agency. Externally, the messianic movement resembled other religious movements that sought pneumatic experiences and social changes.

Spirit possession in Judaism is also known through the notion of the *dybbuk*, a concept that was fictionalised in the early 20th century through theatre and film, yet based closely on kabbalistic lore dating back centuries. Although described as possession by a malevolent spirit, the *dybbuk* bears some resemblance to the *maggid* experience. However, it portrays, if analysed through the perspective of religious individualisation, a different set of cultural problems. A *dybbuk* is the evil spirit of a person who has allegedly come to a violent or dramatic death. A *dybbuk* is more likely to be associated with religious deviance (Rüpke 2016) and requires religious training and expertise in order to be removed. In other words, it demands a ritual expert specialised in expelling evil spirits.

In the Christian world, exorcism was defined by precise laws and was considered a dangerous practice, and it still occurs within the Catholic Church.

The question of control over spirit possession opens a complicated chapter related to the repression of witchcraft in Europe, which dramatically increased after the Protestant Reformation. It will suffice to observe that those who underwent charismatic experiences could potentially be charged with the crime of witchcraft.¹⁹

From my perspective, alleged demonic possession is a type of individualisation in which volition is minimised: often, cases of evil possession are the result of traumatic experiences (rape, abuse, social discrimination) and it is through the spirit possession that a person strives to socialise his or her traumatic experience. If, from a cognitive and neurocognitive perspective, demonic possession is similar to ecstatic experience, from a social and cultural perspective it narrates a different story. Spirit possession is one of the most widespread religious and psychological experiences and is found across diverse cultures.²⁰ I address it here because cases of *dybbuk* possession are described in hagiographic sources devoted to the deeds of the kabbalist who could, in turn, perform exorcisms. Somehow, kabbalah and spirit possession emerged simultaneously and thus appear to be linked.

Among Jews, exorcism was not regulated as it was for Christians, and the spirit might be evil but not necessarily demonic. Exorcism was performed as a way of communicating with the spirit in order to identify his/her history. The spirit often spoke, but the rituals were so invasive that the person they inhabited could easily die. The *dybbuk's* story often described traumatic family situations, sexual abuses, conflict among relatives, misery, and unhappiness. Being dispossessed of his/her own self was a way of revealing the socially unspeakable. It was a means to give voice to a self that was denied expression, even at the risk of being destroyed. In a similar way to 'prophetism', which was less common in Jewish spheres than among Christians, possession reveals a gender issue. Spirit possession and ecstatic experiences were common among women. Jewish women were often recipients of *dybbuks* and were more frequently possessed by evil spirits than men. Among Christian women, by contrast, these experiences had more chances to be socialised positively. Nevertheless, they were always considered extremely dangerous and kept under strict surveillance. Indeed, in many instances women who had such experiences were ultimately persecuted in an atrocious manner.

¹⁹ The literature on this topic is extensive. For general references: De Certeau 1970; Douglas 2004; Coudert 2011. On anthropological views of exorcism and spirit possession more generally, see Csordas 1994, who examines contemporary exorcism.

²⁰ The bibliography is vast, especially when it includes shamanism. One relevant example of this research is provided by Lewis 2003; Crapanzano and Garrison 1977; Ginzburg 2017.

5 Preliminary conclusions

A summary analysis of prophetic/visionary experiences among Jews and Christians, in which signs of prophecy were sought or stimulated, indicates a bi-directional movement. On the one hand, one may identify the way in which body practices were employed in order to attain a religious experience that subsequently produced a radical modification, both of the self and of the religious group. On the other hand, religious beliefs and practices were needed in order to activate a bodily mutation that could be validated socially. Furthermore, spirit possession could be ritualised and pursued by male members of esoteric groups. Conversely, these experiences could happen with a lower level of volition and with a greater amount of self-induced violence, as can be seen in the convulsionary followers of Jansen.

Religious enthusiasm unquestionably combines two distinct elements that are significant vis-à-vis religious individualisation. The first involves the deeply personal experience of being possessed by spirits, the 'Holy Spirit', God, Christ, the divine, and partially coincides with a religious practice which conveys mystical experience of encounter and identification with the divine. The other significant element is the social dimension of the experience, as it was not confined to individual experience *per se* but was, rather, translated into action, meaning that it was performed within a social context and, ultimately, translated into a text.²¹ The process of writing is pertinent because it translates the sensory experience into language, through its literary, semantic, and symbolic devices. The texts do, according to some scholars, undeniably betray the actual experience by patterning them on authoritative models. One could suggest, that they indeed reproduce religious experiences patterned on authoritative models.

If religious enthusiasm was a cross-cultural phenomenon, the specific path leading to an encounter with God could vary. Enthusiasts employed similar practices – primarily possession, speaking in tongue, trances – which enabled men and women to transform into 'prophets'. The body was the main means through which to communicate this experience, which could be sought through a great number of ascetic and semi-ascetic practices. In many cases – especially among Christians – war and social strife had a strong impact on the type and quality of asceticism and ecstatic behaviour. Religious persecution had a strong impact on Huguenots, such as the 'French prophets', as well as on Quakers, although these groups differed in supporting or condemning violence and war. Jewish enthusiasm was to some extent the outcome of exile and oppression,

²¹ The mystical experience is ephemeral, transitory, but when it is recorded, it survives.

and surely created conflict among Jews themselves. Despite behavioural similarities – trance, possession, speaking in tongue – the *convulsionnaires* emerged within the context of Cistercian traditions in the Catholic Church. In their case, we find an enormous amount of violence present in ascetic practices that involved self-infliction of pain to an extent that seriously concerned the political authorities (Strayer 2008).

The search for a profound personal encounter with God through ascetic and mystical practices involves a double paradox. This quest often requires a ritual setting or the support of followers and disciples. In certain cases, it generates a community; very rarely does it remain an isolated individual experience. Furthermore, as Idel and Artzy suggest, Jewish mysticism involves an experience in which the self is always divided (Artzy and Idel 2015, 111f.). In itself, the mystical experience is unique and represents a radical form of religious individualisation, yet it may only be possible through a dissociative experience, which affects both the body and the soul. Furthermore, one may suggest that to be of any significance, even the most radical personal religious experience of an encounter with God must be recorded and thus socialised. In other words, it must be offered for the consumption of a group of followers, at least in the case of 'enthusiasm', which is undeniably always collective.

Religious enthusiasm offers a wide range of types of individualisation: one easily identifiable type is 'competitive individuality' (Rüpke 2013), although this exists in the context of a religious market that was not endowed with 'individual rights'. Against this backdrop, mystical and ecstatic experiences used the body/mind relationship as a repository of charisma,²² that is, as a receptacle or source of 'extraordinary power'. This proved to be successful in reinforcing processes of individualisation, eventually contributing to the growth of religious enthusiasm that crossed into both Jewish and Christian faiths. These distinct yet similar phenomena highlight a certain amount of visionary agency. They subsequently fuelled both de-traditionalisation processes, with the invention of new religious forms (many of the Christian groups that emerged from the Reformation), and, as in the case of Catholics and Jews, a substantial attempt to innovate within a superimposed system. Criticism of 'enthusiasm' must therefore be understood as a strategy to oppose truth claims on religious legitimacy, rather than a rising rationalised mode for interpreting religion.

22 On the notion of charisma, I refer here to Taves 2013.

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Katharina Ulrike Mersch

Out of bounds, still in control: exclusion, religious individuation and individualisation during the later Middle Ages

Medievalists during the last decades have been well aware of phenomena associated with the process of individualisation, and they have also been aware of different aspects of exclusion, religious exclusion being one of them. Various researchers have taken both issues into account and pointed out how they affected religious discourses and agents in a mutually reinforcing way. However, a wide range of terms is used to describe these phenomena within the historiographical tradition, while one and the same term may be used to denote a number of different concepts, depending, for example, on the distinct field of study to which it is applied. In order to reduce this complexity, the present paper will focus only on a limited time period (namely the later middle ages from the 12th century onward), on the western church (without paying attention to heresy, which has its own history of exclusion) and, with regard to the case studies, mainly on sources from regions within what is now Germany. In order to further clarify the conceptual and terminological difficulties, it is necessary to approach different concepts of individualisation or of the individual as such, and their relations to exclusion, by systemising different accounts. In effect, this means bringing together at least four different approaches, three of them situated within historical research and one within sociological research. I will argue that it is crucial to distinguish forms of voluntary exclusion from forms of non-voluntary exclusion. However, it will also be necessary to take into account the fact that, as far as the impact on individualisation and individuation is concerned, some of these threads may come together in medieval religious discourses and practices when we examine the source material.

1 How to talk about religious individualisation and individuation with regard to the Middle Ages?

Historical research over the last few years has dealt with the individual, with the person and the self as well as with private and personal spheres in contrast to

public and representative spheres on a broad scale.¹ One of the main topics of research in this context is religion, in particular monastic life and devotional practices. The variety of terms used by scholars is a consequence of a methodological difficulty. Modern theoretical concepts and their related terminology differ from medieval concepts and their terminology (Iogna-Prat 2005b, especially 8f., Goetz 2016, 470 ff.). At the same time, we need to take into account the fact that words similar to those used in modern research (e.g. *individuum*, *persona*, *subiectus*) may denote quite different, or at least variant, concepts in medieval sources (Iogna-Prat 2005b, 26–9). This may appear trivial, but it is crucial to decide whether to focus on medieval terminology or to use modern terminology to explore medieval concepts, structures, and practices ('heuristic anachronism', Moos 2006, 253). This is especially important when dealing with exclusion, for some phenomena we now group under this keyword were expressed within the semantic field of inclusion in medieval Latin (Röckelein 2014, 129). Therefore, regarding the topic of this chapter, the relation between exclusion and processes of individualisation or at least individuation,² and its place in the section of this publication concerned with 'Walking the edges', the latter option – to use modern terminology – seems preferable. At the same time, we have to keep in mind that what can be interpreted as exclusion in a modern sense is likely to bear different connotations in medieval source material. It is, thus, necessary to clarify some historiographical principles from which my examination will begin.

Jacob Burckhardt's dictum that the individual was invented only during the Renaissance, whereas people in former times associated themselves exclusively with broad categories, such as corporations and kin, sometimes seems to still echo through the discourse about individuality and concepts of the individual, even though by now many studies have indicated the opposite, or at least called for a differentiated approach.³ For example, Jan A. Aertsen makes a plea for methodo-

1 For example, the contributions to a recent conference on one of these topics, the person in the Middle Ages, dealt with a great number of issues (*Die Person im Mittelalter: Formen, Zeichen, Prozesse*, Frühjahrstagung des Konstanzer Arbeitskreises für mittelalterliche Geschichte e.V. Reichenau, 14th to 17th March 2017), such as death and dying, and law and ecclesiology. For an outline of research positions up to the middle of the 1990s, see Aertsen 1996. On the basis of previous research, Derschka distinguishes different 'domains of individuality': religion, monasticism, philosophy, law, literature, art, emotions, social relationships, material culture, money, and theories of personality (Derschka 2014, 29–192).

2 Musschenga defines '[...] individualisation as an objective process of social change, individuation as development of personal identity [...]' (Musschenga 2001, 5).

3 For a survey and evaluation of research since Burckhardt's times, see Iogna-Prat 2005b, 8–23. The latest monograph dedicated to the subject of the individual in the Middle Ages deals instead with the High Middle Ages (Derschka 2014). Concerning Burckhardt's dictum and its

logical and terminological precision. He warns against diffusing concepts of the individual and of personality and against diffusing modern concepts with medieval understandings of *individuum* and *persona*. At the same time, he points out that modern notions of individuality and personality are to a great extent based on medieval theological reflection.⁴ It is hardly surprising then that research has frequently taken into consideration works of theology, similar philosophical approaches, and the personal statements of intellectuals (most frequently those from the 12th century onwards).⁵ As Franz-Josef Arlinghaus states, in this field of study sources with an emphasis on introspection and self-reflection that contain hints for distancing oneself from the others serve as markers for measuring gradual stages of individuality (Arlinghaus 2015, 13).

Moreover, modern concepts of the individual, the self, individuation, and individualisation serve as tools to evaluate and to explore medieval societies and political thinking.⁶ Otto Gerhard Oexle for example, referring to Simmel's concept of social circles, assumes that medieval group culture (e.g. guilds and fraternities) could serve as a 'benchmark for individuality within a society' (Oexle 2001, 20 with reference to Simmel 1968, 27, 30).

Those groups based on *coniuratio* could be interpreted as 'indicators and a factor of a medieval culture of the individual', inasmuch as groups were grounded on the actions of single persons (Oexle 2001, 34). Concerning political thinking and the political mentality, individuality and concepts of personality have been identified in, for example, the time of Henry IV (1050–1106), the excommunicated and deposed king being in conflict with a vast number of princes, lords, bishops, and subjects. According to Tilman Struve, descriptions of individuals became increasingly common motives within historiography during Henry's regency, and individual and personal features became ever more important in these descriptions. Struve assumes that chroniclers then pictured 'the individual yearning for freedom, bursting the bounds of traditional ties' (Struve 2006, 13). From a different perspective, Sverre Bagge traces tendencies 'towards an emphasis on "the inner man"' within historiography. In his eyes, Henry's biography, composed

consequences, see *ibid.*, 9–28. While Derschka concentrates – like others in recent times – on the 12th century, Hans-Werner Goetz has emphasised that the phenomena under examination can be found in early medieval times as well, see Goetz 2016, 267ff.

⁴ Aertsen 1996, IX–XV. See also Iogna-Prat 2005a, 247–70 with regard to ecclesiology and Signori 2005, 119ff. with emphasis on Christianity.

⁵ For example, most contributions in Aertsen and Speer 1996: *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter* explore concepts of the *individuum* and individuation in theological and philosophical treatises, although two sections are dedicated to historiography and art.

⁶ For a thorough consideration of the use of the various terms connected to individualisation in the research history of the field of medieval studies, see Schmitt 2001, 241–9.

by an anonymous author familiar with the king, can be seen as a pioneer work leading towards the 12th century when subject-related descriptions became popular (Bagge 2002, 308 and 363). Philippe Buc, however, has designated the late 11th century as a period of political individualisation: because a 'transpersonal concept of the state' was established, Henry's contemporaries were able to accuse him of putting his 'private interests' above the interests of the Empire (Buc 2010 61–94). We can see that research here focuses on social structures and norms and on how individuals reacted to them in either a deviant or a productive way, as well as on modes of describing historical actors in narrative sources.

During the last years, Niklas Luhmann's approaches in particular have been a subject of discussion in medieval studies. Luhmann's concept of medieval societies as stratified societies is highly controversial among medievalists. Nevertheless, his views on exclusion and inclusion have stimulated debates about medieval social history. According to Luhmann, inclusion in stratified societies is achieved by identification, by being part of a certain estate (*'Stand'*) or group that is defined by exclusion and inclusion. Individuality could therefore be achieved by allocating a social status (Luhmann 1995, 243f. Cf. Bohn 2006a, 145f.; Bohn 2006b, 35f.). By contrast, in societies shaped by social differentiation the individual is characterised via exclusion, i.e., every single person is forced to establish a reliable role management with regard to several functional systems (science, politics, economics etc.), and being an individual (or a system of its own) is only possible beyond those functional systems (Luhmann 1989, 158f. Cf. Bohn and Hahn 2002, 9, 13; Bohn 2006a, 148ff.; Bohn 2006b, 31ff.). While some studies that start from this approach will be discussed below in the context of the relationship between individualisation/individuation and exclusion, it is worth noting that Peter von Moos has pointed out the need to invert Luhmann's approach when dealing with the status of individuals within medieval canon law (Moos 2005, 271–88). In addition, the authors of a recently published volume (Arlinghaus 2015b) use Luhmann's concept to fathom modes for discussing the self, self-reflection, and introspection in premodern times by distinguishing self- and hetero-referential practices of self-construction. Therefore, modes of autobiographical attempts to inscribe the self into society are used to explore premodern 'individuality' (for a description of this methodological approach, see Arlinghaus 2015a). This volume serves as an example of the continuing interest in premodern sources that contain statements about the author's 'self' and which are sometimes subsumed under the term 'ego-documents' (on this matter see, for example, Schmolinsky 2012). This concern has its roots in the 1970s and has interested historians focusing on literature, spirituality, and mentality (cf. Schmitt 2001, 249ff.).

In medieval studies, the correlation between individuals and social structures or groups seems to be the main starting-point for consideration while the

individual's internal relation to God is sometimes taken into account as a third factor. A particular approach might, therefore, investigate contexts in which this correlation and its norms are in transition or contested (cf. Fuchs 2015, 336). At the same time, it might aim to reconstruct levels of (de-)traditionalisation, (de-)standardisation and (de-)privatisation, since privatisation often serves as a marker for individuality, whereas traditionalisation and standardisation seem incompatible with individuality (cf. Struve 2006, 13; Rüpke 2013, 7; Fuchs 2015, 334). For that matter, exclusion and inclusion (and hetero-reference and self-reference respectively) can serve as modes of description on the level of social processes as well as on the level of the analysis of historical texts. With regard to the sources, personal statements of excluded individuals could help to show whether exclusion fostered individuation or individualisation, even though we need to bear in mind that these statements may not reveal an actual 'inner self' but more likely help to uncover 'the narratives that would create and shape an institution called individuality' (Arlinghaus 2015, 17). When dealing with social processes that might be called individualisation, it is necessary to consider norms of exclusion, too, as they can reveal how much 'individuality' an excluded individual should have at his or her disposal. But let us first explore the way in which current research deals with religious exclusion in the context of individuation and individualisation.

2 Correlations between exclusion, individualisation and individuation in religious contexts

Bernd-Christian Otto refers to individualisation with regard to 'standing-out individuals', i.e. individuals who stand out of something (Otto 2017, 40), an idea that might lead one to conclude that exclusion is at the very core of individualisation. But this would be a rather reckless leap, especially when taking into account that – and here again I draw on Otto's considerations – 'discourses of exclusion' may serve the function of 'othering' and thereby lead to the very opposite of individualisation (Otto 2017, 44f.). Moreover, the self can define itself by means of inclusion, by reference to the values and beliefs of the religious community, thereby shaping its own unique identity (Melville 2002, XV). It is, thus, necessary to distinguish carefully between inclusion and exclusion and to take a close look at the correlation between exclusion and inclusion. It should also be noted that the term 'exclusion' can be applied to various phenomena of medieval religious life. Some of these, such as the dichotomy of orthodoxy/heresy are clearly

connected to ‘othering’ but others are connected instead to the configuration of the individual’s soul and the development of its inner relation towards God. This assumption requires some explanation. I shall start with forms of self-imposed exclusion and withdrawal because ‘self-exclusion’ – in contrast to involuntary exclusion (cf. Bohn and Hahn 2002, 10f.) – is considered to be one of the main aspects of religious life in religious practice as well as concerning monastic and ascetic life in the Middle Ages.

2.1 Self-imposed exclusion, seclusion, and withdrawal from common spaces and society

Three aspects of self-imposed exclusion require attention: ‘private piety’, monasticism in combination with similar phenomena, and saintliness, aspects that, in the given order, delineate a curve from a minimal to a maximal degree of exclusion that a human being is able to perform.

‘Personal piety’ or ‘private piety’ has been a popular topic of research and is still studied by those working on medieval religious practice. It bears a notion of individuation insofar as individual practices are concerned, and it bears a notion of exclusion insofar the individual is regarded as standing outside of, or at least being detached from, a community. There is some disagreement about what ‘personal’ or ‘private’ piety actually means. At this point, it is not necessary to develop a precise definition. For the present line of argument, it will be sufficient to explore the notions of several concepts.

From a theological perspective, Bernhard Lang has highlighted apotropaic elements of personal devotional practices, which he defines as manners of acting and speaking that individuals performed in order to express their enduring emotional relationships with a Deity who grants protection and security. In addition, Lang writes of a ‘simple piety without reflection’, in contrast to a reflexive religiosity based upon certain meditative methods, which he calls ‘(Virtuosen-)Spiritualität’. In this sense, personal piety for Lang is the basic form of lay religiosity (Lang 2009). Lang seems to be speaking of religious practices performed in a state of temporary (self-)exclusion from established and standardised forms of religiosity.

Although details of his notion of personal/private piety are not discussed in historical research, one comes across implicit references to exclusion in other studies as well. Eva Irblich, for example, argues in her study of prayer books which belonged or were attributed to the Holy Roman Emperors Frederic III (1415–1493), Maximilian I (1459–1519), and Charles V (1500–1558), that one can distinguish between ‘individual features’, on the one hand, and features attached to these emperors’ roles as rulers, on the other. Speaking of exclusion, Irblich’s second

assumption seems to be more important: in contrast to Lang, she does not speak of apotropaic practices when defining personal devotion but deals with a variety of practices that can be attributed to an individual who withdraws from the community of believers to contemplate. The small size of the books, their limited range of texts, unconventional compilations of texts and iconographies, as well as traces of usage and personal entries, all imply, as Irblich suggests, that the books were used in the context of practices of personal piety (Irblich 1988, 11–45).

Irblich's approach is more common in medieval studies than that of Lang. On the level of objects, private or personal piety is addressed by researchers when a book was kept in a private collection, when images were of small size and were not on display in a public space but in domestic surroundings, and when books and images show traces of use. What makes it legitimate to categorise practices and objects of personal or private devotion as personal and private – something belonging to the sphere of individualisation and individuation – is a moment of temporal exclusion or withdrawal from common rooms and practices. Gabriela Signori demonstrates that these practices were not common for lay people alone, as is shown by the evidence from monasteries (Signori 2005, especially 134). Exclusion here is addressed in a very broad and non-specific sense in this context and the topic thus requires further specification, especially with regard to social structures and norms.

From a modern perspective, the key figure of voluntary religious exclusion throughout the Middle Ages is the monk or nun, at least members of those monastic formations and orders that requested enclosure on a large scale. Yet the underlying concepts of exclusion can only be perceived when set against its opposite: inclusion. Concerning monastic life and enclosure, Hedwig Röckelein – discussing the interpretations of Niklas Luhmann, Cornelia Bohn, and Alois Hahn – stresses the ambivalent, or rather interdependent, conception of lifestyle by speaking of exclusion and inclusion at the same time (Röckelein 2014). Monastic rules did actually operate with the term *inclusio*, implying that a community of like-minded people was enclosed behind monastery walls where they lived a life different from that outside the walls with respect to religious practice, economy, and daily routine. When someone quit this form of life or was forced to leave the monastery, he or she would have been classified as excluded (*excommunicatus*) (Röckelein 2014, 129). When modern concepts are applied, one will recognise aspects of exclusion in the *inclusio* of monastic life. Thus Röckelein describes cloistered ascetics as 'esoteric antisocial elements' withdrawing from their ancestral social ties (family and friends).⁷ While this may count as one aspect of

⁷ Röckelein 2014, 129. For Luhmann's concept of inclusion and exclusion in stratified societies, see Luhmann 1995, 243f. and above. See also Hahn and Bohn 2002, 13–7.

individualisation as described above, it remains obscure how individuation and individualisation are connected to this kind of exclusion. Yet traces can be found on various different levels.

First of all, with regard to the rest of society, the monk or the nun was someone special, and – I again refer to Röckelein – it was the element of voluntary exclusion that attracted social attention and generated social prestige. To accomplish this exclusion, monks and nuns were bound to a rule that regulated their whole life, subjecting them to the authority of their abbot or abbess and to the control of their brothers and sisters (Röckelein 2014, 130f.). These norms, especially the fact that the community itself was the most important feature of monastic life to which everyone had to submit, contradict the idea of monasteries as places inspiring individuation and bringing forward some process of individualisation, as Gert Melville argues. In any case, ‘one of the greatest achievements of medieval monasticism, besides developing perfect forms of community, was producing structures of individuality that can be identified as breakthrough in cultural history leading towards inner self-determination’. This was possible because monasteries provided monks and nuns with the opportunity to focus on their inner relationship with God by minimising outward distractions and sensual temptations (Melville 2002, XIIIf.). Living in a cloister prevents individuals from committing sins which would separate them from God (ibid. XXf., see also XXVI.). Besides, monastic life required self-reflection on different levels: the very decision to join a monastery required, in the ideal case, self-assessment and the testing of one’s own spiritual strength during the novitiate. Taking the vow meant committing oneself to the community of one’s own volition (ibid. XXXIIIf.; cf. Melville 1996, 167ff.); in the middle of the 12th century, Premonstratensians even expected their members to follow the rules with their hearts and of their own volition (Melville 1996, 156).

Treatises dealing with the religious edification of monks, nuns, and regular canons called for self-exploration and self-inquiry, especially from the 12th century onward, during which Peter Abelard (1079–1142) composed his *Scito te ipsum* (‘Know Thyself’) (Melville 2002, XXXVIIf. and XXXVIIIf.; see *Peter Abelard’s Ethics*) and the canon regular Hugh of Saint Victor (c. 1096–1141) claimed in his ‘Didascalion, or, On the Study of Reading’ to acquire wisdom by reading, as wisdom would facilitate self-recognition (Hugh of Saint Victor, *Didascalicon*, lib. 1, c. 1, 110. See Stammerger 2002, 116; Mensching 1994, 599–603.). Of course, self-reference, or rather practices of contemplation that ensured reflection about one’s own inner relation to God, was a common subject of devotional texts produced for and in monasteries in the following centuries as well. Kaspar Elm, when dealing with Dominican women’s convents during the 13th and 14th century, even assumes that ‘religious individualism’ became more important than the community

(Elm 1992, 42f.). This may be true for some particular cases but, in general, exclusion and the relation to the outside-world, communal life, and contemplation remained equally important topics of the monastic discourse.⁸

To live as a recluse (in Latin and German the term *inclusa*/Inkluse again indicates the tension between modern and medieval terminology) can be seen as an even more radical form of voluntary exclusion. Recluses were likely to be walled up inside a cell next to the church after the liturgy for the dead was celebrated for them. During the rest of their lifetime, as far as normative sources are concerned, only a window looking inside the church allowed them to take part in the liturgy and to serve as spiritual guides for their visitors. The recluse's solitude left even more room for contemplation than that granted to monks and nuns, resulting in an even more exceptional position between society and God (cf. Herbert McAvoy 2010; Kruse 2012).

To mediate between this world and the other was the main function of saints, and the narratives of hagiography have also been the subjects of research dealing with the correlation between exclusion, inclusion, and individuality. Andreas Hammer, among others, has stressed that the future saint needed to exclude himself from the human community in this world in order to prepare himself for heavenly inclusion, i.e. inclusion in the community of saints. While the former action provided the future saint with exclusion individuality, the latter deprived him or her of individuality in any form whatever. Transcendental experiences in this world, such as visionary experiences, were taken as signs of the forthcoming heavenly de-individualisation.⁹ In this case, individuality and the total loss of individuality, exclusion, and inclusion, did not contradict each other but were, instead, interdependent. They thus complemented one another with regard to the hagiographical narrative (Hammer 2015, 228).

With regard to monks, nuns, recluses, and saints, voluntary exclusion served transitional purposes. Withdrawing from the secular community was supposed to enable the individual to get closer to heavenly inclusion and because of this excluded individuals could mediate between this world and the other. To a lesser degree, the logic of inclusion via exclusion is valid for private devotion as well. In all cases, exclusion leads in a certain direction, towards God. In terms of ecclesiastical concepts, this means travelling away from the Christian community in this world towards the heavenly community by moving towards the edges of Christian

⁸ Regarding the situation of Dominican women's convents, see, for example, Hirbodian 2016.

⁹ Hammer 2015, 226f. Münkler (2006, 36ff.) discusses the saints' exclusion-individuality as well. The 'overcoming' of personality and the self is also addressed in other articles, dealing with very different contexts, cf. Haas in this publication.

society. Individuality and self-reference are to be found in between.¹⁰ Would this also be the case if the individual turned around and took a step in the opposite direction, an action that, according to ecclesiastical norms, would cause involuntary exclusion?

2.2 Exclusion as sanction for deviant behaviour

Before examining traces of individualisation within forms of non-voluntary exclusion and the potential of forms of non-voluntary exclusion for individuation, it is important to remember that one of the most important, if not *the* most important, purposes of exclusion was to keep delinquents away from the community in order to prevent ‘contagion’.¹¹ This applies both to excommunication as an ecclesiastical sentence as well as to related punishments for deviant behaviour in monastic communities (Jaser 2013, 323f., 340–8; for monastic life see Melville 1996, 163; Lusset 2011, 156). To explore the meaning of non-voluntary exclusion for individualisation and individuation,¹² it is necessary to shift the focus to some extent away from the community and towards the delinquent himself, who might not have been too happy about his ‘opportunity’ to take part in those processes, and to his or her relation with the community.

10 This three-pole structure is important for other phenomena discussed in this publication as well. Cf. for example Cristiana Facchini 1299: ‘Unquestionably, religious enthusiasm combined two distinct elements that are significant vis-à-vis religious individualization. The first one refers to the deeply personal experience of being possessed by spirits, the ‘Holy Spirit’, God, Christ, the divine, and which partially coincides with a religious practice related to ‘mysticism’. The other one refers to the significance of the social dimension of the experience, as it was not confined to an individual experience per se, but was translated into action, meaning that it was performed within a social context and ultimately translated into a text’. Cf. Cornelia Haas’ 1365 description of the ‘United Lodge of Theosophists’ (U.L.T.) ‘method and individual approach to Helena Blavatsky’s theosophy, which emphasises without exception the pursuit of the individual and its perfection – meant as an act of unification with the Divine or higher self, as well as with the community of likeminded persons, in an individual, vital way in service for humanity’.

11 Cf. Hahn 2006, 67ff., 71ff. for theoretical reflections about exclusion on account of sin and contagious diseases.

12 Britta Müller-Schauenburg’s (1351) study of Benedict XIII in this publication deals with a special case of involuntary exclusion.

2.2.1 Norms of exclusion and traces of individualisation and individuation

When dealing with religious and ecclesiastical norms of exclusion, it is important to keep in mind that even though two of the main characteristics of the church were its role as a social body and as a normative and even political institution, its main goal was, nevertheless, to lead the single believer to salvation (Moos 2005, 272–4). Consequently, Bohn and Hahn even find ‘modern’ elements within ecclesiastical concepts of exclusion that served to sanction deviant behaviour and thinking: ‘In a society that designs itself according to afterlife, religion developed [...] its own patterns of exclusion. Everyone was determined by the risk of damnation: the upper class as well as the common folk. [...] the most important form of exclusion in this world that corresponded to afterlife was excommunication; it could strike a nobleman and even an emperor. The worst exclusion of all leads to eternal hell: Religion within the stratified society anticipated modern settings of inclusion and exclusion, because religion constituted an early form of a differentiated functional system that included everyone in the first place and secondly promoted individuation. The individual, not a collective, is to be redeemed and damned’ (Hahn and Bohn 2002, 15; likewise Bohn 2006b, 147f.; Bohn 2006a, 37f.). Bohn and Hahn seem to echo Moos’ statement that Luhmann’s model needs to be turned upside down with regard to canon law (Moos 2005, 271–88). They furthermore clearly refer to a macroscopic level, thus it shall be discussed if individuation and individualisation can also be found when going into detail. Let us first consider norms of exclusion as a sanction with the aim to correct deviant individuals.

Monastic rules and *consuetudines* (‘customaries’) included various forms of exclusion to correct errant monks and nuns as well as lay brothers and sisters. The abbot (or the abbess) could separate the deviant from the dormitory, exclude him or her from communal meals and work or even mass (excommunication). In severe cases one could be imprisoned or – in the worst case – even expelled forever.¹³ Some communities and Orders that had developed a central organisation managed to gain even the penal jurisdiction over monks usually held by the bishops (see for example Fuser 2000, 43ff.), including excommunication as legal punishment. When exclusion is seen as a medicine to cure the deviant who drifted away from the norms of monastic life, its benefit for the soul of the

¹³ Röckelein 2014, 129, 134–8. Fuser 2000, 65–9, 76–80, 87–90, 100, 124–8, 139ff., 152–7, 186–90, 205ff., 214, 220, 224ff., 232ff., 245f., 248ff., 296ff., 304–9, 311, 316f. Monastic rules and synodal statutes refer to the imprisonment of delinquent monks from late Antiquity onwards; from the 10th century onwards, some *consuetudines* of canons regular deal with the subject as well, see Lusset 2011, 154ff.

individual is obvious, as the rules were thought to enable the individual to unite with God. But exclusion may also have contributed to the individual's individuation on another level. Megan Cassidy-Welch, speaking of Cistercian monasteries, assumed that even incarceration served as something more than 'punishment'. It was also intended to remind the sinner of the merits deriving from 'ascetic practice and the cenobitic life' (Cassidy-Welch 2001, 25). She adds that, in a way, 'incarceration was not necessarily solitary: the prisoner was able to commune with God and rediscover the means to eternal liberty' (Cassidy-Welch 2001, 41). Thomas Fuser comes to a similar conclusion when comparing normative sources of Benedictine, Cistercian, and Cluniac origin up to the 14th century: 'in every day monastic life, punishments mark central points for defining one's own spiritual progress' (Fuser 2000, 328).

Norms of excommunication for deviant behaviour are known in Christian communities from the New Testament onwards. They applied not only to monks and nuns but also to clerics and the laity. The censure experienced a changeful development throughout the centuries up to the 12th century that cannot be described here (see Vodola 1986, 1–27). The basic idea was that a severe sin separated the sinner from God, a view that was expressed by separating the sinner from the sacraments or even the Christian community and, in doing so, forcing the sinner to amend and to return to the bosom of the church. During the 12th and 13th centuries, some fundamental specifications with regard to the role of the individual were collected or established and discussed in canon law. They can be found in the private collection of Gratian (*Decretum Gratiani*, ca. 1140) and in official canonical collections such as the *Liber Extra* (1234) and the *Liber Sextus* (1298). We learn from those sources that one could be sentenced with excommunication, for instance, for disobedience to prelates, for violating ecclesiastical rights and possessions, for injuring clerics, for infringements of norms concerning marriage and sexuality, for maintaining contact with an infidel or for practicing magic (*Decretum sive Concordia discordantium canonum*, C. 11 q. 1 c. 12, C. 12 q. 2 c. 4, C. 17 q. 4 c. 23, C. 24 q. 3 c. 19, C. 2 q. 6 c. 32, C. 26 q. 5 c. 9). Minor sins and offences resulted in a minor excommunication (exclusion from the sacraments); major sins and offences entailed a major excommunication (exclusion from the sacraments and the community of believers in a broad sense, as common and economic life, legal rights, and feudal ties were affected to varying degrees) (see for example *Liber Extra*, 2.25.2; 5.27.10, cf. Vodola 1986, 44–96). Even though some scholars tend to understand excommunication as a mere disciplinary punishment (cf. Vogel 1975, 446), we have to bear in mind that in contemporary legislation it was meant to provide inner spiritual healing as long as the excommunicated individual faced the sentence with respect (see for example *Dekrete der ökumenischen Konzilien* 2. First council of Lyon 1245, const. 19, 291).

Some developments in canon law shed light on strong tendencies towards standardisation yet, at the same time, point to new perspectives for the individual. Excommunication for certain offences required an ecclesiastical judge's sentence, whereas other offences automatically and immediately led to excommunication. Canonists and popes deliberated on the latter form of exclusion particularly in the 12th century. In some respects, this differentiation helped increase papal control; in certain cases, e.g. when the excommunicate had beaten a cleric, only the pope could grant absolution (Vodola 1986, 28–31; *Dekrete der ökumenischen Konzilien 2*. Second council of the Lateran, can. 15, 200 = *Decretum sive Concordia discordantium canonum*, C. 17 q. 4 c. 29). With regard to heresy, excommunication *ipso facto* could be used to uncover cases of erratic religious behaviour that perhaps otherwise would not have been detected. If people from the delinquent's personal environment knew about the excommunication *ipso facto*, they were obliged to avoid contact with the delinquent. The delinquent's priest, for example, was not allowed to administer the sacraments to him. Thus competent ecclesiastical judges were able to read the signs and take the case to the court (Vodola 1986, 34). But, nevertheless, this so called *excommunicatio latae sententiae* first and foremost concerned the excommunicated individuals themselves, who were thrown back on themselves and their consciences.¹⁴ Besides, in less serious cases, such as when someone had made contact with an excommunicate, this form of penalty granted a certain amount of privacy: the person concerned could make his confession to a simple priest and attain absolution without undergoing a process and appearing in court (*Liber Extra*, 5.39.29). The concept of general excommunication, i.e. on certain days ecclesiastical judges sentenced everyone in general who committed a certain crime or would commit it in future (cf. Huizing 1955, 315–8; Jaser 2013, 359–73), *prima facie* seems to provide striking evidence for a process of de-individualisation. But Dominique Iogna-Prat draws attention to the fact that since 1246 at the latest the practice of excommunicating collectives had been abandoned. The ecclesiastical judges were pledged to judge and punish only individuals with this sentence, thereby acknowledging their personal responsibility (Iogna-Prat 2005b, 20; *Liber Sextus*, 5.11.5). Peter D. Clarke traced similar discussions and norms concerning the interdict, a censure that prohibited groups, such as the citizens of a certain town, from participating in the rites and services of the church (Clarke 2007, 21–7).

Speaking of personal responsibility and culpability, the ecclesiastical process dealing with excommunication allowed reflection upon the question of whether

¹⁴ As von Kober puts it, *excommunicatio latae sententiae* prevails 'nur vor Gott und dem Gewissen', Kober 1857, 51.

or not the penalty was imposed justly. Apart from the fact that the culprit was able to appeal against a sentence (cf. Hergenröther 1875; Köbler 2014, 296ff.) and to give his or her opinion in this regard, the mere idea that a sentence could be unjust inspired popes and scholars to reflect upon the relation between the church, the status of the sinner, and God. We learn from the *Decretum Gratiani* that God's judgement will not be affected by an unjust sentence, because God's judgement relied upon the individual's conscience exclusively (*Decretum sive Concordia discordantium canonum*, C 11 q. 3 c. 54). Though, in general, the excommunicate was obligated to respect even an unjust sentence until it was lifted, he or she was allowed to disregard it when it forced him to act wrongfully or to disobey God's commandment (*Decretum sive Concordia discordantium canonum*, C. 11 q. 3 d. p. c. 90, c. 95, d. p. c. 101. Cf. Helmholz 1982, 211). In consequence, this left room for personal considerations about religious principles, at least on a level still compatible with the orthodoxy. The same applied to an excommunicate's fellows. While they were in fact obliged to avoid contact with someone struck with a sentence of major excommunication, they were allowed to decide if they avoided someone condemned unjustly, as long as they were led by their conscience (Gillmann 1924, 7).

Excommunication was intended to bring the excluded individual to voluntarily reintegrate himself or herself into the church. As such, it was a sanction that could and should be removed after a time. During the phase of excommunication, the intention was that something should happen to the individual's inner attitude towards God and towards the Christian community. Whether what happened was sufficient or not needed to be judged, and it was judged within the process of absolution. Ecclesiastical judges needed outward signs to evaluate the inner state of a culprit, to condemn him or to lift the sentence. Concerning absolution, it was confession,¹⁵ a pledge to improve and to make amends, sometimes in terms of public penance, that served this function. Concerning practice, we are well informed about the excommunicates' pledges and public acts of obedience and penance (cf. Neumann 2008; Mansfield 1995), i.e., those actions directed towards the Christian community. Unfortunately, the act of confession, which was more explicitly directed towards the sinful individual, remains obscure. We nevertheless have to take into account that in some, or even many, cases some kind of confession might have taken place, even though we do not know what the individual and his confessor talked about. The impact of confession on

¹⁵ Confession was required at least when a confessor absolved an excommunicate in the face of death, see Swanson 2011, 9ff. In some cases, confession was also required when an excommunicate was to be absolved regularly, see Mersch 2017, chapter IV 2.3.

individualisation and individuation is highly ambiguous. As has been pointed out by Nicole Reinhardt in the context of early modern confession, confession was embedded within a highly normative framework and committed the individual to this normative framework. Nevertheless, confession drove individuals to self-examination, to think about their intentions and conscience (Reinhardt 2015, 424; see also Münkler 2009, 25–8, Münkler focuses on confession's contribution to processes of normalisation). This ambiguity can be observed in medieval times as well,¹⁶ although the normative frameworks and modes of self-examination were subject to fundamental historical changes until the 16th and 17th centuries. However, Alois Hahn, referring to the changes confession underwent since the 12th century and quoting publications from across the range of the aforementioned fields within medieval studies, has claimed that in this case 'subjectivity results from processes of social control' (Hahn 1997, 409).

Assuming that Hahn's viewpoint is valid, a similar ambiguity can be observed when exploring phenomena of exclusion. Exclusion usually did not correspond to an exclusion from society but, rather, played a crucial role as a means of regulation within society (Bohn 2013, 79). This observation is important for understanding the impact of phenomena of exclusion on modes of individuation and processes of individualisation that were, in turn, connected to the institution of confession. When thinking about individualisation and individuation, a point of particular interest is the privacy of auricular confession postulated at least since 1215. But it should be noted, too, that confession is based upon an even more complex aspect of Christian thinking, namely the concept of sin. In theology and canon law, the question of individual intention became increasingly important. Again, it is the 12th century that is most commonly seen as the period of upheaval (Schmitt 2001, 251). Hahn and Bohn, for example, refer to Abelard, who in his *Scito te ipsum* shifted the focus from exploring external action in order to detect sin towards intentional action, i.e., acts of the will consisting in consent to sin. For Abelard, atoning for one's sin therefore presupposed internal contrition, 'contrition of the heart' (*contritione cordis*).¹⁷ Although it had been common to explore one's own internal state with regard to sin at least since Augustine (d. 430), the

¹⁶ Arlinghaus 2015, 10ff. with reference to relevant previous studies. For correlations between sin, conscience, norms, and deviance in 12th and 13th century monasticism, see Melville 1996, 172–82, Melville 2005, 186f. For the impact of ecclesiastical theories of intention on statements of defendants before ecclesiastical courts in the 14th century, see Mersch 2018.

¹⁷ Hahn and Bohn 2002, 11f. with reference to Peter Abelard's *Ethics*, c. 3, 4–37, and c. 19, 88f.: *Cum hoc autem gemitu et contritione cordis, quam ueram penitentiam dicimus, peccatum non permanet [...]* – 'Moreover, with this sigh and contrition of the heart which we call true repentance sin does not remain [...]'. See also Kramer and Bynum 2002, 65–71 with reference to further sources.

particular emphasis on introspection from the 12th century onwards may be explained by reference to the ‘birth of purgatory’ during that time, leading to a broader acknowledgement of the individual’s responsibility for him- or herself (Kehnel 2002, 36 with reference to Le Goff 1981). In canon law, scholars debated about whether collectives were able to sin in the form of consenting to another’s sin or if this was possible only for individuals (Clarke 2007, 27f.). This would imply that various phenomena grouped around concepts of sin may be enlightening subjects for the issue discussed in this paper, since sin entails sanction. Furthermore, absolution required inner contrition and this was true not only with regard to ‘private’ and regular confession but also with regard to an absolution from excommunication.

When comparing forms of voluntary exclusion, such as those sketched above, with the norms of involuntary exclusion, a number of essential differences can be observed. As already stated above, while monastic and saintly withdrawal from the world was supposed to bring an individual closer to God and enable him to serve as a link between this world and the other, the exclusion of sinners was believed to express their distance from God. With regard to the legislative setting, the sinner was of no positive use for the community of believers. Nevertheless, we can observe several similarities as well. Both types of exclusion have sometimes been understood in the scholarship as liminal conditions (concerning monasticism, see Röckelein 2014; concerning excommunication see Jaser 2013, 322–8). In either case, this condition was thought to be temporal, as inclusion was its final aim;¹⁸ monks, nuns, and saints would aim to unite with God while excommunicates should reintegrate themselves into Christian society. Furthermore, in both cases, although a strict set of norms shaped the relevant condition, it offered and demanded individual self-reflection and reflection on one’s inner relation to God. In the case of excommunication, concepts of guilt and conscience shaped this reflection. In the next chapter, we will see that these ideas had an influence on historical agents as well.

2.2.2 Being excluded and talking about excluded individuals

When examining individual cases of excommunication, with regard to the source material, we are far better informed about the prelates who excluded deviant subjects than about how penalised individuals reacted to their exclusion. Where we do have information we can mainly trace legal procedures that point towards

¹⁸ Cf. Hahn 2006, 71: ‘Soziologisch sind diese *partiellen* Formen der Exklusion deshalb relevant, weil sie Inklusion und Exklusion in spannungsvoller Weise miteinander verknüpfen müssen’.

conflicts we today would assign to the field of politics, as in many cases command structures or ecclesiastical properties were concerned. But from time to time we find examples that hint at individuation and individualisation in responses to ecclesiastical censures or in sources that talk about excommunicated individuals. In what follows, a number of examples will be discussed in order to show to what extent excommunication could initiate or enforce processes of individuation and to what extent talking about the excommunicate's inner state could serve as a means of standardisation.

With regard to appeals against excommunication, from the 12th century onwards we often read about procedural errors, ill-informed judges, and misconduct. This is true, for instance, in the case of English bishops appealing against a sentence imposed by Thomas Becket (d. 1170), archbishop of Canterbury, during the Becket-controversy in 1166 (*Materials for the history of Thomas Becket* 5, no. 204, 403–8. Cf. Helmholz 1994, 242ff.); in the case of laymen who had been excommunicated in the context of quarrels with clerics during the Middle Ages¹⁹; in the case of appeals during the conflict between the Colonna-cardinals and Pope Boniface VIII in 1297 concerning his administration and election (Becker 1988, 54–9); and in the case of monks and abbots appealing against charges of apostasy in the 15th century (Svec Goetschi 2015, 231–59).

What do we learn in these instances about an excommunicated individual's internal state, about his or her personal relation to God? In many cases, we find that the excommunicated person presented his or herself as a good Christian who did his very best to fulfil his role in Christian society as a bishop, monk, nun, king, or layman holding a special office. And in some cases, those appeals served propagandistic purposes. Some of the most popular examples – at least with regard to German medieval studies – are those related to King Louis IV 'the Bavarian' (d. 1347). After a double election and the subsequent disputes about the papal ratification of Louis' kingship, Pope John XXII excommunicated Louis in March 1324 and imposed an interdict on the Empire. Three texts illustrating the development of Louis' argument from December 1323 onwards suggest that he planned to appeal before and after the sentence was imposed.²⁰ He insisted on his election and kingship being legitimate, portrayed himself as a sincere catholic believer and ruler, pointed out legal errors in the process of his excommunication, and tried to demonstrate that John XXII was an unjust and illegitimate

¹⁹ Cf., for example, the appeal filed by the city of Soest in 1280 against a sentence of excommunication imposed on the citizens by Siegfried of Westerburg, Archbishop of Cologne, *Westfälisches Urkundenbuch* 7, no. 1726, 795ff.

²⁰ Among the numerous studies dealing with those connections, Becker's book about appeals should be mentioned in particular, Becker 1988, 72–99.

judge. Concerning this last aspect, Louis at first criticised John's treatment of the Friars minor (December 1323, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Constitutiones* 5, no. 824, 641–7, the passage concerning the Friars minor: 646), before setting aside this argument in the second text (January 1324, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Constitutiones* 5, no. 836, 655–9), and going on to accuse John of being a heretic with a thirst for spilling Christian blood in the last text (May 1324) composed after his excommunication. The argumentation includes references to the understanding of evangelical poverty held by the Friars minor (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Constitutiones* 5, no. 909f., 723–54; see for example Wittneben 2003, 229ff.), a highly controversial subject within the Order and the church at that time which led to papal processes, doctrinal decisions, and various appeals.²¹ Louis promulgated this appeal throughout the Empire (see for example Kaufhold 1994, 66–9), from which we can see that it was composed not just as legal remedy in the ecclesiastical court but also to serve a propagandistic purpose.

When people were excommunicated during a dispute over religious ideas and doctrine, the dispute might be shifted to the question of whether the individual should obey his prelate or – if the prelate was wrong – follow his conscience and disobey. This can be observed, for instance, with regard to the above-mentioned dispute between the Friars minor and the Pope. However, those conflicts are more general, the texts may only briefly touch on the topic of conscience, the authors mostly appeal not against censures but against papal bulls dealing with doctrine, and they stress their main subject – for example evangelical poverty – rather than excommunication or the appellants' internal state (cf. for example Wittneben 2003, 282ff., 290–352 on the Friars' minor appeals from Avignon and Pisa [1328], on the topic of conscience especially 309; Wittneben 2004; Becker 1988, 72–83). Appeals allow us, then, to look at how excommunicates evaluated ecclesiastical hierarchies as well as their position and the judge's position within these hierarchies and how they dealt with ecclesiastical norms. Here one might speak of 'inclusion individuality' in the state of exclusion, since the appellants related themselves to the norms and ideals of the Christian community. The personal relationship the excluded maintained with God seems to be less important than the individual's place within Christian society, the judges' misconduct, and in some cases the intentions the (future) excommunicate describes when explaining that behaviour led to excommunication.

²¹ Cf. Miethke 1969, 76f., 86, 105 note 390, 403–6, 409f., 416, 424, 429, 501, 505, 517 with information about the appeals of Louis IV, those of the Friars minor, and the correlations between those texts.

With regard to this last aspect, the strategies excommunicates used to legitimise their behaviour sometimes seem to slightly foreshadow ‘modern’ role-distance. When, at the end of the 15th century, the Pope excommunicated Johann of Morschheim, a palatine bailiff, Johann excused his behaviour with reference to the specific context. The actions which led to his excommunication were embedded in a conflict between his superior, Philip, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, and the abbot of Weissenburg abbey, who were fighting over possessions. Johann 1498 tried to gain support for the annulling of the sentence by declaring in a plea that he had not attacked the abbey of his own will but due to his duties as a bailiff.²² Overall, appeals may shed light on how the excommunicates perceived themselves as legal persons or at least acted like one. But this seems to lead us too far away from the aspects dealt with in medieval studies when speaking of individuation, the individual, or the self.

When an individual ruler or city consul ignored a major excommunication, or when it was likely that he would ignore it, ecclesiastical judges could impose an interdict on the excommunicates’ lands. Here again, sources inform us about the reactions of the aggrieved parties, and here again I want to draw on the example of Louis IV. As I have argued elsewhere with reference to the Dominican mystic Margaretha Ebner and the Benedictine monk Hugh of Geurtheim during the reign of Louis IV, the interdict could press people to criticise norms and judgements (Mersch 2013). As Louis was never granted absolution, the interdict was – or should have been – in force throughout more than two decades in large parts of the Empire. Hugh’s convent, taking the king’s side, ignored the censures. Hugh himself changed his mind in 1338 and went to the papal court in Avignon to ask for absolution. He also pleaded to be allowed to break his vows by not returning to the monastery in Gengenbach so long as the interdict lasted, a request his Benedictine superiors supported and which the curia finally granted. As Martin Kaufhold puts it, Hugh was able find his own way out of the above mentioned predicament (Kaufhold 1994, 248f.; *Vatikanische Akten* no. 1988, 719f.); his conscience seems to have made him act against the opinion prevailing in his convent. Margaretha Ebner’s case proves that such individual decisions could be based upon reflection of one’s own internal attitude. When she composed her ‘Revelations’ in the period after 1344 in order to describe her life shaped by the mystical vocation, Margaretha used the excommunication of Louis IV and the following interdict to ponder two questions: Is it possible to act on the basis of one’s

²² A summary of Johann’s plea by Konrad Peutingger († 1547) can be found in *Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Mittlere Reihe* 6, no. 146, 597f.: He said he was *ein amptman der Pfaltz gewesen, und deshalb seines ampts, was er wider den stift gehandelt, hette tun müssen, nicht us sein sunderlichen willen noch vornehmen*.

own free decision when the decision contradicts the commands of a prelate? And if it is possible, why is it possible? The answer she received when asking the infant Jesus himself was quite straightforward: yes, it is possible because true love for god outweighs the duty to obey. It would, therefore, be possible to receive communion even during the interdict, as long as the individual sought to do so out of love for God. At the end of her ‘Revelations’ she reinforces her argument. ‘Human judgement is’, as the infant Jesus told her, ‘often deceived’ (Margaretha Ebner. *Offenbarungen* 28, 35f., 148), and the interdict is in fact merely a penalty to support the judgement of a human being, even though this human being might be the pope.²³ The two examples illustrate that in situations affected by censures of exclusion it is possible to detect individual decisions that may be based on internal reflection.

With regard to absolution, we often learn that the former excommunicate felt contrition. When the citizens of Magdeburg, for example, were on their way to be reconciled some five or six years later after Archbishop Burchard III was murdered in the city in 1325, the city’s representatives went to the curia and shed tears to express their contrition (*Urkundenbuch der Stadt Magdeburg* 1, no. 339, 205–9). In addition, some excommunicated consuls wrote about their deep regret in separate letters addressed to the pope (*Päbstliche Urkunden und Regesten*, no. 512, 283f.; *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Magdeburg* 1, no. 336, 203f., cf. Mersch 2018). We do not know whether the future reconciled delinquents really felt this way or if they only tried to comply with ecclesiastical norms. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the delinquents’ internal states were a subject of discourse.

This was the case not only in court rooms but also in historiography. As indicated above, in the 11th and 12th centuries the excommunicated King Henry IV was depicted in a way that laid emphasis on the inner condition of the individual (Bagge 2002, 308 and 363). Concerning Henry’s famous penance and reconciliation at Canossa, where he sought out Pope Gregory VII in 1076/1077, chroniclers wondered if his penance was honest or if he only pretended contrition. Philippe Buc has gathered together the sources dealing with this episode and points out

23 This addresses a tension that is actually effective up to date, cf. Veronika Hoffmann’s remarks in this publication on contemporary German Christianity: ‘The key problem lies not in differences at the level of belief content [...] but between the institutional view of an interconnectedness of religious truth claims, the authority of the church, and institutional belonging and the individual view of radical religious self-empowerment. Because this tension is to be found within the institutions, religious self-empowerment and belonging to institutions that are theoretically incompatible in fact go together to a large extent’ (1121). For the correlation between deviance, processes of impiety, and personal choices, especially concerning the deviant’s followers, cf. Jan Bremmer’s contribution to this publication.

that some authors pondered the question of whether the penance reflected an inward view or not. The contemporary Benedictine monk Hugh of Flavigny provided his readers with a harsh description of Henry's attitude on the grounds that Henry had obtained absolution only on account of his outward appearance. Hugh stressed that someone 'who only pretends to look for God does not deserve to find him' (Buc 2001, 243; Hugh of Flavigny. *Chronicon*, lib. 2, 444f.). Bonizo of Sutri, an adherent of Gregory VII, reminded his readers that penance needs to be done with a humble mind and body (*mente ut corpore*), implying that Henry performed the penance only with his body and not in his mind (Buc 2001, 243; Bonizo of Sutri. *Liber ad amicum*, lib. 8, 610). Similar examples can be found in sources from the 12th and 13th centuries and in sources dealing with less popular people, too (cf. Mersch 2017, chapter IV 1.3a and 2.4). Concerning the 14th century, the example of Louis IV shows that even someone who died without reconciliation could be depicted in a positive way with regard to his internal state. Louis was never reconciled and he died in 1347 as an excommunicate (Czerny 2005, 81f.) who, according to canon law, was dissociated from the church and therefore separated from God, not only in this world but in the other as well. Many sources describe how Louis died from a stroke during a hunt (cf. Czerny 2005, 34–48; Glaser 2002, 1–37). Pope Clement VI then condemned the dead emperor, calling him a 'persecutor and enemy of God and the Roman church',²⁴ and some contemporary chroniclers did the same by reflecting on signs of Louis' internal state. For example, Henry of Rebdorf, a canon from Eichstätt, pointed out that Louis had died without any signs of penance or contrition (Henry of Rebdorf. *Chronik*, 68f.). In contrast, we read in the 'Life of Emperor Louis IV', presumably written in 1347, that the 'good catholic' Louis died while 'lifting his hands and eyes to the sky, recommending himself humbly to God and the Virgin Mary' (*Chronica Ludovici imperatoris quarti*, 137). According to a contemporary Bavarian continuation of the 'Saxonian World Chronicle', Louis' companions witnessed that, in his last breath, he said a short prayer addressed to the Virgin Mary.²⁵ The Dominican friar Henry of Herford reported that Louis had spoken words of penance, his hands and eyes directed towards the sky: 'Almighty and merciful Lord, have mercy on me, the poor sinner, because although I have truly sinned a lot, anyway, I have never ever renounced you, God of mercy, or belief or vow, as you know'. Having

²⁴ In a letter addressed to Bishop Ulrich of Constance, November 13th 1347, and again in a letter addressed to King Charles IV, December 7th 1347: *dampnate memorie Ludovici de Bavaria, dei et ecclesiae Romane persecutoris et hostis*, Vatikanische Akten, 848f. Cf. Czerny 2005, 72f.

²⁵ *Sächsische Weltchronik. Zweite bayerische Fortsetzung*, 339. Michael de Leone tells a similar story, Michael de Leone. *De chronicis temporum hominum modernorum*, 472f.

said this, he then died (Henry of Herford. *Liber de rebus memorabilioribus*, ad a. 1347, 270f.).

For the approach pursued in this paper, the chroniclers' interest in Louis' internal or mental state is important with regard to the concepts of sin and penance. Susan Kramer and Caroline Walker Bynum, referring to the 12th century, point out that 'man cannot see what is hidden [...]. This privileging of the inner self is [...] the root of the disclaimer frequently cited in twelfth-century treatments of penance that the church judges exterior things while God alone judges what is hidden or secret. The church does not know the soul of even an open excommunicate or heretic who is seized suddenly in death, for example [...]. Nevertheless, despite this admitted inability to see into the soul, the church does retain an interest in knowing the *interior homo*' (Kramer and Bynum 2002, 71). Apparently, excommunicates' contemporaries in general retained an interest in knowing the inner man. When taking into account the fact that at least some of the chroniclers may have had a didactic purpose, using the story to tell their readers how to die a 'good death', and thereby explaining how even an excommunicated individual could achieve heavenly inclusion,²⁶ discursive elements of individualisation seem to have been used here to spur religious standardisation.

Taken together, the statements of excommunicated individuals and individuals from the excommunicate's environment, as well as reports about excluded individuals within historiography, bear resemblance to the norms of exclusion sketched above. The strict set of norms shaped how these people talked about themselves and about excommunicated individuals. In turn, the way in which they talked helped to reinforce processes of standardisation. Nonetheless, the individual's inner state was at stake and sources related to excommunication can thus shed light on how people thought about this internal state and found means to talk about it.

3 Conclusion

Both self-exclusion and involuntary exclusion demarcate states of being that relate the individual to society in a very specific way and, at the same time, to God in an equally particular way. Whereas self-exclusion should lead towards God and therefore pave the way to heavenly inclusion, involuntary exclusion should, above all, illustrate the individual's distance from God. But on another

²⁶ For the correlation between the particular judgement, the individual, and inclusion in general see Hamm 2016, 290ff.

level it should also persuade the sinner to reintegrate into the church or, in other words, to again achieve inclusion in the church, a this-worldly inclusion eventually paving the way to heavenly inclusion. Consequently, in both cases strict norms were developed that should guide the individual on his or her way. And exclusion could be made visible in terms of temporal or permanent spatial separation: one could contemplate in a 'private' room, live in enclosure, be walled away inside a separate room, or even be banned from the mass and, therefore, from (certain parts of) the church building. In both cases – voluntary and involuntary exclusion – guidance was available in terms of discourses about the internal state. This could be found in treatises dealing with the religious edification of monks and nuns or, for example, in historiographical texts dealing with the internal state of sinners. In both cases, standardisation and individualisation are not mutually exclusive but mutually dependent. Although exclusion as a means of religious standardisation via 'punishment' may seem to be in conflict with the notion of individualisation because it appears as a measure of compulsion, it could still provide starting points for the individuation of an individual. Canon law expected that those threatened by excommunication and those being excommunicated exercised introspection and self-reflection to prepare to reintegrate into the Christian community. Furthermore, it had the potential to contribute to a process of individualisation because the implementation of ecclesiastical penalties provoked protests and discussions about whether these penalties had to be accepted and why, which is to say that individuals had to choose whether to obey a judgement or to deal with it in a rather stubborn way. On the level of discourse, then, excluded individuals could serve as figures onto whom debates could be projected, allowing the discussion of ideal forms and modalities of self-reflection and the internal relationship with God.

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Britta Müller-Schauenburg

The lonely antipope – or why we have difficulties classifying Pedro de Luna [Benedict XIII] as a religious individual

1 Object of the study

This paper presents a case study of a late medieval, although pre-modern, person within the context of the Latin (Western) Great Schism. The geographical focus is on south-west Europe, or, to be more precise, the South of France and the North of the Iberian Peninsula. The example leads us to reflect on a special problem with the concept of individualisation, a specific problem of perception, description, and terminology, which results in the invisibility of a special kind of individualisation. The chapter will conclude by proposing a term that can mark out this specific invisibility in a visible manner, so that the problem is, at least, included in the research matrix.

Two points should be mentioned in advance. First, the case might be somewhat surprising. The person to be analysed was a pope: Pedro Martínez de Luna, known also as Benedict XIII. A pope (or ‘the pope’) could figure well as the opposite of what is usually assumed to be interesting within the process of individualisation. It is important to recognise that the object of this case study is the natural person (this pope), not the office (the pope).

A second point concerns the meaning of the term ‘religious’. Throughout this paper, the meaning will be mainly judicial. Pedro de Luna was a canonist, a specialist in Canon Law, and, probably for this reason, his ecclesiology, his understanding of heresy and ‘orthodoxy’ and also his own statements and actions according to or differing from his contemporaries, were mainly judicial. So the term ‘religious’ has a meaning not so much in a theological sense but in the sense of ‘divine law’. Therefore, law is not only the limit of religious freedom or the shelter of a wide range of religious options: i.e. it functions not only as the frame but as the religious field itself. But, in turn, the term ‘divine law’ (*ius divinum*) will not be used here in precisely the same sense it carries in the discourse of canonists. Within that context, the phrase is used as a *terminus technicus* and forms the antonym to ‘ecclesiastical law’ (*ius mere ecclesiasticum*).¹ In the present

¹ Ecclesiastical law is made by human beings and it is the outcome of the work of humans who tried to listen to God but were forced to use human language to express the concrete norm, or

chapter, however, no opposition to ecclesiastical law is intended. Here, the term just makes clear that, as seen from the Christian Canonistic perspective, religious law is really part of the relation with God as a transcendent being. Most canonical/legal norms refer largely or wholly to questions about the social aspect of the mystical body of Christ and are used to regulate the life of the Church in a social way. They are ‘religious’ in a strict sense but they are not ‘unquestionably plausible’ as, in theory, divine law is in the sense of the *terminus technicus*.

2 The life of Pedro de Luna/Benedict [XIII]

Pedro Martínez de Luna (1342–1423) is known today primarily as the pope of the obedience of Avignon from 1394–1417/23.² His papacy was the longest of the Great Western Schism. Despite this, he did not become as well-known as he might have done because he was considered by the later tradition to be an antipope. As such, he was given significant weight neither in secular historiographical research contexts, where popes of the Schism were written with brackets around the ordinal numeral (‘Benedict [XIII] / Pedro de Luna’) or not (‘Benedict XIII / Pedro de Luna’) and freed from the question of the legitimacy of their succession, nor in theological contexts, which tried to draw a valid line from Peter the Apostle through the ‘real’ popes of ‘Rome’ to the present, where his inclusion would have meant his becoming part of the long tradition of popes, who are, thanks to the office, always an object of fame and curiosity.³ Nor did Benedict become an object of research as simply an interesting person, at least not outside his native Spain (Puig i Puig 1920; Moxó y Montoliu 1986; Parrilla, Muñiz, and Caride 1987; Sesma Muñoz 1994;

even had to regulate something which is untouched by questions or topics of divine law. Divine law, on the contrary, has to be made by God. For example, the substance of the Ten Commandments will be seen as divine law. Even there, seen from the Christian Canonistic perspective, one must distinguish between the order God gives and the expression of the order through the medium of human language. Several norms, judicial or moral, are nevertheless seen as being divine law, as, for example, the indissolubility of sacramental matrimony (Aymans 1996).

2 The date 1417 is usually seen as the end of the schism, as it marks the deposition of Benedict XIII by the Council of Constance. However, since he did not accept this deposition, and because there remained loyal churchmen with him who elected a successor, there is another strong tradition of dating the end of the schism later. According to this reading of events, the end of Benedict XIII’s papacy is the date of his death: Moxó y Montoliú 2006; Alanyà i Roig 2014.

3 The historiography of papal history was initially understood as a task to be pursued like a chronicle, starting with the *Liber pontificalis*. After the Protestant Reformation this changed, as historiography became an important political and theological issue. For a splendid introduction to the conditions under which this historiography developed, see Fuhrmann 1989.

Centro de Estudios Bilbilitanos Institución ‘Fernando el Católico’ 1996; Pereira Pagán 1999; Suárez Fernández 2002, etc.). Research on the time of the Schism and the Council of Constance had little to say about him, with some exceptions in the works of writers from Germany (e.g. Ehrle 1892, 1900a, 1900b; Seidlmayer 1933; Girgensohn 1989; Langen-Monheim 2008; Jaspert 2014; Schwedtler 2018, Müller-Schauenburg 2018) and France (Pillement 1955; Millet 2009).

De Luna was born as the son of a noble family (Schwedtler 2018, Müller-Schauenburg 2018), at a small castle in the city of Illueca in Aragon (Pereira Pagán 1999, 31–40). In Aragon some relics of his body are kept today in a small shrine (Parrilla, Muñiz and Caride 1987, 157f.). He was familiar with the Iberian political and cultural situation and well connected to the noblemen throughout the whole region, and familiar too with the ‘multi’-religious situation, in which Jews, Muslims and Christians lived in close proximity. After a military education, he studied Canon Law at the University of Montpellier, where most students from Aragon went at that time. He became a professor at the same university, where he taught the *Decretum Gratiani* (Verger 2004).

By the time De Luna was born, the papacy had already been in Avignon for thirty years. In earlier phases of historiography, this shift of the papacy to Avignon was ill-famed as a ‘Babylonian captivity’ of the Church and both the King of France and the pope were blamed for creating a wrongful dependency of the papacy upon the French crown. Today’s historiography tells a very different story. French historians, followed by the international community, were the first to emphasise the cultural impact of the Avignon papacy on Europe as a whole and also on the Latin Church (Hamesse 2006; Favier 2006 et al.). The period of Pedro de Luna’s childhood was already seeing signs of the decline of the papal palace as a cultural centre of the Latin world. However, the papal court’s effects were still present, the intellectual situation vibrant. Within these years, the ecclesiology of the late medieval Latin Church took its most important developmental steps and the influence of mystical, as well as philosophical, traditions came to the attention of the popes – here we need only mention the struggles with such noted ‘heretics’ as Eckhart, Marsilius of Padua, William of Ockham, and the Cathars.

Pedro de Luna was created cardinal in 1375 by Gregory XI in an atmosphere that was filled with expectancy at the imminent return of the papacy to Rome. The following year, he accompanied the pope back to the city with which the papacy is most identified but it appears that this ‘come-back’ was by no means easy. In contrast to attitudes at Avignon, the pope was not welcomed by the populace and violence from clergy of his party made things even more difficult. In 1377 the pope had to flee to Anagni, near Rome, for some months, staying there from May to November. Less than twenty months later Gregory XI died on the 28th of March, 1378. The election of a new pope took place in Rome that April, albeit under very

difficult circumstances due to threats from the public. Eventually, a second election took place but the pope who had been elected in the first process, Urban VI, refused to give up his position. Thus the Great Schism began (Seidlmayer 1940).

Pedro de Luna was among the group of cardinals who returned to Avignon with Clemens VII, the winning candidate of the second election. During the following years, de Luna made his career as a cardinal. His main mission was the winning of territory for the obedience of Clemens VII. He had some significant successes both in France and, especially, in the Iberian Peninsula. The first reason for his success was his familiarity with the Iberian nobility and church, and the second was his clear thinking and argumentative abilities.

When Clemens VII died in 1394, Pedro de Luna was elected as his successor. Everybody's wish was to end the schism and he seemed to be the one with the wish and the ability to do so. But there was a change of atmosphere in the relationship with the French crown. Charles VI of France no longer supported Benedict XIII, dissent arose, and there was a military attack on the papal palace in Avignon, during or after which the pope and his curia were imprisoned in the palace. After seven months of imprisonment Benedict XIII eventually managed to flee. Once he was free again, the atmosphere changed somewhat in his favour. He took up a kind of 'mobile papacy' based on a series of temporary locations, moving with his curia mainly along the coast between the Pyrenees and Liguria.

The Council of Pisa in 1409, organised by cardinals of both obediences, was initially viewed sceptically by de Luna/Benedict XIII for canonistic reasons. Nevertheless, he sent a delegation and was ready to participate in the proceedings. But the delegation was treated very badly and even threatened by the Council (Brandmüller 1990). This experience, and the broader outcome of the council – a third pope and Benedict XIII's deposition and excommunication by the cardinals – changed Benedict's disposition and his willingness to strive for union. The personal danger for him grew and so, in 1411, he finally moved to Peñíscola, a small castle at the coast between Barcelona and Valencia. This castle became the new (and last 'Avignonesian') papal palace. The radius of his papal activities became, seen from a European perspective, more and more local. The king of Aragon and the clergy remained loyal and the obedience, despite becoming smaller, continued to function well, at the beginning at least. A deep break came with the Council of Constance and its temporal dependency in Perpignan in 1415 (which has been neglected in research and historiography for a long time), when the emperor-to-be Sigismund of Hungary came to see Benedict XIII to 'negotiate' with him (Jaspert 2014, 119–41; Catafau, Jaspert and Wetzstein 2018). In fact, the only option Benedict XIII was given was to abdicate unconditionally. After the unsatisfactory result of the Council of Pisa, and being a canonist, this option was

not one Benedict could take seriously. When the King of Aragon and Sigismund both tried to press a decision on him, Benedict left the place with his curia and returned to Peñíscola.

The result was a consensus and contract between the two kings, effectively dictated by the more powerful ruler. A part of the regional clergy became part of the contract party, another part tried to stay loyal to Benedict XIII. In Constance, Benedict was deposed (again) by the Council in 1417. But he lived on until 1423, governing in Peñíscola, and passed his papacy on to a successor who managed, in 1429, what had eluded Benedict: the ending of the schism in a legal way, without the risk of more chaos, and to give up papacy while being, from his own point of view, responsible for the perpetuation of the apostolic succession (Suárez Fernández 2002, 307). Up until his death, Benedict XIII had a small, functioning curia and was, in fact, a pope, albeit one separated from almost the whole of the ‘rest’ of the church. He spent the period living in a small palace, surrounded by the sea, and indulging his fondness for books. His library is known of and discussed by specialists of this late medieval period and of the history of books in general (Jullien de Pommerol and Monfrin 1991; Egger 1995; Planas Badenas 2014; Löffler 2018 et al). Not so well known is his public disputation about religion with Jewish scholars, which dates to just before the Council of Constance, although it has been topic of some research (Pacios Lopez 1957; from Jewish side for example: Talmange 1985; Rauschenbach 2002; Cohen 2013). The outcome and meaning of this disputation is very problematic from today’s perspective (Jörg 2011). Nonetheless nobody doubts that he was the only medieval pope who initiated and personally took part in a public disputation with Jews, had an inventive concept of the union of Jews and Christians, and was very much interested in and familiar with Jews as well as Muslims.

3 A person of integrity, non-violence and law – condemned, excluded, secluded

We can observe four aspects of Benedict’s personality which mark him out as a possible object of research on religious individualisation in his period. The first is a part of his character: he remained a person of integrity while being condemned by ‘the church’. Many of his contemporaries, whether of his obedience or not, gave reports or testimonials describing, and even enthusing about, this quality of his character and his behaviour in general (with many quotations: Immenkötter 1976). This pope always went his own way within the church and this characteristic independence of mind became more pronounced, rather than

less, when he became a person with responsibilities for important decisions within the institution. To give one example: during the election of 1376, de Lunas behaviour contrasted markedly with that of the other cardinals (Seidlmayer 1933). He remained calm and reasonable during the violent election of Urban VI and also remained calm regarding the outcome of the election. Initially, he refused to flee with the others from Rome to Anagni, waiting instead to study the situation, acquire and accurate the picture, and draw his own conclusions. Eventually he went to Anagni, alone, with the aim of convincing all his colleagues of his opinion. Meeting them, afraid as they were and ready to execute panic-fuelled and inconsiderate proceedings, he again showed himself to be a listening and reasoning person. He was ready to be convinced by them concerning their fear. He did not just deliver his own opinion or shout loudly enough to be the winner of the discourse; rather, he reacted to what he was seeing and tried to find a legal way to keep the church together. He was not a notorious loner, however. His strong will to think with his own mind was noticeable in the eyes of contemporary eyewitnesses.

In Medina del Campo, the King of Aragon organised an interview of the participants of the elections in order to come to his own opinion regarding the elections and who should be recognised as the legal pope. De Luna alone testified, stating that he had not been afraid during the first election (which would have been a legal foundation for the second) but that he had subsequently been convinced by the fear of the other cardinals, and only then he has been prepared to countenance a second election (Seidlmayer 1933, 211f.).

Later in life, too, Benedict XIII was never willing to be pressed. He always insisted on forming his own opinion and acting in accordance with his own beliefs. Even while suffering the loss of territory, he remained faithful to his favourite way of finding a solution: through argument. Attractive, intelligent, never boring, and upright, he was a magnet to interesting contemporaries and they took pleasure in his presence. When politics took another turn, he was left by most of them. Hardest of all was his abandonment by the King of Aragon, whom he had helped so much. Despite these setbacks, he did not threaten anybody (Müller-Schauenburg 2018) and just continued on his own way. When the mission from the Council of Constance came to announce to him his deposition, he remained calm and reasonable (Brandmüller 1997, 266–8). In contrast to so many other popes of medieval (and other) times, not a single rumour of nepotism, the breaking of moral rules or vows was ever told, or none at least that was found to be true: The accusation that he called demons (see also Boudet 2009), aired by the Council of Pisa, was unfounded and was not repeated at the Council of Constance. That he remained such a person, even while being condemned by, so to speak, the ‘rest of the Christian world’, was not the outcome of his lack of

power but of a high ethical standard. He did not change his behaviour when he lost power and influence but remained as he had been from the beginning, as is evident, for example, in the context of the election of 1376.

The crucial question regarding the interpretation of Benedict XIII's behaviour within the matrix of religious individualisation is that of his own understanding and motivation for this behaviour. We do not have sources such as diaries that contain reflections on these decisions. Because of this, if we wish to look further, we must of necessity turn our eyes towards his library, to the books he owned and read, and to the people with whom he talked. As has already been mentioned, the papal court of Avignon had become a centre of culture at that time and, contrary to what is sometimes assumed, the growing humanism of the period had something like a centre or cluster not only in Italy but also in Avignon. Being an intelligent and interested person, Benedict XIII made contact with humanists (Ornato 1969).

Nicolas de Clamanges, the famous French humanist, was for a long time part of Benedict's court and also acted as his librarian. Remarkably, not in the 'libraria magna' but in the personal small working papal library, dating to his years in the papal palace in Avignon, we can find a collection of manuscripts containing works by Petrarch (Jullien de Pommerol and Monfrin 1991, 132). For a while at least, Benedict must have had a special interest in this author. It is very likely that he was attracted by Petrarch's melancholic view of loneliness, especially the inner loneliness of the person who tries to follow the way of the mind. This sense must have been particularly prominent for him as he suffered through the decline in French support.

This atmosphere of melancholic and tragic loneliness may have been very important for Benedict XIII, as a pattern for understanding his own situation and, perhaps, also important for the few people who remained loyal to him as part of his small papal curia until his death. Literature gave nourishment and positive value to this type of existence. One has to follow one's way, no matter whether or not the crowd accepts it or is even willing or able to understand it, and consolation can be received from the beauty of the truth – these assumptions must have been decisive for Benedict XIII. He also possessed an exemplar of the 'Dialogus' of William of Ockham. Ockham's teaching of the church of the 'faithful remnant' in the right way to God must also have been important to Benedict XIII. The manuscript had already been part of his library when he was still a cardinal (Ehrle 1890, 555). It was brought to Peñíscola to become part of the papal library at his new palace (Jullien de Pommerol and Monfrin 1991, 489). Third, and in addition

to Ockham's theological perspective, the tradition of *consolationes* was foundational for Benedict XIII's positive attitude towards being left alone with the truth.⁴

What is really most peculiar regarding Benedict's behaviour is his non-violent reaction to the threats he had to suffer. This was very closely related to his reading of the Stoics and, especially, to the perspective of the '*consolatio*-literature'. Benedict XIII took his time to think about each situation and he always took his next step with a sober mind. When his life was in danger, he simply changed his location immediately and calmly, but he never started a precipitous and violent defence. He suffered what was done to him, not moving one inch away from what he assumed to be the right way and the truth for the church.⁵ Benedict may have been not a saint, and nor did he only bring peace. It is questionable, for example, whether his meticulous sticking to the law or his idea of bringing the Jews closer to the Christian community did not have an enormously disruptive effect, as it has been said also regarding the disputation of Jews and Christians above mentioned (Dahan 1990, 359). But his reaction when being injured himself was always calm and sometimes ironic. These ironic *dicta*, in particular, have been taken by some historians as proofs that he was detached from any serious connection with reality anymore, yet in fact, they are not. Benedict never mixed arguments with jokes. Where negotiation was concerned, he stuck to arguments and to nothing else. But he had room for both. When he called the rock of Peñiscola his 'Arche Noe' (Seidlmayer 1933, 206), excommunicating the rest of the world – a compari-

4 There is a *Consolatio* which was for a long time attributed to Benedict XIII. However, today we can be certain that he was not the author (the real author was Iohannis de Tambaco,), although the reason for this (wrong) medieval adscription of the text to him through two medieval manuscripts, is an open question. The simple fact of the reference to the similarity with the described situation Boethius/Johannes/Pedro does not explain the adscription: an image of his one with arms, and one from his nephew, a close relative, just seven years after his death – if the adscription had been an image of his ridiculous error, this had been impossible. The questions, given by Stegmüller concerning the process and motivation, are still open (see Stegmüller 1963). At least it must had been imaginable by people very familiar with him, maybe himself, that this could have been his perspective and the text be composed by him. One manuscript puts this text in context with Cicero. Also interesting is that it is containing strong reference to Seneca (rules of the *Imitatio Christi*).

5 This attitude could be described as related to the perception of 'Leidensmystik' (pointed out in the context of Dietmar Mieth's work on Meister Eckhart) which was new at his times, with the parallel characteristics of being not ascetic, being unsought and unwanted, having its origin only outside of the individual, not abnegating the empirical situation by the average of theological reflection, and – we can only assume, be the lack of the diary telling s.th. like this – felt as a duty in obedience to God (see Mieth 2004, 136–49). There are some typological parallels with the case of Riccarda Suitner, who speaks about radical pacifism and the diversity of American sects, which can be considered 'in an apparently paradoxical way [...] simultaneously an expression of individualisation and conformity', see her contribution to this publication.

son which has often been said to describe an old man who is not to be taken seriously any more – he was in fact only expressing, as a canonist, the consequence of the separation of all the others from him, in as far as he might be the true pope. The image conveys his feeling that God was with him in his increasing seclusion in that place, giving him shelter while a big battle was happening all around him. Really, like Ockham, Benedict XIII was able to imagine a true church held and built by just a few souls, perhaps only one soul, going on in the right way without any kind of ‘power’ in a secular sense of the term. And although at the end of his life more or less nobody in Europe was ready to affirm his position, he carried on in what he assumed to be his way until the end.

Benedict XIII never restricted the judicial singularity of the papal office. But he restricted himself within the limits of canonistic options (which are less extensive than the theological options which came after the schism), and he never thought himself to be omnipotent or as having any similar status. While a pluralistic option was not part of his concept of the papacy, his adherence to the ‘way of arguments’ (known as *via discussionis* or *via conventionis*) as a way of leading the church means that, at least at the level of theory, he was familiar with, and even assumed, a plurality of possible positions. His manner of staying faithful to his convictions regarding religious law and his own ecclesiological standpoint, even while losing not only his real political power but also his friends and supporters, is more than surprising and is best explained by looking at the books in which he was interested.

4 Four reasons for invisibility within the matrix of ‘types of individualisation’

So, we have a person who separated from the church because of his own, careful thoughtfulness. Why is it so difficult to describe this person within the framework of religious individualisation? There are four main reasons, which disclose a paradox, namely that there are some individuals in history with little or no chance of becoming a ‘religious individual’, although they perform perfectly some essential elements of a standard individualising career. We will look at each of the four in turn.

The first reason is that the counter-part of deviation in this case is difficult to grasp. It is neither institutional nor normative. Benedict XIII was elected as the pope and he never ceased to define his life, office, and mission in these terms. Seen from his perspective, there was only a *de facto*, but not a *de jure* crack in his relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. His reference community did not

change at all.⁶ In addition, Benedict was a canonist through and through and it was partly his fidelity to legal procedure that made him so lonely. He did not act against laws. He did not and could not refuse to obey a religious authority, since he himself was, in his own eyes, the highest authority. So in terms of a deviation, one can only describe the separation between numbers or groups of people. Perhaps with the perspective of history, one can identify a process of privatization – but without any relevance to anybody, at least. There has not been any long-term effect, no new theology or something like that.⁷ It is impossible to identify a ‘deviation’ of this individual, neither from an institution nor from norms. The ‘otherness’ of this person is in-visible.

The second reason is similar to the first: There is a lack of self-characterisation as a deviating subject. Benedict XIII wanted to be traditional, regardless of the fact that few remained faithful to him who shared his understanding of tradition. The zero-point of the measure for deviation was himself. From his point of view, all the others were deviating. They were heretics. This individual in defence had a perfect fall-back position. He tried, with all his power, to be an institutional person. Office and persona came in tension and relation in a very striking way. Benedict XIII stepped, so to say, out of his original persona to defend an office with which he himself was completely identified.

The third reason, again closely related, is: there is a lack of perception by others as a deviating subject in an emphatic manner, positive or negative, and a lack of institutionalisation and historical reception of him in terms of individualisation. No group followed in his path and no process of institutionalisation took him as a point of reference. In short, there was no stabilisation for long, no standardisation, no regime following him, and therefore there was never anybody who included Benedict XIII’s story, at least in general terms, into his or her own story of individualisation, institutionalisation, or de-institutionalisation. With the dissolution of his former institutional environment when the schism ended in 1429, and the lack even of an ‘honouring’ resistance against his position, the complete neglect and overwriting or replacement of this institutional form was complete. We do not

⁶ One might describe the ‘heretics’, i.e. anybody not accepting him as pope, as the counter-part of the deviation from which he distanced himself.

⁷ During Benedict XIII’s time as pope there was an emergence of spaces of choice or freedom, both for the believer and for theologians of the time within his obedience. This was an effect of his ecclesiology. He did not mind if theologians were doing or thinking things that seemed to be quite new regarding their teaching in philosophy, Christology, the status of the Mother of God, and other such topics which had been objects of struggle for a long time and became so again afterwards. To him, only the administrative ‘orthodoxy’ was relevant. His indifference to theological questions, or – emphatically – his ‘stoic’ relation towards dogmatic struggles can be seen as an effect or a result of the ‘legalistic’ individualisation of Pedro de Luna.

have any appropriation ('Aneignung', see Matthias Engmann on Kierkegaard in this publication), any recipient. This case makes it obvious that there is not only a paradoxical characteristic of religious individualisation that as soon as it affects religious groups or prompts their formation, dynamics of normativisation and standardisation may ultimately congeal into a collective phenomenon (see the general introduction by Fuchs et al. in this publication). On the contrary: if formation of new groups or discourses and standardisation does not happen in any way, then there will be no visible phenomenon at all, at least not one of relevance. The notion of 'relevance' could also be seen as a crucial point. In the case of Pedro de Luna, we have to mention the emerging Spanish and Catalan research interest in him now, which is developing now partly for political reasons. So there is not simply 'nothing at all'. How relevant is a group of recipients who are, again, deviating from the mainstream of research? Additionally, a kind of 'third order relevance' can be identified regarding the question the case raises for the concept of religious individualisation and for the historiography of the time of the Schism as it is usually told.

To summarise: There is a general problem with describing individualisation as deviation as far as the leading figure of a traditional religious institution is concerned. And there is a special, second problem, visible particularly in this case, of how to grasp an unsuccessful 'individual' who was not even admired by those who followed his path a little later on, i.e. the popes after the final union of with the remaining papal curia from Peñíscola, taking up for example his support of the university of Salamanca, or the canonists of the school of Salamanca – who, quite the reverse, deliberately avoided referring to him. This problem may be a specific or typical problem within the late middle ages, during which period the interstices between what emerged as 'modernity' and what remained 'medieval' were more complex than historiography was for a long time willing to concede.

This reveals the necessity of applying an inverted frame of the concept of individualisation, in order to register – and not to miss in research, as well as in historiography written by an institution itself – such possibilities as the case of a person who in fact is unwillingly deviating from a religious institution of which he simultaneously believes himself to be the solitary leader, granted that status by the will of God. What the case of the lonely antipope asks is for us to name his type of individualisation, so that it may be part of the research matrix. I propose to call this type of individualisation 'missed individualisation'.

5 ‘Missed individualisation’

‘Missed individualisation’ does not mean – just to underline directly the most likely misunderstanding – that Pedro de Luna failed to become an individual. The failure and ‘missing’ are elements of the history of its reception. Missed individualisation is a lack of perception, under very special conditions, by the contemporary as by the later-born. A social precondition of this type of individualisation is the identification of the person with an office (what we would perhaps call within a modern framework an ‘impersonal’ position), and the type of office itself. In the case of Benedict XIII, his contemporaries were not interested in him as a model of a religious plurality, which seemed to be desirable. Nevertheless, a leading figure in medieval times was, seen from the legal point of view, strong, much more endowed with internal law (in German: ‘Eigenrecht’). There was not in every case such a big contrast between the legal frame and the ‘individual’, as we would assume from the modern point of view. Research on religious individualisation, having its origins in specific modern ideas that are now to be extended into new spaces and periods, could be in danger of missing such cases if it does not draw them out with special effort. This notion, this kind of process and dynamics of individualisation, must be considered with special attention. These cases will probably never become the most convincing examples within the frame: they are truly ‘missed’. But it seems to be important, at least, to identify them as well.

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Cornelia Haas

Varieties of spiritual individualisation in the theosophical movement: the United Lodge of theosophists India as climax of individualisation-processes within the theosophical movement

Helena Blavatsky's 'Theosophical Movement', founded in 1875 in New York, shows itself in its beginnings as an example of detraditionalisation from conventional forms of religion. This is associated with an opening for individual and experimental approaches to new and foreign forms of religions and spiritualities. The later increase in institutionalisation within the movement provided less space for this sort of individuality and led to divisions and splits within the movement.

This chapter aims to identify and extract the specific dynamics of processes of individualisation, as well as de-individualisation, within the theosophical movement in the form of a step model. The latter in the United Lodge of Theosophists' (U.L.T.) 'method' and individual approach to Helena Blavatsky's theosophy, which has as its sole focus the pursuit of the individual and its perfection. This pursuit is understood as an act of unification with the Divine or higher self, as well as with the community of likeminded persons, in a way that is both individual and vital, as well as providing a service for humanity. Certain features of this process are methods for an ultimate elimination of disturbances that obstruct the study and spread of the true teachings of Blavatsky, seen as a manifestation of divine wisdom. However, an essential component of this process is the realisation of one's own, individual path.

1 Introduction

The Theosophical Society (TS), established in 1875 in New York, introduced a perspective on the world that its founder, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, later defined in the subtitle of her Opus magnum opus, 'Secret Doctrine' (1888), as a 'Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy'. The society had as its first and most important objective the forming of 'a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour'. Their second explicit aim, with which I will be concerned in this chapter, was to gain deep insights

both the sciences and the wisdom contained in world religions ('to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science'), for the purpose of individual spiritual perfection and self-divination ('to investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man').¹ This second aim offered manifold possibilities for spiritual individualisation.² This de-traditionalisation from conventional forms of religion and spirituality, parallel to an opening up to individual and experimental approaches to new and foreign forms of religions and spiritualities, climaxes in the United Lodge of Theosophists' (ULT) programmatic individual approach to Helena Blavatsky's theosophy.

This chapter aims to identify and extract the specific dynamics and the development of processes of individualisation (and de-individualisation) within the theosophical movement.³ It can be regarded as a step model, beginning with the foundation of the TS in its specific historical and geographical environment and culminating in the concrete implementation of the ULT 'method' as a possible peak of spiritual individualisation within the Theosophical Movement. These processes and varieties of spiritual individualisation within the history of the Theosophical movement can be defined generally as *dynamic, partly reactive, and sometimes backwards, even in the sense of de-individualisation*. The ULT (India) represents one of the movement's *programmatic climaxes* and can be seen as a special example and 'methodology' for *reactive spiritual individualisation*. In the following, I will outline the particular gradual process of spiritual individualisation, which starts with the formation of the Theosophical Society in 1875 in New York as the breeding ground of previous global spiritual and scientific currents.⁴

1 This is the most prominent version of the 'three objectives'. For the history of revisions and modifications see. http://theosophy.wiki/w-en/index.php?title=Objects_of_the_Theosophical_Society (last accessed 5th August 2018).

2 I prefer to use the term 'spirituality' because of its more 'inclusive' connotation, which more suitably represents the Theosophical Society's self-image.

3 In doing so, it is important to distinguish between generally visible tendencies within the movement and their consequences, and highly individuated individuals at the top, such as Helena Blavatsky, Annie Besant, or Bahman Pestonji Wadia. The latter have been the subject of a number of studies and are not central for this discussion. See, for example, on Helena Blavatsky: Cranston 1993; Goodrick-Clarke 2004; Keller and Sharandak 2013; for Annie Besant: Taylor 1992; for prominent Indian theosophists: Moritz 2017.

4 Part III, *Theosophy, Culture, and Society*, in Hammer and Rothstein 2013, provides an overview with different topics. For detailed information on the spiritual precursors, see Godwin 1994.

2 The beginning: the theosophical society (New York, 1875) as a platform for individual religious options and a provider of ‘ancient wisdom’

First, it will be useful to embed the genesis of Blavatsky’s Theosophical movement into the context of socio-religious, occultist, philosophical, and scientific traditions and events spanning global history.⁵ Of particular interest for the topic at hand are those traditions and events that were well-known to Blavatsky and explicitly mentioned in theosophical sources, such as in the presentation of ‘classical’ Theosophy as a quest for divine wisdom (Goodrick-Clarke 2013). Scientific discussions on evolutionary theories, new archaeological discoveries, psychology and occultism, as well as social challenges were important issues. Finally, a main source for Blavatsky’s incorporative theories on the rise of the human race and the link between the cosmos and its spiritual development were Indian religions. This background provided arguments against the rising ‘purely materialistic’ Darwinism and provided, in her opinion, a ‘natural’, magical worldview (Bevir 1994, 748; Haas, forthcoming).

The importance of spiritualism and its establishment in the Anglo-American urban intellectual middle and upper classes in particular, increased in the late 19th century. The growing interest in spiritualism, and in consequence its commercialisation, generated accusations of fraud against dubious mediums and their activities. This in turn led to a loss of reputation, but also to investigations about ‘different possible realities’, first and foremost by the academic field of psychology in the United States.⁶ Finally, *a literature-based, culturally-interactive avant-garde spirituality, triggered by various religious, utopian- and reform-movements,⁷ post-war-experiences,⁸ ‘new’ sciences including psychology* (Taylor 1999) and

⁵ This kind of examination was – and is – extensively done in the relevant secondary literature, e.g. Bevir 1994; Godwin 1994; Lubelsky 2012; Hammer and Rothstein 2013; von Stuckrad 2014.

⁶ Such as the *Society for Psychical Research*.

⁷ The western and central regions of New York state at the time of the Second Great Awakening, was termed ‘the burnt district’ by Charles Grandison Finney in 1876, who defined this area as ‘over-evangelized’ and without any unconverted population left over to be ‘burned’. See Cross 1950; Wellman 2000; Pritchard 1984; Altschuler and Saltzgeber 1983. This region became fertile ground for many of the new religious and reform movements who later permeated almost all parts of society, e.g. *Transcendentalism* in literature, *Utopian groups* (e.g. *Shaker-movement*), as well as *Protesting-movements* as the *Women’s rights movement*, the *American labor movement*, *Abolition movement*, *Prohibition* or *Temperance movement*). Surveys are Sutherland 1989; Schlerth 1991 Claybaugh 2007. For the *Women’s rights movement*: Braude 2001.

⁸ The popularity of spiritualism gains in importance especially after periods of war (American Civil War 1861–1865 and WW I 1914–1918), when people had suffered the loss of relatives and

parapsychology, as well as a growing interest in- and knowledge of eastern spiritualities became the fertile soil of the movement (detailed information in Carroll 1997).⁹ Spiritualism and the quest for scientific proof of the existence of spirits and supernatural phenomena thus turned into a matter of interest for the intelligentsia, especially in North America. Knowledge of non-Christian and, in particular, Asian religions and wisdom systems was common and widespread in these circles (Christy 1932; Bergunder 2006). This is equally true for the idea of *universal religion* (Transcendentalism and Unitarianism are to be emphasised here) as a result of one of the central themes of 19th century scholarship: the search for origins.

When considering North America in particular, a close connection between spiritualism and Protestant forms of religion and their ideals should be taken into account, manifested, for example, in a commitment to reform in the areas of women's rights and the abolition. This factor will later be particularly interesting with regard to Olcott and his Buddhist activities in Sri Lanka (Prothero 1995 and 2006). The rising importance of modern science should likewise be seen in direct relation to these phenomena in the light of industrialisation and the pioneering discoveries of the (natural) sciences during the 19th century, the latter became increasingly influential. A transformation process from 'faith' to 'plausibility' had to be warranted by 'knowledge'. Therefore, as well as to demonstrate scientific claim, many religious communities labelled themselves as 'scholarly' (Stuckrad 2014).¹⁰

As a matter of fact, a fertile tension arises from these seemingly conflicting issues of science, spiritualism, and world-religion. This tension can be considered the basis for the genesis of the Theosophical Society's program. According to the protocol¹¹ of the first meeting, the society was originally formed 'for the study and elucidation of occultism' in 1875 in New York by Helena Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and William Quan Judge, who had all been involved in spiritualist circles before. Thus, they were quite aware of the scientific examination of spiritualism

loved-ones and were willing to try new ways to get in touch with them. A prominent post-WW-I-example is Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of 'Sherlock Holmes'. Conan Doyle wrote numerous books on the subject, among them *The History of Spiritualism* (1926). For background and reasons for the spiritualist 'hypes' see e.g. Oppenheim 1988; Hick 1990⁶, 129–76; Carroll 1997; Albanese 2007.

9 Italicised sentences show the plot of each section in this chapter.

10 Blavatsky often commented very harshly on the academics of her time and their 'dogmatics'. See Haas 2012 and forthcoming.

11 Notes of meeting proposing the formation of the Theosophical Society, New York City, September 8, 1875: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a8/St-1ata.jpg> (last accessed 6th June 2017).

by scholars; the zeitgeist influenced them to work from similar motives and – at least in theory – for the same purpose.

In terms of religious individualisation, for this initial stage of the TS it can be stated that *the aim was solely the scientific study of the occult, which was later combined with the desire to acquire knowledge of universal laws and their dissemination*. According to Olcott, the ideal of Universal Brotherhood as the ‘first objective’ was developed later, around 1878, and was not part of the original concept but merely a necessity with regard to the intended association with Asians.¹²

However, acquisition of knowledge of world religions and their ancient wisdom was seen as necessary for each member’s individual ‘pool of knowledge’ and as a basis for finding their own path. Therefore, it is fixed as ‘the second objective of the TS’: ‘II. The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study’. Knowledge as an objective of individual searching should, the society believed, originate from pure, ancient traditions in their original form, which are to be preserved. Established, traditional, forms of religion were perceived and criticised as corrupt or obsolete.

The third objective, ‘III. The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man’, was thoroughly modern for its time and is connected, inter alia, with the emergence of psychology as an academic discipline. It should also be noted that the idea that Asian religions in particular were important carriers of religious experiences emerged in close connection with the inception of psychology. Some psychologists have considered William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1901/02) to be an early example of a combination of scientific acceptance and study of the existence of the unseen, which modified the common, merely materialistic idea of the sciences.¹³

¹² ‘The idea of Universal Brotherhood was not there’ and did not occur until in 1878, the Society’s ‘sphere of influence extended so as to bring us into relations with Asiatics and their religions and social systems’, thus making ‘the Brotherhood plank [...] a necessity, and, in fact, the corner-stone of our edifice’. The by-laws adopted in 1875 simply state, ‘The objects of the society are to collect and diffuse a knowledge of the laws which govern the universe’. Olcott, cited by Anonymous 1951, 45 (last accessed 9th August 2018).

¹³ James was a member of the TS branch in Boston (no longer existent) at that time. This information can be found with reference to Blavatsky-biographer Sylvia Cranston in Taylor 2009, 50, n. 58: ‘James had been a member of the Theosophical Society in Boston since 1888, read their literature, and commented regularly upon it, particularly in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902a). [...] Acknowledgments to Sylvia Cranston for providing me with documentation for James’s membership in the earlier Theosophical Society’. The significance of the paranormal for late 19th century psychology and William James in particular is portrayed in an interview with Eugene Taylor by Thibaud Trochu (2008). For further reading, see Taylor 1983 and Blum 2006, as well as the critical review by Taylor 2007.

One additional, and equally important, factor regarding the supposed tendency towards religious individualisation in the initial phase of the movement is the fact that Blavatsky had already been familiar with (Tibetan) Buddhism for a long time. She even called her apartment in New York ‘Lamasery’. Olcott was also interested in Buddhism during this period in New York and had at least a basic knowledge of both ancient texts and discussions about Buddhism’s ‘modern’ forms.¹⁴

Buddhism contains immense potential for individualisation in its basic assumptions and in the sometimes explicitly anti-dogmatic nature of its teachings, such as the direct invitation of its founder to act solely according to one’s own experience and to accept as ground-breaking that which has been recognised by each individual as right. Nothing but serious reflection on one’s own experience can, in combination with the acceptance of the ‘four noble Truths’ and other universal laws, lead to escape from the cycle of rebirths. This is certainly one of the key reasons behind the wide range of possibilities offered by the TS for an individual approach to religion, religious experience, and spiritual liberation, which is free from any convention about ‘What is to be believed’. The Theosophical Movement in its initial stage therefore creates a *fundamental platform of possibilities for religious individualisation by offering and at the same time requiring the study of world religions and their wisdom*, as manifested in their ‘second objective’. This should prompt the individual to search for his or her own truth by using the knowledge gained. Moreover, the existence of both a spiritual world and the paranormal is a natural assumption, while commercial spiritualism is officially rejected.

Any kind of traditional religious confession or belief therefore becomes irrelevant and is subsidiary to the idea of Universal Brotherhood. At the same time, the fundamental necessity of studying the human psyche is emphasised as an absolute requirement in the face of massive upheavals in matters of faith through new, spiritual-religious currents and their confrontation with the realities of their time.

Finally, the focus on individual religious needs is to be taken into account within Universal Brotherhood.

3 Activities and interactions in India

In order to discover whether religious individualisation may have been triggered by the TS’s various interactions with indigenous religions and existing religious movements in India from 1879 on, in what follows I examine them in their own broader historical and intellectual contexts. Here, observable phenomena are

¹⁴ For discussion on the specific ‘Buddhisms’ of Blavatsky and Olcott, see Haas 2015.

characterised by great diversity and can only be recorded based on individual, particularly significant, phenomena as shown below:

- 1) The (very short) ‘fusion’ with Dayananda Saraswati’s Hindu reformist movement Arya Samaj (Anonymous 1951, 59; Campbell 1980, 77) failed after a short time. The reasons for this failure were twofold. On the one hand, regarding content, the relationship was blocked by Saraswati’s basic assumptions that all non-Vedic teachings are heresy, that there is one sole ruler to be worshipped, and that the Veda is the exclusive source of true knowledge. On a more psychological level, Saraswati’s claim to supremacy soon collided with the TS’s founders’ popularity and their need for recognition. The first issue, in particular, conflicts with (and is absolutely contrary to) the concept of an individual approach to religion, which was based in part on the TS’s founders’ tendency towards Buddhism. Finally, the fusion resulted in the Theosophists’ ‘conversion’ to, and emphasis on, the superiority of (Theravada) Buddhism,¹⁵ the fundamental claim of which is that the individual finds his or her way to (self-) salvation without god or institutions.
- 2) The interaction with the Parsees in Mumbai eventually resulted in ‘Parsee Theosophy’.¹⁶ This special form of Zoroastrian religion includes e.g. the reestablishment of occult elements, such as the reintroduction of Avestan as the ritual language, the introduction of reformed rituals with a new emphasis on the occult content, as well as the combination of traditional theological concepts with scientific terminology. This created a new form of metaphorical Avestan hermeneutics and was advocated for by the Theosophists. It additionally agrees with the traditional notion of faith in a personal god, as well as with the intermediary role of a priest. Indeed, Parsee Theosophy can also be interpreted as a counter-movement to the simultaneously increasingly fashionable Western textual criticism and the corresponding interpretation of tradition. As such, it is, however, a phenomenon of the elites and the educated classes who are aware of the related debates.

Even though Parsee Theosophy is a side effect affecting the (minority) religion of the Parsees more than the Theosophical Movement itself, Parsee Theosophy is a still ongoing result of and reaction to preceding religious individualisation within the community and is therefore based on partly

¹⁵ For details, see Haas 2015.

¹⁶ A brief description of the rarely used term *Parsee Theosophy* as a separate category can be seen in the online encyclopedia *Overview Of World Religions* of the Division of Religion and Philosophy at the University of Cumbria: <http://www.philtar.ac.uk/encyclopedia/zorast/partheo.html> (last accessed 8th June 2017). The origin of the term *parsi/parsee* is usually traced back to ‘those from Persia’, and does not signify any religious affiliation. See Stausberg 2002, 373.

re-traditionalising and ‘esoterising’ the Zoroastrian religion within the Indian Diaspora. It can thus be summarised as a *process, triggered by the Theosophists, of religious individualisation based on re-traditionalisation by ‘regaining lost spirituality’*.

- 3) As to the Theravada Buddhism of Sri Lanka, the intermediary work and popularity of Henry Steel Olcott from the 1880s onwards was both responsible for its revival and the cause of a major boost, through his setting up of infrastructure and his support for religious networking among the various Buddhist traditions of Asia. The explicit preference for Theravada Buddhism by Olcott and Blavatsky, seen as ‘representatives of the West’, raised new confidence among the Sri Lankan Buddhists (Campbell 1980, 84; Bechert 1995, 336f.; Queen 1996¹⁷).

With regard to religious individualisation there must be a clear distinction between a) *the potential of extension of individual paths in the West (‘Western Buddhism’) inspired and enhanced by Theosophical Buddhism*, and, on the other hand, b) *the creation of stimuli within the existing Sinhala Buddhism*. Olcott’s perception and reforms of Buddhism play an essential role for Western recipients: his ‘Protestant Buddhism’, as it was defined by Obeyesekere (1970) and Prothero (1995), represents a *new variety of Buddhism*, using methods derived from, among others, Christian missionaries.¹⁸ It idealises and simultaneously hybridises Buddhism with the ideas of the Theosophists and therefore turns it into a religion more easily ‘digestible’ by interested Westerners than contemporary Buddhism as it was actually practiced. In this way, Prothero states, Olcott turned out to be the ‘first Western Buddhist missionary’.

- 4) Compared to what I have outlined so far, the role of Annie Besant appears much more diverse and less specific in terms of spiritual or religious individualisation. The reason for that is a permanent tension between spirituality and politics that defines her person and activities. In many respects, this can be recognised as the result of her political commitment. It specifically manifests in, for example, her significant affinity for Brahmanism in her later Theosophical life, as well as in a clearly evident, increasing hierarchy in the movement during her presidency, along with the creation of (public) cults

¹⁷ Queen 1996, 21ff. identifies Olcott, Dharmapala, and, finally, Ambedkar as pioneers of the so-called ‘*Engaged Buddhism*’.

¹⁸ A discussion of this term is given in detail in Prothero 1995. According to him (1995, 281), the basic, simplified typology is as follows: ‘Obeyesekere intended the term to convey two meanings: first, that this new form of Buddhism began as a protest against Christian missions; and, second, that it mirrored Protestant Christianity in structure and content’.

(Krishnamurti, etc.) in the TS Adyar. The latter tendency, in particular, eventually led to the resignation of her co-worker BP Wadia (and many others), who then joined the (U.S.) United Lodge of Theosophists and later established this group in India.

Religious individualisation, based on the interaction of theosophy and indigenous religions, is largely characterised by the mutual influence of Besant and parts of the Brahmin elite. However, this too – as in the case of Buddhism and Olcott in Sri Lanka – was preceded by a variety of activities from pre-existing Hindu reform movements and was often even inspired by colonial presence and Christian missionary activities. Thus, the TS in India had already gained some influence among Indian elites even at the beginning of Besant's active time. Individuals such as Bhagavan Das, with whom Besant founded the 'Central Hindu College' (CHC), now 'Benares Hindu University', at Benares, should be mentioned here. For the education of young Hindus, she authored an introduction to Hinduism titled 'Sanatana Dharma' (1903) – analogous to Olcott's 'Buddhist Catechism' –, and the 'Universal Textbook of Religion and Morals' (1910), both inspired by Theosophical ideas, as well as those of Hindu reformers. These became required reading for students of the CHC (for biographical details on Besant, see Taylor 1992).

The essential character of this period in the movement's history can be characterised as a *strategic and systematic distribution and institutionalisation of authoritative Hindu-Theosophical knowledge*. This happened in reciprocity with the expansion of the Theosophical platform to Indians and the offer of Theosophical hybridised Indian, as well as Western, knowledge to India. Besant's political commitment thus temporarily shaped the *interpretation of 'right action' from one's own religious experience and conviction* in dealing with the colonial power, a concept that would later compete with those of Gandhi.

The period of Annie Besant's influence as president is characterised by her (late) significant affinity for elitist Brahmanism as well as by an increasing, controlled hierarchical structure (also in the sense of 'esoteric' hierarchies) within the movement and the creation of public cults such as Krishnamurti. It marked a *period of religious de-individualisation within the original society* and resulted in a great number of schisms and the emergence of opposing groups within the movement.¹⁹

¹⁹ Starting with the separation of TS Adyar and TS America under WQ Judge in 1895.

4 Controversies, splits and their consequences within the movement

Changes in the quality and quantity of religious individualisation within the Theosophical movement should be contextualised and analysed in the context of the movement's history and inner dynamics: after internal loyalty losses caused by the 'Coulomb affair',²⁰ Blavatsky founded the 'Blavatsky Lodge' and the so-called 'Esoteric Section' (ES) in London in 1887/88. They represent the ideal of a community of individuals, 'true adepts' ('chelas') who seriously study Theosophy²¹ while rejecting worldly necessities in the form of membership fees, fixed premises, and official membership. Campbell (1980) considers this a consequence of a long standing and fundamental programmatic conflict, and of the 'tension between mysticism and established organization'. In this context, he defines 'mysticism' as 'a type of individualized religious response to the perceived hardening and formalization of religion'.²²

Notably, the ES models the history, methods, and structures of organisation, as well as the ideals of leadership, for what would later be known as ULT. Moreover, the new organisational forms of these groups are matters of particular interest since they show *characteristics of an elitist-spiritual, secret, literally 'esoteric' counterpart to the exoteric side of the movement represented by Besant, Olcott, and Adyar-hierarchies.*

In case of the ULT, this concept of the ES is equally the basic requirement for individual spiritual progress. However, the elitist idea, officially formulated by Blavatsky, was omitted and, therefore, no secrecy was required. For the ULT, this resulted in a seemingly paradoxical approach: the adopted form, which was designed by Blavatsky to protect the esoteric parts of Theosophy, was now propagated as a 'method' for stimulating individual spiritual progress, and was thus converted into an exoteric mode.²³ However, reality is always shaped by individuals.

20 For detailed description and backgrounds of the Coulomb affair, see e.g. Anonymous 1951, 82ff.; Cranston 1993, 265–84; Campbell 1980, 87–95.

21 For Blavatsky's idea of the 'perfect chela', see Anonymous 1951, 136ff.

22 Campbell 1980, 97.

23 This is discussed within the movement and ULT itself, as the question of an anonymous author shows: 'Is ULT, one wonders, trying unsuccessfully to function as an exoteric group within an esoteric form?' The article *ULT's Nature and Method – How Esoteric is the Work Of the United Lodge of Theosophists?* originates from the ULT-allied *Theosophy Magazine*, Los Angeles, January 1961, 127–30, 'Question and Comment', online <http://www.wisdomworld.org/additional/Question-AndComment/Number5-January1961.html> (last accessed 19th February 2018).

5 United Lodge of Theosophists

Finally, I will try to sketch the ‘method’ of the United Lodge of Theosophists as (one) climax of spiritual individualisation within the Theosophical movement. In historical perspective, the ULT was a splinter group of the TS in America, under W.Q. Judge’s presidency after its separation from the TS Adyar. Its founder, Robert Crosbie, was a former member of the TS in Boston. Born into a largely Protestant environment, he was, like most other founders, exposed to spiritualism from a young age. The aforementioned affinity in the TS with the rising desire for *scientific study of the paranormal as well as Oriental Studies* that was prominent in America co-occurred in the life sciences as well as in (academic) psychology, with the same basic interest, but from different starting points.²⁴

These different backgrounds should be kept in mind when looking more closely at the ‘method’ of the ULT, which in terms of religious individualisation can be reduced to its essential features²⁵ and summarised as:

- 1) *The programmatic rejection of structures of organisation*, as described in the previous section on the Esoteric Section and Blavatsky Lodge. The only requirement for associates is the agreement to the so-called ‘Declaration’. As stated on their website, ‘A brief philosophic declaration is its sole guiding document’.²⁶ The prevalence of forms and (hierarchical) structures is

²⁴ Thus, the prominent TS member William James, who entered the Lodge of the TS in Boston in the same year as Robert Crosbie, shows in his works profound knowledge of the Theosophical doctrine when he identifies the Indian Vedānta philosophy as one of their fundamental concepts. Taylor 2009, 36 with reference to an article by William James on the meaning of ‘person and personality’ in *Johnson’s Universal Cyclopaedia*, New York, 1893.

²⁵ A detailed description by the ULT itself with appropriate statements can be found in the Pamphlet *The United Lodge of THEOSOPHISTS. Its Mission and Its Future*. Online: <http://www.phx-ult-lodge.org/amission.htm> (last accessed 19th February 2018).

²⁶ The text reads as follows: ‘*Declaration*: The policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion. The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the fundamental principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF; a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood. It holds that the unassailable basis for union among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is “similarity of aim, purpose and teaching,” and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that basis. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity. It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and It welcomes to

- regarded as a main cause for turning away from the essential: the pure study of Theosophy and self-awareness of the individual as part of the Universal Brotherhood, also regarded as potential unity with the Divine.
- 2) Access to divine wisdom with the higher self via *rejection of any personalisation of teachings and connected personal cults*, which are seen as obstacles for overcoming the ‘illusion of self’. Emphasised keywords are therefore ‘impersonality’, ‘anonymity’, and, as a consequence, ‘esotericity’. Here, ‘impersonality’ and its meaning ‘anonymity’ function as protection for each individual as a part of a whole: only by eliminating the obstacle of the ‘illusion of self’ can the individual achieve personal access to divine wisdom. It is the only way to become a specific, individual part of the theosophical organism, the ‘Universal Brotherhood’, according to one’s own karma and through consistent development of one’s higher self. This should, however, not be confused with a selfish quest for knowledge and progress which is not conscious of the perpetual connection between the individual and the whole.
 - 3) *The absolute necessity of independent study and individual comprehension of the original sources and the movement’s history*, and, in consequence, the availability of original materials. In addition, the need for the study of the philosophy and history of the Theosophical movement for everyone’s own independent comprehension of the original teachings, as well the familiarity with the writings of Blavatsky, Crosbie, Judge, Wadia and other ULT-writers.
 - 4) *Independent, practical application of the ‘third objective’ of the Theosophical Movement*, ‘to investigate unexplained laws of nature and psychic and spiritual powers latent in man’.
 - 5) *The ideal of the inspired, ‘magnetic’ individual as a permanent potential nucleus/centre to spread (theosophical) wisdom* invisible to others. Such an individual requires spiritual integrity as a potential founder and the centre of a study group, whose members he can influence positively by invisible forces to make them better people and to spread his influence, again ‘invisible’, to other circles.

its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others. “The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all.” Further, there is a form to sign by associates: ‘Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its “Declaration”, I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine’.

<http://www.ult.org/> (last accessed 19th February 2018).

These criteria emphasise without exception the pursuit of the individual and its perfection, meant as a process of unification with the Divine or the higher self, as well as with the community of like-minded persons, but each in their own vital way. Here, all of the features above are methods for the ultimate elimination of irritation that prevents associates from studying and spreading the true teachings of Blavatsky, regarded as a manifestation of divine wisdom. An essential point, however, is the realisation of one's own, individual path and its necessity. Generally speaking, increasing institutionalisation within the Theosophical Movement is regarded as diminishing the space for individual approaches, leading to splinter groups claiming individual approaches as their main original objective. However, as in most 'religious/spiritual programs', there is a natural and fundamental tension between ideals and realities.

6 Conclusion

The obvious potential offered by the original TS is in decline – in its motherland as well as in other countries such as India – due to the increasing hierarchy and dogma within the movement. This trend resulted in, among other things, the separation of the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT) in Los Angeles in 1909. The concepts and backgrounds of this splinter group can, again, be seen as the result of several processes in the TS, such as the founding of the Esoteric Section (ES) by Blavatsky herself in 1888. The ES was supposed to take shape as an *elitist secret society* and was directed by Blavatsky at 'true adepts'. These are distinguished from mere blind followers for the purpose of individual study of 'real' Theosophy. The 'esoteric form' of the ES presents itself in many ways as a model for the organisational structure of the ULT. The latter consciously understands established organisational forms as obstacles to an individual search for truth. Particularly remarkable as characteristics are the principles of a) emphasis on the inner self, b) impersonality and anonymity, c) 'esotericity', as well as d) the idea of 'each member a centre'. They show a permanent call for the individual's representation and his or her responsibility for the 'soul of the whole body', which is supported by very few regulations and generally rejects administrative control. The ULT's programmatic individual approach to Helena Blavatsky's theosophy is based solely on one's own experience and self-study and explicitly rejects any form of organisation, institutionalisation, hierarchies, or dogma. With its strict emphasis on the writings of Blavatsky and her 'true disciples', William Quan Judge, Robert Crosbie, and B.P. Wadia, the ULT – an organisation of American origin and refined in India, among other countries – carries a certain echo of the 'sola scriptura' feature of Protestant religions.

The ULT India was founded in 1929 by the Indian Parsee B.P. Wadia. This year marks at the same time with the resignation of Krishnamurtis the beginning of the “Post-Gilded Age” of TS Adyar. ULT India could possibly have acted here as a *trigger, preserver, or even destroyer of religious individualisation in the context of the Theosophical Society Adyar in India.*

The history of splits and schisms within the Theosophical Movement and, ultimately, the foundation of the ULT provides some general insights into the dynamics of individualisation processes, both (a) within the movement, structurally as in self-understanding, as well as (b) specifically in India in reciprocity with indigenous religions, colonial perceptions, and political involvement.

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Vera Höke

Individualisation in conformity: Keshab Chandra Sen and canons of the self

The Brahmo Samaj, one of the earliest and most important Indian social and religious reform movements, shared with liberal Christian thinkers and like-minded philosophers a remarkable emphasis on the self. The ‘Brahmo Self’ was intellectually related to a complex tradition that was shaped by Puritan practices of scrupulous self-examination and faculty psychology, a philosophical paradigm concerned with the nature of man and the relationship between vices and virtues, faculties and will. Both traditions contained the notion of a self that could, and needed to, be balanced, checked, and thereby improved or developed. For the first twenty years after it was founded, the Brahmo Samaj presented itself as representing a particular strain of philosophy, namely the Advaita Vedanta. In this context, the relation between man and divine was a pivotal point of discussion. Moving back and forth between these discourses on the self, the emergent self-constructions reflected certain social constellations and problems within this religious community.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–1884), a leading figure of the prominent nineteenth century Bengali reform movement Brahmo Samaj (roughly translatable as Society of God) from the late 1850s until his early death in the 1880s, produced an enormous number of lectures and designed several religious rites that centred on the individual as the very basis for the realisation of religious knowledge. He tirelessly emphasised the necessity of a ‘living religion’, presupposing that ‘God is not dead, and the channels of inspiration are not shut up’ (Sen 1904/1879, 437). Aiming for God-realisation by turning ‘inwards’ (*antare*), his writings were no less characterised by the urge for religious and social reform, linked to discourses of the ‘development’ of the Indian people. Sharing the notions of many of his contemporaries, Indian intellectuals and Westerners alike, he cherished neither the religious traditions that dominated popular religious culture in Calcutta nor the Brahmanical ‘high-culture’, with its reliance on ritual accuracy, outward duties, and dietary confinements. While generally welcoming Western culture as superior to Indian culture in its contemporary condition, he believed that this superiority was confined to the present and did not extend into the future. He was convinced that providence held a special place for India and Indians in the history of mankind.

The Brahmos, as they came to call themselves from the 1840s onwards as part of their development of an identity that set them apart as a confined religious community (Hatcher 2001), belonged to a middle class that was tied particularly

closely to the British colonisers. Many of the great Bengali families had laid their financial foundations in the eighteenth century by working for the British East India Company as translators (*dubashees*) or traders and moneylenders (*banyans*). In the early nineteenth century, members of the middle class were successful in building up trading companies and indigenous banking houses, and were able to establish themselves as *jamidars*, the (mainly absentee) landlords of rural Bengal. But their financial success did not last. Financial crises in the 1830s and 1840s undermined their wealth and almost all of them were pushed out of trade and banking. Their elite position thus became more precarious, with their sources of income narrowing to what could be earned serving the British administration in the then capital of the British Empire in India. This class of people, now more dependent on a thorough education than ever, had long since turned education into one of the fundamental characteristics of their identity. They called themselves *bhadralok*, a term that literally reflected the English ‘gentleman’, and was understood to designate a ‘civilised’ or ‘good mannered’ person. According to their own perception, it was their education that distinguished them from the uneducated masses, the ‘small people’ (*chottolok*), on the one hand, and from old Indian aristocracy, on the other (Bhattacharya 2005; Sarkar 2011). *Yatna*, relentless efforts and industry, which had already played a major role in precolonial educational literature, remained one of the most important lessons to the educated youth of Calcutta. *Yatna* came with a promise: children that were lazy and disregarded their parents would have a dark future life, whereas those that applied *yatna* to their behavior in regards to education would be able to achieve anything they aimed for (Hatcher 1996). This attitude was not confined to their own class; it was applied especially to the lower classes, in a manner that carried strong paternalistic overtones (Bhattacharya 2005). This middle-class, which encompassed individuals of differing social status, thus valued education highly as a means to uplift the individual from a state of ignorance and end the deplorable state of the Indian people, as well as, often, its only source of employment and income. It was within this general framework that the encounter with Western, as well as Indian, traditions and philosophies took place.

In an earlier article on individualisation in the Brahma Samaj (Höke 2015), I concentrated upon the particular way in which notions of Avatarism, the theory of ‘Great Men’ as developed by Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the Gaudiya Vaishnava practice of *raganuga bhakti sadhana* were fused into a set of unique practices, called *sadhu samagama*, or ‘Pilgrimages to the Saints’. I attempted to observe closely how Indian, European, and American traditions were linked within a religious framework that was generally informed by and open to both streams of thought. Its leading principle, ‘intuition’, allowed free borrowing from anything cherished in religious traditions. My discussion there

was based on the premise that linguistics, in conjunction with social processes of translation, played a central role and the argument I develop in the present chapter progresses along a similar line.

Although the discursive construction of the self by no means exhausts the processes of what we call 'individualisation', it was an important part of the way these processes were reflected and consciously set into motion in late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, America, and India. In this paper, I will concentrate on two decisive elements in the construction of the self in the writings of Keshab Chandra Sen. First, I will show that his expectation that one observe, critically examine, and develop the self, often has to be framed within the context of the faculty psychology of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and overlapping with practices of self-examination that had a long history in Protestant piety. Second, I will discuss his treatment of the self, which emerges from his reflection on the discourses of Indian Vedantic traditions. Keshab's notion of the self falls somewhere between a position that identifies the *atman* (the individual self) with the *brahman*, and a position that involves the passionate veneration of a personal Godhead as cultivated in *bhakti*-traditions, which latter presupposes a relation and therefore a discrimination between the worshipper and the worshipped. These elements, self-examination and self-cultivation on the one hand, and the relationship between the divine and the self on the other, were pivotal features of the notion of the self in Brahmo discourse. Whereas practices of self-examination and self-cultivation were, as we will see, part of a framework that was more globally acknowledged and that could be put into use for different ends, the wide-ranging and open discussion of the relationship between man and the divine contained elements that were for several reasons confined to India. There was not only a long and encompassing tradition of discussing these matters, which had to be addressed by the Brahmos as a part of the traditions they had grown up with, but also a certain reluctance on the part of Christians to question the personality of the godhead to the extent that was possible in India.¹

A related element, concerning the exaltation of the individual self as the decisive authority in religious matters, is much too encompassing to be dealt with here. It should be sufficient to note that no religious knowledge that depends on outside authority, whether ascribed to persons or to books, could ever supplement the immediate, direct encounter with the divine for most of the authors discussed here. However, the cultivation of the self as part of, and yet as something above,

1 Among the New England intellectuals, it was Ralph Waldo Emerson who, at least partly inspired by his readings of Indian philosophy, went furthest in his idea of an impersonal godhead. In doing so, he provoked a huge wave of protest that encompassed even the most liberal Christian thinkers, expressing and emphasising the absolute need for a personal god. Grodzins 2002, 115–27.

society and in a dual relationship with the divine was not only a prerequisite for immediate knowledge of the divine but also the way to gain such knowledge, as it led to encounters with the divine. *Self-reliance* was a term that was prevalent beyond the circles of New England's intellectuals; it also informed many of the practices of the Brahma Samaj, especially in the New Dispensation Church.²

Regarding processes of individualisation, this analysis also emphasises that even though religious actors may insist on the necessity of religious immediacy and individuality, they never do so in a vacuum. On the contrary, they rely on canons of knowledge, only some of which were handed down to them in the form of written texts. Others were transmitted orally or as religious practices, with which the historical actors engaged, were inspired by, and sometimes refuted. This article does not aim to analyse processes of 'individualisation' in the Brahma Samaj generally, but rather seeks to show how discussions of the 'self' relied on different canons of knowledge, some of which were shaped by Christian approaches, others by Hindu discourses.

1 The self as subject of examination and improvement

That the English term 'self' was a word prominently used in Keshab's English publications is undoubtedly linked to the importance attached to the term in the English and Northern American traditions he interacted with. Protestant traditions in England, and even more so in America, had a long history of concentrating on the self as a subject of reform. Americans had, from the late seventeenth century and through the entire nineteenth century, been speaking freely about 'the importance of constructing the self properly' (Howe 1997, 3). The time between the American Revolution and the Civil War has been singled out as a period during which discussions of selfhood and identity exploded and brought about shifts in language. Whereas some terms, such as 'self-government', 'self-culture', and 'self-reliance' emerged for the first time, older terms, such as 'self-denial' and 'self-improvement' became vested with new meanings (Masur 1991, 191). David

² The New Dispensation Church (*nava vidhan*) emerged as the result of several schisms in the Brahma Samaj. The 'Brahmo Samaj of India' (Bharatbarshiya Brahma Samaj), founded in 1866 as a distinct branch of the movement and headed by Keshab Chandra Sen, further split up in 1878, after a time of severe criticism of Keshab, and the manner in which he developed his thought and style of leadership. Two years later, early in 1880, Keshab applied the name 'New Dispensation' to his own movement, and declared it to be a further step in the course of religious progress.

Howe, in his monograph on *Making the American Self*, regards the conscious performance of acts of self-construction specifically as the exercise of a practice, albeit one that was mainly achieved verbally (Howe 1997, 4). The ‘self-made men’, as heroic ideal of the nineteenth century, was by no means confined to successful entrepreneurs. Rather, suggests Howe, the self-made man was,

one who had attained eminence by his own efforts in any walk of his life, not necessarily in business, and not just in monetary terms. The process of becoming self-made was understood as the development of human potential broadly conceived. Finally, what distinguished the self-made man was that his identity was a voluntarily chosen, conscious construction, not something that had to be achieved by an individual in isolation.

(Howe 1997, 136)

One element that contributed to the discourse of the self in England and America was the ‘polite culture’, inherited from Scottish enlightenment. Linked to the goal of a free society, the ‘essence of polite culture was the balanced cultivation of the self [...]. The cultivated gentleman or lady, the responsible citizen, the objective observer of society: this was the ideal self’ (Howe 1997, 55). ‘Balance of character’ was the highest aim in the cultivation of the self, embedded in the paradigm of ‘faculty psychology’, likewise inherited from Common Sense philosophy. ‘The psychology of the age’, writes Howe,

taught that human nature could be analyzed in terms of certain components, such as the “understanding” (powers of awareness, including both sensation and reflection) and the “will” (powers of action or motivation). Among the powers of will could be distinguished a variety of human motives, typically arranged in a hierarchically defined sequence of “faculties”. The moral and rational powers (because they partook of the divine nature) had precedence over emotional and instinctive impulses (animal powers). Last of all came the mechanical reflexes (vegetative powers), over which there was no conscious control. Those powers that were under some degree of conscious control could be cultivated or restrained by the exercise of will.

(Howe 1997, 5f.)

Exercising control over the faculties and strengthening the moral and rational powers was of utmost importance, as the higher faculties in the sequence of rightful precedence were considered to be much weaker than the animal powers. Conscience was not only supreme but also the weakest of motives. Within this framework, self-interest was not necessarily repudiated. Instead, self-interest could also be considered a rational faculty, as long as it was kept in its place, guided by prudence, in the sense of self-preservation, and balanced with conscience, the moral sense (Howe 1997, 12f.).

This whole strain of thought developed within the framework of Christian thinking and values. First, Scottish Common Sense was related to reformatory aims within the Church of Scotland (Howe 1997, 50–2). In America, where the paradigm

was widespread and dominated the political discourse, it not only became part of the thought of liberal Christian groups but was also taken over by Evangelicals. The act of critically observing the self, and developing and improving it accordingly, was often as much a question of having the freedom to do so³ as it was a moral obligation. As a practice that relied on observing the individual, the individual bore a great deal of personal responsibility. The individualism it brought forth did not stand in polar opposition to a strong sense of community. Projects of self-discipline could, rather, to cite Howe, 'be undertaken collectively as well as individually' (Howe 1997, 5).

The habit of keeping self-observational pocketbooks or diaries, a practice particularly cultivated by the Puritans in England and New England, overlapped with faculty psychology and was probably no less influential in shaping the notion of the self as an object of scrupulous examination. In Puritan theology, self-examination was closely linked to predestination. By self-examination, 'each person ought to seek to discern the twin signs of election in his or her life: the inward testimony of the Spirit and the outward evidence of sanctification'.⁴ Only by questioning their heart and by questioning their life could Puritans know whether or not they belonged to the elected few who were saved by God. But diaries were not only used to reflect on and investigate one's own self. These writings, when shared, could serve as spiritual stimuli with an effect similar to that of listening to sermons or regular readings of biblical texts (Bremer 1995, 21). Self-examination also became a crucial part of the wider genre of conversion narratives that gained importance in the Christian 'Awakenings' of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in America and England. Apart from Puritan and Non-Conformists sources, this mainly Evangelical genre also relied on the practices of self-examination of German Pietists, such as Philipp Jacob Spener (1635–1705) and August Herrmann Francke (1663–1727). Although the Pietism movement was slightly earlier than that of the Awakenings taking place on the British Isles and in northern America, both phenomena were closely interrelated (Welch 1972, 15).

Although the Unitarians and Transcendentalists did not generally cultivate the practices of writing conversion narratives or of keeping self-observational diaries, the latter practice was not entirely unknown.⁵ However, focusing on

³ The freedom of developing oneself was not naturally a given for people of lower status, women or black people in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

⁴ The link between self-examination and predestination was already established by William Perkins (1558–1602) in the sixteenth century. Hindmarsh 2005, 36.

⁵ Caroline Healey Dall, for instance, first started to write her diary under the influence of this impulse. Dall was part of the inner circle of the transcendentalists and was married to the Unitarian missionary Charles Dall, who spent the best part of his life as a missionary in India and became the only Christian ever to be initiated into the Brahmo Samaj. See Drees 2005.

the self still became a decisive part of their teachings and writings. The region in which these movements mainly developed – Boston, New England – was a stronghold of Puritanism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This widespread notion of a self that needed to be questioned and examined critically but that could also be developed and improved found a prominent place in the discourses of liberal Christians, being informed by Puritan practices as well as the paradigm of faculty psychology. The *Unitarian Monitor*, a fortnightly publication of American Unitarians, cites a book by William Sullivan intended for schools:

A self examiner may be supposed to ask himself such questions as these: Have I duly considered my bodily frame, and its wonderful constitution, and uses; – have I endeavoured to preserve it in a fit condition to render to myself, to my connexions, to society, and to its Creator, the duties for which he ordained, and gave it; [...] what account have I to give, of the week that is gone; have I learned any thing; am I wiser or better, or more worthy of my own respect, and that of others, then I was on the last sabbath; have I let the hours run by unmarked, by any useful act of mine; [...] have I done to others, as I would that they should do to me; have I escaped vain and criminal anger; have I said of any one, unlawfully, that which I should not dare to say to him; have I been gentle, charitable, civil, cheerful, kind hearted; have I rendered that which is due; have I made promises, which I cannot perform, or any which I should not make; whom have I offended; [...] if my peace of mind is disturbed, if a blush tinges my cheek, if a sigh burst from my heart, if a tear dims my vision; must this have come over me, or could I have prevented it; [...].
(Sullivan, cited after *Unitarian Monitor* 1831, 102)

This quote contains several hints towards the ideals involved in the cultivation of the self, such as the instrumental use of the body to fulfill one's duties towards oneself, one's kin, society, and God, or the absolute control over, or even subduing of, any kind of emotion. However, what I want to draw attention to here are the practices of formulating concrete questions that lead to a scrupulous investigation of one's everyday behavior and of rendering an account of the past week, which seems to imply a regular execution of this practice.

William Ellery Channing's (1780–1842) lectures and writings may serve as another example here. In an introductory remark to a public lecture series held in 1838, published in 1839 as an essay entitled 'self-culture', Channing defines the venture of cultivating the self as 'the care which every man owes to himself, to the unfolding and perfecting of his nature'. 'Self-culture', he emphasises, 'is something possible. It is not a dream' (Channing 1839, 9). Self-searching, 'the faculty of turning the mind unto itself; of recalling its past, and watching its present operations', is only a preliminary step towards the power of forming the self by seeing 'in ourselves germs and promises of a growth to which no bounds can be set, to dart beyond what we have actually gained to the idea of Perfection as the end of our being' (Channing 1839, 10). Distinguishing several dimensions

of self-culture,⁶ Channing places it in the context of the relation of the individual to society and the world, on the one hand, and the relationship with God, on the other, the two being intimately connected (Channing 1839, 13–5). Focusing on the social dimension of self-culture, Channing singles out aspects of the self that ‘*must* be discharged’ and repressed (Channing 1839, 12f.). He shows a more sceptical approach to self-interest than the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers mentioned above, although their approach to the issue was popular among Americans in general. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), the great Scottish philosopher and essayist, went even further in calling for the ‘Annihilation of the self’, so that ‘Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin’ (Carlyle 1838, 192–7). The emphasis on selfishness and self-seeking as parts of human selves that are to be overcome sometimes leads to the apparent ambivalence of a discourse centring on the self that seeks to annihilate itself.

2 The self as atman?

The notion of *atman* in Indian philosophy and religion, usually translated as ‘self’ in English writings, has been the subject of much discussion for hundreds of years. While *atman* is already mentioned in a more limited sense in the earlier genre of the Brahmanas, the concept of *atman* is first developed within the Upanishadic tradition, ca. 700–200 BCE (Malinar 2009, 45–9). Here it is an immortal part of the human being that is already liberated and only dwells inside the body to leave it after death, either to be re-embodied or to be released and never to appear again. Later schools of Vedanta (literally: the end of the Vedas) dissented greatly, particularly on the question of the relations between the divine, the material world, and the individual ‘self’.

On a spectrum between *dvaitic* (dualistic) and *advaitic* (non-dualistic, sometimes termed ‘monistic’) positions, two interpretative poles were available. At the *dvaitic* end of the spectrum is the idea that there is a personal God from whom human *atman* will remain a separate entity altogether. At the other end, the extreme *advaitic* position, all differentiation is just mistaken perception that is to be eliminated by knowledge (*jnana*) and the realisation that the *atman* is nothing apart from the tranquil, transcendental consciousness (*brahman*). This debate encompassed many different positions articulating complex models of the relationship between the divine, man, and the material world. I will confine myself here to those of particular importance in the Bengali context: the already mentioned position of *Advaita*

⁶ The moral, religious, intellectual, social, and practical dimensions. See Channing 1839, 15–21.

Vedanta, most popularly formulated by Shankara in the 8th/9th century CE, and that of *Acintya Bhedabheda* (roughly translatable as ‘inconceivable non-difference in difference’), as it was developed by Jiva Gosvami, a 16th century follower of the great Bengali (that is: Gaudiya) bhakti saint Caitanya (see Gupta 2007). Shankara’s position of Advaita left a lasting impression on successive generations of those who discussed Vedanta philosophy, and although there are some interesting twists and turns in the relationship between the Gaudiya Vaishnavas and Advaita schools,⁷ the former came to regard the latter as their ‘archrivals’ (Holdrege 2015, 40). But these claims of absolute opposition between Gaudiya Vaishnavas and Advaitins should perhaps not be taken too seriously. Although the Advaitins served as the rhetorical ‘Other’ for Gaudiya Vaishnavas, there are mediating figures, such as Sridhara Svami (14th century), who was acknowledged as the greatest commentator on one of the most important texts of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, the *Bhagavata Purana*, despite being a *samnyasin* (renouncer) of a Shankarite order (Gupta 2007, 40).

For Advaitins, *brahman*, the absolute Being, without form and characteristics, is the highest principle. Personal forms of the Divine are but inferior approaches to *brahman*, useful only for those who are incapable of approaching the formless. In contrast to this, the *Acintya Bhedabheda* has it that Krishna, in the form of the cowherd (*gopala*) in the heavenly realm of Vraj, is the true form or nature (*svayamrupa*) of the divine, and its only independent, complete form. By developing what Barbara Holdrege calls an ‘encompassing hierarchical taxonomy’, the great Vaishnava theologian Jiva Gosvami subsumes all other forms of the divine, including *brahman*, as subordinate, dependent aspects of Krishna (Holdrege 2015, 50f.). The way of the Advaitins is not, then, declared to be completely wrong but, rather, an incomplete and partial truth.

The approach to dealing with earlier, rival traditions is similar in both cases: Advaitins as well as Gaudiyas posit hierarchical models of the divine which incorporate, domesticate, and subordinate, rather than succeed, the earlier traditions (Holdrege 2015, 44). Apart from differences regarding the true form of the divine, it is also the choice of different ways (*path*) and ultimate goals that distinguishes Advaitins from Gaudiyas: Shankarites single out knowledge (*jnana*) as the only means of understanding the true nature of the *atman* as undifferentiated from

⁷ Caitanya himself had taken a vow as a *samnyasin* (an Advaitin renouncer and wandering ascetic) early in his youth, although he was probably initiated into a form of Advaitin sect that was inflected by *bhakti* (see Holdrege 2015, 41). Furthermore, the name of one of his well-known followers was Advaita Acharya, literally the teacher of Advaita. This phenomenon was an issue discussed by his followers, who found an explanation that did away with any engagement with the tradition of Advaita by reading into it an expression of the non-difference (*advaita*) between Advaita Acharya and Caitanya. See Manring 2005, 36 and 57.

brahman. This insight alone can free the *jiva*, the individual being, from the cycle of rebirths (*samsara*) and lead to salvation (*moksha*), the final absorption into *brahman*. To achieve this end, it is necessary to lead the life of a renouncer (*sannyasin*) (Bartley 2011). Gaudiyas single out *bhakti*, a term of manifold meanings that primarily denotes utter love (*prema*) and longing (*viraha*) in Bengal, as the appropriate means for approaching the divine. They do not aim for *moksha* but for a direct, loving relationship with Krishna. The relation of the divine to the *atman*, as well as the relation of the divine to the material world, is that of an inconceivable non-difference in difference (*acintya bhedabheda*), insofar as, in the end, all that exists is an emanation of one kind or another from Krishna. However, as the immutable and unchangeable Supreme Being, Krishna Gopala is neither touched nor affected by the processes of change to which humans and the material world are subjected. The material world is brought forth by the unconscious yet unavoidable activity of Krishna's powers, the *shaktis*. In contrast to Advaitins, who hold that the material world is a distracting illusion (*maya*), for Gaudiyas the world must be real, as it is an emanation from Krishna (Santideva 2000, 215–56). While some Vaishnavas, especially in rural Bengal, also led a life of renunciation, the mainstream practice is that of a *grihastha* form of participation, that of a householder who does not neglect his social duties but remains part of his family and extended kinship group. Another term that also needs to be considered here is *ahamkara* (the sense of I-ness), which brings forth the notion of the 'I'. Within Advaita, this 'I' (*aham*) is not related to the *atman* itself but is, rather, part of the extended self; it 'designates the individuated self represented in [...] *jiva*-consciousness' (Ram-Prasad 2013, 226–9). Given the complexities of the notion of *atman*, it seems that we lose something both on the side of *atman* as well as that of the term *self* when we translate the one into the other.

3 The self in Brahma discourse

Advaita Vedanta and faculty psychology seem to be key issues for understanding the conception of the self within the Brahma Samaj. Despite his emphasis on the universal elements of religion when writing and acting on the international stage, the founding figure of the Samaj, Rammohan Roy, had introduced the Advaita Vedanta into the movement right from the beginning in the late 1820s.⁸ He was

⁸ See Killingley 1993. Rammohan dealt likewise with Muslim, Hindu, and Christian sources, and expressed his religious worldview from within these traditions. It is not easy to see precisely how these are related to each other in his work, as he himself does not link them explicitly.

the first to translate at least a part of the Upanishadic writings into Bengali. Debendranath Tagore and the group of like-minded people around him, who began to renew the Samaj in 1842, initially subscribed to Advaita philosophy as well. Brian Hatcher has translated and analysed an early publication of the *Tattvabodhini Sabha*, a society founded by Debendranath before joining the Brahma Samaj, many of whose members later turned towards the Samaj with their leader. The small tract, called *Sabhyadiger Vaktrikta*, was published in 1841. According to Hatcher, the contributions show what he calls a 'Bourgeois Vedanta', by which he means a version of the Vedanta that allows its authors to develop a different understanding and legitimation of their newly acquired social status. While they emphasise the immediate worship of the supreme self and rely on the Upanishads and other scriptural sources to authorise their arguments, they rarely refer to any of the subjects that are commonly associated with Advaita Vedanta. The 'metaphysics of *atman* and *brahman*; the relationship between ignorance (*avidya*) and illusion (*maya*); and the characteristics of an ultimate reality that is beyond name and form' (Hatcher 2008, 74) were of minor importance compared to the question of how to pursue a life in this world and the need for a balanced character. The first discourse, delivered by Shyamacharan Mukhopadhyaya, formulates this position clearly and gives an example of this strain of argument:

[...], when lust, anger, &c. grow strong, careful effort to control the senses will be fruitless. If the senses are controlled but greed is not restrained, then no thief will be able to stop stealing. A person who fails to control his lust and anger will suffer all sorts of misfortunes. However, if he acts with all his senses properly regulated, he gains blessings in this life and the next. What's more, if it weren't for our senses, there would be no way to live our lives in this world. [...] the senses are at the very root of worldly life. To prevent the predominance of lust, anger, and the other vices, the countervailing virtues of shame, patience, &c. were created. Therefore, respected members, dedicate your lives to the right cultivation of patience, sincerity, virtue, truth, &c. and to the defeat of lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, &c. (Hatcher 2008, 143)

Killingley discerns the three religious traditions with which Rammohan interacts as distinct modes in which he addressed different audiences. Muslim, Hindu, and Christian audiences were addressed separately by using the respective religious terminology and scriptural sources. Although he does not single out any of these traditions as more important for shaping his overall religious thought, Killingley emphasises that Rammohan presents himself solely as an exponent of Vedanta in his Bengali writings (see also Killingley 1982). Bruce C. Robertson regards Rammohan as a representative of Advaita and regards his universal religious thought as being governed by this self-understanding. According to Robertson, the terminology Rammohan used in his English writings was misleading. It not only led to a mistaken view of his philosophy among Unitarians but also among successive generations of Brahmos (see Robertson 1995).

The useful purpose of the senses and self-interest, when subdued to nobler motifs and countervailed by virtues in a balanced character, seems to echo some of the ideas formulated by faculty psychology. Although Hatcher does not, himself, use this term, he points out similarities with Scottish Enlightenment authors, such as Thomas Reid and Adam Ferguson. As the Scottish Enlightenment had become part of the curriculum of English-language schools, it seems very likely that the members of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* were familiar with the key-writings (Hatcher 2007, 78). Rather than ascribing the similarities to the influence of these authors, Hatcher explains the attraction of these arguments by referring to the context of the successful *bhadralok*.

Whereas the conception of the divine as ‘the Supreme Self, whose essential nature is consciousness’⁹ remains rather closely related to classical formulations of Advaita Vedanta, the relation between self and God envisioned by Shankara later became a stumbling block for this philosophy in the Samaj. According to Debendranath Tagore’s autobiography, the discovery of the metaphysics of *atman* and *brahman* was his pivotal reason for turning his back on Advaita Vedanta. He found it to be opposed to the relationship of man to god as that of a worshipper to the worshipped, which Debendranath declared to be the essence of Brahmoism. Even more so, the idea that worshipping the Supreme Being according to Vedanta would lead to liberation by annihilation of the individual consciousness (*prithak samjnana*) and absorption into that Supreme Being (*nirbhanmukti*) was to him a terrible sign of extinction.¹⁰ The duality of man and divine, incompatible with Advaita philosophy, was declared the basis of Brahmoism, despite its explicit insistence on the worship of an abstract, a-personal godhead. As a consequence, the Brahmo Samaj turned towards a more intuitive approach to the divine.

The scrupulous examination of the self, comparable to the practices of the Unitarians, became more important in the Samaj some twenty years later. If we are to follow Keshab’s cousin and long-term companion Protap Chandra Majumdar, the practice of publically giving an account of one’s own behaviour and misbehaviour and inviting others to comment on it critically, was already introduced in 1860, only three years after Keshab Sen had joined the Samaj. Describing the meetings of the *Sangat Sabha*, a small society within the Brahmo Samaj in which the participants were mainly the then young supporters of Keshab, he writes:

⁹ Discourse Five, written by Chandrasekar Deb. See Hatcher 2007, 150.

¹⁰ Tagore 2012, 80–4, see also the English translation: Tagore 1914, 160–5.

They met frequently, and with fiery zeal for self-reformation, laid bare their whole hearts, freely and frankly discussed their own faults, courted mutual aid and criticism, and under Keshub's guidance made most genuine progress in spiritual and moral life.

(Mozoomdar 1887, 130)

Though Keshab increasingly turned towards Gaudiya Vaishnavism in his later years, practices of critical self-examination remained a part of his program. In the late 1870s, for example, the missionaries of the New Dispensation were expected to keep a spiritual diary. They were furthermore asked to write daily reports that had to be handed over to Keshab himself.¹¹ Besides, self-investigating questions that bear a striking similarity to the catalogue reprinted in the *Unitarian Monitor* (cited above) were also to be found in the New Dispensation's journal:

Have you yet found out the work of your life, and discovered the means of carrying it out? Have you found your place in the New Dispensation, the place every one is pleased to give you with blessings and good wishes? What undoubted successes have you achieved in your religious career? What passions have you completely conquered? How many souls have you been the means of saving? What testimony can you give of having seen God, of having forgiven your enemy, of having abjured the love and care for worldly wealth, and turned your home into a sanctuary? Do all those who know you best pass a favourable opinion of your character?

(Sen 1916/1882, 121f.)

Furthermore, Keshab's strong predilection for the topic of sin (*pap*) likewise shows at least a partial relation to the need for scrupulous self-examination, and the promise that the self can be developed and improved. Original sin, he once remarked, was nothing but the liability of human beings to give in to carnal propensities (Sen 1904/1877, 368). The 'remedy' for this 'disease', i.e. the general liability to sin, was to be sought in the cultivation of the spiritual as well as the worldly life. He demanded that we 'must so train and discipline ourselves, day after day, that we may rise above things of this world and enter into the spirit-world'.¹²

¹¹ Damen 1983, 170. Self-Examination as an important practice was by no means confined to Keshab alone. A number of lectures by the Brahmo Shivnath Shastri, who later became one of the leaders of a rival branch of the society, was collected and published in 1951 under the heading *atma-pariksha* ('Self-Examination'), a term that seems to be of relatively recent origin. The first of these lectures carries the title 'Self-Scrutiny – Through Other's Eyes and One's Own' in the English translation by Rajanti Kanta Das. Shastri, 1953.

¹² Sen 1904/1877, 373. The term 'spirit world' introduced here hints at Keshab's idea of a separate realm that lies beyond 'worldliness', in which human beings were able to have immediate intercourse with 'Great Men' (*sadhus*). This scheme seems to be related to the ever-present heavenly realm of Vrindavan, accessible to the devotees by means of *raganuga-bhakti sadhana*. However, it is not possible to discuss this matter in detail here. For the Gaudiya Vaishnava notion of

The concrete realisation of the discipline of the self is linked to a cultivation of the worldly life by means of ‘ascetism’ (*vairagya*) and spiritual life by means of ‘practice’ (*sadhana*). *Vairagya* was a widespread notion in the Indian traditions with which Keshab interacted. The term is mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita*, one of most important sources of Krishna-*bhakti* (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.47–48, see Zaehner 1973, 51), and was also used by Shankara, the foremost thinker of Advaita Vedanta (Raveh 2012, 33f.). Whilst it is most commonly translated as detachment or non-attachment (Damen 1983, 158), Keshab chose to translate it as ‘ascetism’ in his English writings. To prevent misunderstandings, and probably to distinguish it from *samnyasa*, the ascetic ideal of the Advaitins, he eagerly distances himself from what he calls ‘wrong ascetism’. The renunciation of the world, family, and children (i.e. taking *samnyasa*) he called the ‘absurd and mean’ aspects of ascetism, nothing but ‘an error and a sin’, and not more than ‘pious selfishness’ (Sen 1916/s.d.). The Brahma Samaj always cultivated the form of *grihastha*-religion, that of householders remaining within the social structures of the family. Although Keshab in certain contexts advised some Brahmos to distance themselves much more strictly from family and friends than it appears here (Sen s.d./1876, 5f.), renouncing the world was in general not an alternative to being selfish, greedy, ‘worldly’. There was no way of doing away with social duties and ties, even though they could turn out to hinder spiritual development. The emphasis on the need for ‘the death of carnal nature’ (Sen 1870/1868, 90) was not a merely theoretical issue but, rather, a practical one, although there is clearly a connection to the notion of examining and developing the self as advanced by the Unitarians, amongst others.

The community of close followers that Keshab had gathered around him was shaken time and again by problems and the misbehaviour of some of its members. He had placed on their shoulders the expectation of being a ‘model brotherhood’ that would serve as the germ of a social reformation, not only in India but for all mankind. However, the actual community fell short of the ideal (Damen 1983, 157–67). These conflicts can partly be traced back to financial shortfalls, suggesting that the emphasis on *ascetism* was also a way to turn a time of hardship into a virtue. After all, the need to set up strict rules ‘for the subjugation of the carnal nature, for the regulation of worldly duties and desires’, and to practice *vairagya*, ‘which is only another name for simplicity and austere self-discipline’, became

heavenly Vrindavan, see Haberman 1998; for the related set of practices called ‘Pilgrimage to the Saints’, see Höke 2015.

more pressing in the face of what was perceived as ‘the weakness and instability which have repeatedly characterised the lives of a great many Brahmos’.¹³

While Keshab shared the prevailing estimation of conscience as the highest but weakest faculty,¹⁴ he shares Carlyle’s call for a complete annihilation of the self, which he develops in much more detail. In this regard, it is Jesus Christ that sets the example to be followed.¹⁵ Turning towards the sayings of Jesus that ‘I and my father are one’ (John 10:30) and ‘I am in my father and my father is in me’ (John 14:11), he explains that Jesus was devoid of any ‘individuality’.

These words clearly mean [...] nothing more than the highest self-denial. [...] Self must be extinguished and eradicated completely. Christ said so, and Christ did so. He destroyed self. And as self ebbed away, Heaven came pouring into the soul. For, as you all know, nature abhors a vacuum, and hence as soon as the soul is emptied of self [sic] Divinity fills the void. So was it with Christ. (Sen 1883, 287f.)

A similarly radical stance is taken by Keshab in his writing on ‘Objective and Subjective Yoga’, a long article that explains his theory of Yoga to his American audience, first published in the *New York Independent* in 1883, shortly before his death. He explains that for ‘Vedantic Yoga’ (i.e. Yoga that looks for God in nature) ‘material is the great obstruction’, whereas in Keshab’s own theory of ‘Subjective Yoga’ (i.e. introspective Yoga), the self is the problem that needs to be eradicated in order to achieve the union with the Divine:

This self-abnegation is not merely self-denial or asceticism in the ordinary sense of the term. It is not merely the renunciation of carnal pleasures and temporal enjoyments. It is not even the highest form of poverty. It is not mere sackcloth and ashes. It is something more. The sacrifice it enjoins is far more radical and deep. It is the sacrifice not of self-interest or selfishness or self-indulgence, but of self itself. The yogi hates self as an abomination and an evil in itself. [...] He will have no other salvation than the absorption of I, Mine and Me in the godhead. (Sen 1883, 17f.)

It seems that he does not point to the dissolving of the *atman* in the *brahman* but, rather, to the sense of I-ness (*ahamkara*) and the ‘I’ (*aham*). That it would be misleading to translate the ‘self itself’ as *atman* in this context is shown by his introductory remarks on the meaning of Yoga:

¹³ S.a., ‘Retrospect of the Year’, *Theistic Annual* 1877, 2. While no author is given, this critical estimation was probably written by Pratap Chandra Majumdar, who edited the journal.

¹⁴ ‘Our conscience has the right to rule over us, but not the might’. See Sen, 1870/1868, 78.

¹⁵ On the peculiar practice of the *Sadhu samagamas* and their place between the Great Men-Theory developed by Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson and Gaudiya Vaishnava practices, see Höke 2015. On Keshab’s overall conception of Christianity and the meaning of Jesus for religious history and practice, see Höke 2018.

What does yoga literally mean? Union. [...] The created soul, in its worldly and sinful condition, lives separated and estranged from the Supreme Soul. A reconciliation is needed; nay, more than a reconciliation. A harmonious union is sought and realized. This union with Deity is the real secret of Hindu yoga. It is spiritual unification; it is a consciousness of two in one: duality in unity. (Sen 1883, 1f.)

The unity thus remains a duality; the *atman* remains separate from the divine. The absorption of 'I, Mine and Me in the godhead' does not suspend the relationship of worshipper and the worshipped. It should be noted here that there is a movement between and on the edge of Western and Indian philosophical streams of thought. The balance of character as aimed for according to the widespread paradigm of faculty psychology is being connected to *vairagya*. In trying to make 'ascetism' a workable translation, it had to be distanced from *samnyasa*. The complete annihilation of the self as a preparatory step leading to the union with the divine is, for Sen, exemplified by no one else than Jesus Christ. This union, however, is one in which the duality of man and divine remains. Interweaving elements of the Indian and Western frames of reference, the usage of Western and Indian terminology to structure not only the religious argument but also actual practices in the community of Brahmos leads to a new understanding of both the Western and the Indian sources. *Sadhana*, religious practice as a 'method of realization' (Haberman 1988, 7), is another of those indigenous terms that are combined with Western ideas¹⁶ but that also leads far beyond the confines of the imagination of Western authors.

The necessity of developing a cultivated, well-mannered, self in society was the foundation upon which the shared intellectual discourses of the United Kingdom, North America, and India were based. In the nineteenth century, the notion of the 'self' was a key concept that was explicitly reflected upon and debated. The individual did not only bear a substantial amount of personal responsibility, interwoven with recurring elements of divine grace, but also had potentials that could and should be realised by self-cultivation. 'Self-interest' was deemed a necessary driving impulse, albeit only when tamed and subdued by the nobler faculties. In Calcutta, this strain of thought was integrated into a reading of Advaita Vedanta by members of the *Tattvabodhini Sabha*, many of whom would later become Brahmos. In the 1830s, when the Bengali *bhadralok* were still mostly successful entrepreneurs, this served to legitimise their new-found social status, as well as their entrepreneurial activities. In the 1870s, when the fate of many of those who

¹⁶ The Indian concept of *sadhana* was central for the practical side of religion within both the New Dispensation and the Brahmo Samaj of India from the 1870s onwards. Introducing *sadhana* as a novel feature in one of their newspapers, the Brahmos, tellingly, translated it as 'self-culture' in 1876. See *Indian Mirror*, Sunday Edition, 24.09.1876, 1.

considered themselves as *bhadralok* had changed, with their lives becoming more precarious, self-interest was downgraded in the view of the Brahma Samaj of India and the Church of the New Dispensation. Although the discourse remained centred on the self and the constant examination of one's own behaviour was conducted more scrupulously than ever, self-interest was something to be overcome and annihilated. While not allowing for a complete withdrawal from worldly duties, Keshab Chandra Sen cultivated an attitude of indifference towards worldly successes as well as disappointments. It was not coincidental that the emphasis on self-examination emerged at a time of trouble within his small community, it rather emerged as a solution to specific organisational problems and unrest. In contrast to how the self was discussed in the United Kingdom and America, in Calcutta these discussions became entangled with rival ideas, of being in or retreating from the world, that were peculiar to India. Practices of self-construction were related to Indian philosophical discourses; the discourse of the self thus became entangled with a more ontological perspective that focused on the relation between humans and the divine. The Brahma Samaj shared an abstract, impersonal notion of the divine with Advaita Vedanta. Unlike the latter, however, the Brahmos considered the relationship between man and divine as that between worshipper and worshipped. This approach overlapped with the *bhakti*-attitude of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, a tradition which gained importance in the 1870s and particularly in the area of spiritual self-cultivation. However, despite calling for an immediate encounter with the divine, this encounter was informed by different canons of tradition, on the edge of which the Brahmos developed their own ideas.

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Cristiana Facchini, Cornelia Haas, Vera Höke, Katharina Mersch,
Britta Müller-Schauenburg

Afterword: walking the edges

Our section looks at different religious constellations in a variety of historical and cultural contexts and the way in which individual actors within them seek their path to the Divine, God, or Wisdom (Facchini, Mersch, Haas, Höke), or seek to restore religious legality to their marginalised position as a deposed pope and justification of remaining in the office in terms of religious law (Mueller-Schauenburg). Contributions in this section embrace different historical periods and contexts, including the Latin Christian Middle Ages, Christians and Jews of the early modern period from Northern Europe to the Ottoman Empire, and the modern period that connects continental Europe, Great Britain, India and the United States. This selection implies that we are dealing with very different notions of “religion” and equally different concepts of the individual self or non-individual self.

Despite the huge differences in historical and cultural contexts, our chapters share common features: they all deal with case studies that move on the sideways of the mainstream. They deal with religious minorities, excluded or expelled people, but also with exceptional cases and splinter groups. In different ways all of these walk the edges, either of one or between several religions, cultures or geographical regions.

Two chapters address medieval Latin Christianity. Katharina Mersch deals with two different forms of exclusion: one leading the Christian soul away from society and God (excommunicates), and one from society towards God (monks, nuns and others). This process pushes individuals or groups to the edges of Christian society. This also holds true for Britta Müller-Schauenburg’s case study, which deals with Benedict XIII, an antipope during the Western schism (1378–1417). While sticking to the authority of his office, he was abandoned by the main body of the church.

Cristiana Facchini analyses religious enthusiasm in the seventeenth century, a phenomenon that affected Protestant, Catholic and Jew alike. If Jews were on the edge of both Christian and Muslims societies, their diaspora interacted with a common tradition of sacred texts that supported the idea of prophetism or pneumatic experiences. In the case of Christian groups, pneumatic experiences were always deemed dangerous, as they were often performed by people who would be persecuted or marginalised, as in the case of Quakers and ‘revulsionnaires’. Prophetism, and therefore ‘spirit possession’ had always been conceived as a challenge to established religious communities and norms.

The chapters by Cornelia Haas and Vera Höke address cases in which historical actors walked on the edges between several religions, aiming for a harmonious whole based on an eclectic synthesis of their parts. Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–1884), a leader of the Bengali religious movement called Brahmo Samaj, aimed for an eclectic universal religion. His approach was not only informed by Western Unitarianism and Transcendentalism but also by Indian philosophical and religious sources. The Theosophical Movement, founded in 1875 in New York, represents in itself a cosmopolitan fringe-phenomenon, based mainly on literature, avant garde spirituality and spiritualism.

Furthermore, all religious groups described here – laity, clerical, and religious minorities – developed a dialectal relationship between the search for a special (and individualised) contact with the Divine and the interaction with the social realm. Secondly, strong tendencies to question a given authority are evident. The value of tradition is a common topic of discussion, often via – or resulting in – restorative ideas. Tradition is necessarily taken up in a selective way and always remains ambivalent. Thirdly, the phenomena observed can be described by a threefold terminology of a) exclusion, b) inclusion, and c) seclusion (solitude).

- a) By *exclusion* we mean, on the one hand, all those practices that aim to ban ‘deviant’ individuals from the “true” community of believers, the “body of Christ”, and the collective memory (Mersch, Müller-Schauenburg). On the other hand, social exclusion enhanced many forms of religious individualisation that might eventually support the rise of new religious communities (Facchini). In the case study of the Theosophical Movement, exclusion might be supportive of the endorsement of a new authoritative set of rules, as can be seen by Helena Blavatsky’s forming of the esoteric section, which addresses only ‘true adepts’ (Haas).
- b) By *inclusion* we mean paths that lead to the construction of a new type of community in which the believers are integrated through the means of a new relationship with the Divine within a different social setting (Facchini, Mersch). Alternatively, inclusion might also refer to the inclusion of new sources within the canon of traditions referred to by a community, merging them with other sources to form a unified whole in which the boundaries between “old” and “new”, “own” and “others”, are no longer easily discernable (Facchini, Haas, Höke).
- c) By *seclusion* we denote the willing separation of one or a few individuals either from the main religious body or from worldly affairs. Alternatively, it can indicate the way a group of believers leave another group in order to profess a higher truth. Seclusion implies always a choice about space and the selection of ascetic, sometimes bodily, practices (Facchini, Höke, Mersch, Mueller-Schauenburg). For example, contemplation was set apart from

common places. This withdrawal is not necessarily physical. In the case of religious enthusiasm, Jews sought ‘mystical experiences’ in specific, identified places, such as the graves of holy men. In Fox’s narrative, God does not dwell in ‘dreadful places’ (churches) but lies within the heart of every man and woman (Facchini). In the case of Benedict XIII, the abandoned person shows a remarkable attitude of detachment from the struggle of power (Müller-Schauenburg).

Seclusion may also be regarded as a way to contextualise traditional models of seclusion, insisting on the importance of remaining in the world, and amongst worldly affairs, instead of renouncing it. Thus, the Brahmo Samaj aimed for a “householder” religion (*grihastha*), calling radical forms of ascetism (*samnyasa*) sinful (Höke).

These terms are related to the relationship of the individual towards God, as well as the relationship of the individual towards society or the social realm. This already shows that the distinction that we advance here is artificial and only useful for clarifying our perspective, as all the aspects mentioned are actually closely interrelated.

The ideas of the self that are articulated within our case studies are often rather broken or fragmented (Facchini, Hoeke). They might even lead to an outright rejection of a personal, visible self, which can be expressed by anonymity or a call for “impersonality” (Haas, Mersch, Müller-Schauenburg). Some of the practices described in these chapters also imply an elitist attitude to the search for the Divine or religious tradition. Walking the edges is not a model for the masses.

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