

Proposal for the establishment of a *Kolleg* research group (GZ FOR 1013/0):

**Religious individualization in historical perspective**

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## 1. Abstract

The planned research group intends to investigate *cases of individualization within the medium of religion and their consequences for religious change*, that is, in terms of their religious historical dynamics. In particular, it scrutinizes the presence and extent of individual scope for religious action, the resulting forms of religious traditions and religious reflections on individuality prior to and external to occidental modernity and during the period of modern theory formation. The idea here is to replace sweeping theories on individualization and corresponding universal histories with scrutiny of the preconditions for, and forms of, phases of increasing and decreasing individualization, together with investigation of the handing down and diffusion of religious concepts of individuality. By drawing on historical and systematic disciplines, we intend to open up new sources for religious history and scrutinize and modify paradigms for the description of religions, religious experience and religious change.

## 2. Problem and aims

For around two decades, “individualization” has been considered a key social theoretical concept for understanding modernity. In historical terms, the beginning of this process is generally placed in the era of the Reformation, or perhaps the Renaissance, though it is thought to have become explicit, in the shape of the term “individuality”, only during the Enlightenment era. Certain variants of this narrative link the beginning of such reflexive individuality with Augustine’s autobiographical writings. This places not only European history prior to the early modern period, but also non-European history as a whole in a particular light. Modernization, which is assumed to have been successful, is set against a stereotype of the other that interprets shortfalls in modernization as resistance to individualization. From this point of view, the capacity for religious individualization becomes a key indicator of the capacity for modernization in the socio-structural and economic sphere. Within Christianity, this process may for example be observed in the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism; Islam is at present frequently described from a similar perspective by non-Muslims, in the context of debates about of

globalization. Similar attributions of resistance often dominate views of Hinduism and Buddhism.

This linking of religion and individualization is no coincidence. Its origins lie in very different scholarly contexts. Since Schleiermacher and Hegel, and in even more pronounced form since the great analyses of religion by William James, Ernst Troeltsch and Georg Simmel around 1900, the question of the causes, character and consequences of processes of individualization has occupied a central place within the philosophy, sociology and psychology of religion, endeavours generated by this very linkage. Writings in the sociology of religion produced in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century link the thesis of individualization with empirical studies on the individuality of religious practices and ideas. So far, nothing comparable has been produced by researchers in the history of religion. The antihistoricist impulses of the founding generation and the philological legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to an interest in the nature of entire traditions and systems, in essentialized “religions”, which were significantly changed only by a small number of individual geniuses, founders or prophets.

Beyond narrowly conceived Eurocentric and “modernist” notions, the research group proposed here intends to examine afresh the link between religious individuality and processes of individualization in great temporal depth and geographical breadth, by bringing about an exchange between the above-mentioned disciplines and offering its members a space in which they are able to focus on research of their own of relevance to our topic. The aim here is both to advance towards a modified view of religious individualization in modernity and to open up new historical perspectives on the dynamics of religious traditions, including those prior to modernity and outside of Europe. In order to achieve this, on the methodological level we link the following two perspectives:

First of all, individualization is not understood as a continuous process, but as a historical event that occurs in “phases”, one which does not point to a universal, more or less transhistorical process, but which results from contingent circumstances. Within these phases, however, individuals may draw on earlier breakthroughs and phases to articulate new motifs. The process referred to here, in which individuals become key players in

sociation and in their own way of life, are multifarious and overarch socio-structural, cultural, religious and economic factors.

Second, the focus of historical investigation is directed at the sphere of religion. What is at issue here is no longer the relationship between religion and individualization as defined – in very different ways – in the grand narratives mentioned at the beginning. These assumed, for instance, that “Axial Age” models of universalized religions brought the individual to prominence or, with reference to a specifically European development, that this was achieved by the Renaissance, which ended the dominance of medieval Christianity, together with the radicalization of personal concern with salvation brought about by the Reformation. Rather, the point of departure is the assumption that religion is a comprehensive medium that allows to symbolize the connection between individual, society and overarching whole. In this way, analysis of the extensive evidence of religious individuality may become a particularly apt tool, methodologically speaking, for understanding larger-scale developments. Freed from the burden, imposed by the individualization thesis, of distinguishing between “good” and “bad” religion, we can direct our attention at the most varied forms and functions of individuality, which may be understood historically as the creative variation of traditions. Thus, it is no longer merely the “great individual”, but also the spheres of linguistic competence, ritual performance, aesthetic expression, social distinction, along with the religious experience that individuals have and express within these spheres, that take on importance for large groups and thus for the development of both religions and societies. Here, special consideration is given to the many and varied interconnections between religious individualization and other forms of social differentiation.

To investigate religious historical sources from the perspective of “individualization” offers dual benefits for the historicization of religion. First, that which individuals gain from religion and processes of the appropriation of religious traditions by individuals come into focus even in those cases in which religion is typically defined in terms of social functions or mentalities. Second, we may discern the dynamics of religious communication through spheres of individuality or through familial or local structures even in those cases in which religious changes are typically understood through the prism of the history of ideas or as the result of political history. Here, the discipline of history

may pick up on the impulses of *agency* theory. At the same time, new material is provided of relevance to questions about religious experience within the philosophy of religion or to sociological research (on religion), while this material is opened up to both temporal and spatial comparative analysis. We might think here both of Max Weber's transcultural comparison of intellectuals' religion in Asia and Europe and of the religious persecution that characterized the medieval Christian church and the Chinese Tang era, which gave rise to very different interplays of centralist pressure to conform and individual variants of religious action.

While the core competences of the proposers and their own projects suggest that the research group will be of primary interest to researchers working on Mediterranean-European and Western religious history and on systematic issues, an overly narrow focus on the Occident and the Mediterranean will be avoided through establishment of a research group professorship in the religious history of East Asia and by involving researchers capable of providing comparative perspectives; the expertise on West and Southwest Asian and Islamic religious history available in Erfurt will also enhance the *Kolleg's* appeal to potential fellows specializing in East Asian or African studies.

### **3. State of research**

1. The research debate on religious individualization – usually conceived as consequence and cause of processes of differentiation – features very different emphases; these have not yet led to comprehensive research in the *history of religion*. Since Herder, Schleiermacher and Hegel, the *philosophy of religion* has formulated conceptions of individual religious experience and underlined the connection between religious and expressive individualism (R. Bellah, F. W. Graf). As mentioned above, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, religious individualization has had a strong presence within *research in the sociology of religion*. For Simmel, for example, both formally and materially, religion lies at the very point where social integration and individuation intersect (V. Kreck, L. Schramm). As a response to the thesis of secularization, which assumed that religion would disappear as a consequence of processes of modernization, the hypothesis of the extensive individualization of religion within modernity (T. Luckmann) was put forward – and criticized with reference to the persistence of organized religion in the

public sphere (J. Casanova). Cases of the individual appropriation of religion (from the perspective of modernization theory) are examined above all for marginalized groups (such as immigrant Muslim women, G. Klinkhammer), but also have much validity beyond this context (K. Gabriel).

If one wishes to find points of contact, however, the field may be more broadly conceived: in the social anthropological and consequently comparative religious research, an orientation towards institutions and structures has given way to an increasing interest in individual perspectives and experiences over the past three decades: the structuring concepts being performance and ritualization (S. Bell) rather than ritual, experience (F. Ricken, M. Jung) rather than doctrine, negotiation and construction rather than identity (W. Schiffauer, J. Malik), communication rather than belief (H. Tyrell, H. Knoblauch), the rationality of action rather than membership (R. Stark, H. Joas). This shift in focus not only opened up entirely new sources for the comparative study of religion, but also brought about an increased sensitivity to the local variability of religious traditions (“local religious history”, H.G. Kippenberg), though this has so far only rarely been deployed to study the dynamics of religious historical processes.

2. Historical research (on religion) has concentrated on a small number of fields, which we merely spotlight here.

The issue of the *origins of individualization* long seemed to have been definitively settled, for these could be identified in the movements of the Italian Renaissance and of Martin Luther’s German Reformation, which were in competition but which converged in their effects. In 1860, in his masterpiece *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, Jakob Burckhardt described in detail the development of the individual; essentially, he viewed this self-evidently as a matter of emancipation from moral and religious ties. Prior to this, the Protestant German Enlightenment, from Johann Salomo Semler to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, had interpreted Martin Luther’s Reformation as the liberation of the individual conscience from Church paternalism and thus as the setting free of enlightened subjectivity. Johann Gottfried Herder perpetuated this interpretation by applying to Luther the new concept of genius (E. W. Zeeden). In this way, Luther became the paradigm of individuality, but one that was basically secular. That is, in both cases modernization through individualization inevitably culminated in secularization.

The received wisdom that the individual was emancipated through a secularizing Renaissance and Reformation is increasingly being questioned. It is in fact possible to identify a thrust of individualization, at times a virtual cult of the individual, among artists, literary figures and politicians of the Italian Renaissance, but we should take care not to take too literally its secular stylization based on ancient role models, a stylization which held particular appeal to the aesthete Burckhardt (J. J. Martin). Renaissance Humanism was an overwhelmingly Christian movement; in fact it often prided itself on renewing Christianity in light of ancient sources and in this sense it proved a necessary precondition for the Reformation and for denominationalization. Luther, however, in terms of his own self-understanding, wished to be nothing other than a theologian, in other words a teacher of the Holy Scriptures (K. Holl). Hence, for him, liberation from the tyranny of the clergy meant binding the individual all the more tightly to the message of the Protestant Reformation. The impulses towards individualization that initially emerged from this were of a pronounced religious character; furthermore, they had a prehistory and parallels in the old Church (W. Reinhard).

Both the Reformation and the cases of individualization found in the Renaissance have roots that extend far back into the middle ages. Increased religious needs, which were expressed in individualized concern for one's own salvation and which entailed the enthusiastic extolling of human dignity, were already a feature of late medieval urban culture. While people eagerly accepted the range of means of salvation provided by the Church, such as indulgences, they saw the individual's pious conduct as the key to success. The pious death was developed into a learnable art, for which there were "manuals" (A. Tenenti; K. Schreiner; B. Hamm); mystics were distinguished by practices that did not take their inspiration from the traditional institutions. In essence, Luther's Reformation consisted of nothing other than the consistent radicalization of this individual concern with salvation. The no less radical critique of the church to which this gave rise initially allowed religious individuality to flourish. But the revolutionary political consequences of this development quickly led to the establishment of new ecclesiastical systems, which, in light of the new reality of competition between churches, were stricter than in the past. The parallel nature of these processes of religious, cultural and social disciplining in the old and new churches, both materially and temporally, is

understood in terms of “denominationalization” (H. Schilling, W. Reinhard). Although all churches were pervaded by distrust of religious individuality, they forced people to become conscious of their faith and thus to live a consciously religious life, generating the self-analytical introspection of the Lutherans and the individuality of the Calvinists, with its focus on taking active responsibility for the world. Analogous developments can be found in more subtle forms among Catholics, such as the Jesuits and Francis of Sales.

3. What picture of religious individuality emerges beyond the Christian late middle ages and early modern period? In-depth research has been carried out on Central Europe: in his history of Protestant piety, L. Hölscher has combined investigations in the history of concepts and studies on religious life to produce a portrayal that lays bare both the origins and displacement of spaces of individuality in practices of the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries and their interplay with processes of institutionalization. The interpretive trope of individualization undoubtedly plays a major role in accounts of religious developments occurring from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, particularly the period around 1900 (“Himmel Fimmel”) (U. Linse, T. Nipperdey); this applies also to Protestantism (F. W. Graf); meanwhile, the focus on individual practices has found expression in a large number of detailed studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of Europe and North America, but also Latin America. A similar approach has also been taken to modern Japan (M. Pye, I. Prohl), opening up the prospect of fruitful comparison.

No comparable state of research exists for other epochs. The analyses of ancient polytheistic religions, whether they refer to “embedded” religion or “polis religion” (C. Sourvinou-Inwood), work on the assumption that all members of ancient societies were in principle equally religious. From this perspective, religion (and this applies to Judaism as well) is a taken-for-granted part of every biography: *rites de passage* structure the life of each individual, while ritual acts within the domestic cult, family cult or burial and death rites facilitate change of status. This basic assumption of a *homo religiosus* is bound up with a political interpretation of ancient religion: as religion is an unquestioned given and individuals might at most occupy marginal intellectual, critical or even atheistic positions, religion is thought to be particularly well-suited to cultivating “collective identities” and instrumentalizing them, up to and including the securing of power. An example is the claim, which has now been disproved historically, that only citizens were entitled to take

part in the rituals of the *polis* (S. Krauter). Here, the religious actions of individuals take place solely in those niches and predefined spaces permitted by the civic religion which in turn is created and financed by the leading social classes. On this view, only Christianity offered a fundamental alternative. In any event, with its emphasis on individual promises of salvation and on faith rather than ritual practices, it marked a rupture with the form of ancient religions outlined here. In modern research, Christianity emerges only gradually as an “ancient religion” (C. Marksches).

In fact, non-Christian antiquity also knew individual religious practices. Ancient conceptualizations gave such *sacra privata* precedence even vis-à-vis the reach of the state, with respect to military conscription for example (Gellius). Cicero’s “religious legislation” explicitly excepted the *sacra privata* from any kind of interference. In contrast to this ancient understanding, if we survey the history of research so far, the realm of individual religious practice appears merely as a marginal phenomenon, discussed solely in exceptional cases of religious deviance – such as the reckless monolatry of Hippolytus (B. Gladigow) or explicit atheism (C. Auffarth). Attention is focussed on rituals of birth and mourning and on notions of souls and the hereafter (J. P. Vernant, J. Bremmer); the work of those authors (such as C. Calame) who have gone beyond this – with respect to life cycle rituals – is dominated by political interpretations. In the case of domestic cult, a strictly antiquarian perspective dominates: we are thought to be dealing here (in the case of snake worship for example) with a conceptual world that can be traced (e.g. in agricultural traditions) to the boundaries of modernity. Not without good reason does research at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by folkloric studies and evolutionary theory, include empirically rich studies on this topic (E. Samter, M. Bulard). More recent studies have dropped this evolutionist orientation, but remain captive to an antiquarian perspective which at best includes economic history (J. T. Bakker), and which seeks no further historical contextualization.

The second field concerns research into the key factors determining membership in small, soteriologically oriented groups (“sects” in the terminology of the sociology of religion), which are regarded as forerunners and ultimately competitors of Christianity (F. Cumont). The point of departure here is the assumption that the public cults failed to sufficiently address the individual in his existence between the social orders, which were gripped by

change to the point of crisis in some cases. These cults would not have offered any emotionally and intellectually satisfying perspective to the “Axial” consciousness of individuality that was gradually being articulated; this analysis could be applied both to the Hellenistic cities and the metropolises of the imperial era. In his history of religion, M. P. Nilsson consistently followed his examination of Hellenism with a study of the Roman Empire. Recent research on the ancient world (C. Bonnet, J. Rüpke) no longer makes use of the concepts of “individual faith” (Cumont) and “conversion” (A. D. Nock), but concentrates on membership of the cult, featuring relevant rituals, interpretations and rendering beliefs plausible within the group (W. Burkert). J. North refers to “elective cults”, which acquire an enhanced “religious identity” primarily by offering a community, while marginalizing them as merely part of the extended spectrum of *civic cults*. Thus, profound individual religious practice is limited to the great political figures. Research on Christianity retained the individual perspective, but concentrated on the individual act of decision-making and its rituals (T. M. Finn; M. E. Johnson). With the exception of the cult of the dead (T. Klauser, Y. Duval), the broad spectrum of other individual ritual practices, of votive religion for example, attracted no interest beyond the material realm (exceptions: H. Versnel, F. van Straten).

4. As mentioned at the beginning, “individualism” is often used as a delimiting term distinguishing Christianity or the “West” from Asian traditions. Yet in his “Economic ethics of the world religions”, with the concept of the intellectuals’ religion for example, M. Weber had already introduced a more nuanced picture of Buddhism. The characterization of asceticism as “otherworldly individuality” (L. Dumont), studies of the interplay of individualism and collectivism (U. Kim, H. Triandis), the observation of the individualization of rituals in Hinduism (A. Michaels), all of this points to a significant need for differentiation, which calls into question a history of religious individualization limited to Europe. At any rate, the polemical use of the concept has provoked a number of studies which, for instance, take up the question of religious individuality within Judaism – and which engender the dissolution of “Judaism” as a descriptive unity (L. Jacobs). For the Islamic sphere, we can point here to a rich stock of recent research on conversion (the work of M. García-Arenal for example). The recent reception of the concept of the Axial Age or Ages (however problematic it may be to generalize the concept into “multiple

axialities”) offers further points of departure within the context of trans-cultural enquiry into phases in the discovery of transcendence (S. Eisenstadt, B. Wittrock), without itself placing the issue of individualization centre stage.

#### **4. Approach**

The topic described above is diverse in nature and requires both diachronic and comparative approaches; these are outlined in what follows. The work of the project leaders, their team of colleagues and of the research professorship focuses on key fields of research and thus offers both an overarching framework and nuclei around which more in-depth studies might take shape. The work of the research group will necessarily be supplemented by attracting researchers who will introduce relevant research projects that they are unable to tackle on their own or who can use the *Kolleg* research group to bring their long-term research into particular focus.

By opening up the analytical perspective of embedding in communicative processes as well as other processes of differentiation, alongside the issue of far-reaching thrusts of individualization, the study of religion as a medium for processes of individualization goes far beyond the documenting of individual variations within narrow disciplinary bounds. Accordingly, the “intellectual nuclei” intended to attract and integrate researchers in line with the principles of greatest proximity and greatest distance have been carefully selected: 1) As a medium of individualization, religion appears far earlier than implied by the standard interpretation, which basically sees the discovery of the individual occurring in the Renaissance and Reformation. Mediterranean and Middle Eastern antiquity is an exemplary era in this respect, one distinguished by a wealth of extant research and library holdings. 2) The era privileged by the standard interpretation, that of the late middle ages and early modern period, emerges as highly differentiated internally and in need of a fresh analysis that focuses on processes of exchange between the denominations, interrelations between religious specialists and popular religion, historical links with earlier phases of individualization, and the early stages of the formation of later key concepts; the projects being pursued at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, archival materials and book holdings in the city of Erfurt and the Gotha Research Library (Herzog Ernst) serve as particularly valuable points of reference here. 3)

New approaches to the interpretation of modernity since the *Sattelzeit* (Reinhart Koselleck's term for the time around 1800) are generated when individualization within the medium of religion is related to the expressive, civil-republican and utilitarian dimensions of this process. Erfurt stands out as a site of relevant research and library holdings. 4) For the members of the research group, the professorship in the religious history of East Asia marks in a special way the extension of the group's focus beyond the polytheistic and monotheistic traditions of the Mediterranean region, Europe and North America. This professorship can draw upon the expertise and resources relating to the study of Asia in other disciplines and, over the long term, round off the range of options for research on religion at the University of Erfurt. Overall, then, the usual way of reading the genesis of individualization is problematized by the very structure of the working group, as it tackles in parallel antiquity and modernity, Europe, the Middle East and East Asia, and Christian and non-Christian religions.

### 1. Antiquity

Chronologically, the research group aims to begin its work – programmatically – prior to Christian-dominated late antiquity. Research on ancient religion has only just begun to embrace the approaches described above (M. Beard; N. Belayche; R. Gordon; H. von Hesberg; P. Zanker; D. Frankfurter; J. Rüpke; M. Wallraff). It is this thread that the interdisciplinary work of the research group aims to pick up. We examine accounts of local ritual practices by actors of differing status and gender who drew on religious images imparted through various media (mythic narratives, theatre, literature). In light of the capacity, characteristic of monotheistic as well as polytheistic religions, to make simultaneous use of a wide variety of local and regional or distant places of worship and of objects of worship (gods, martyrs), we may describe the creativity of individual religious action (Joas) as a process of tapping into the archive of cultural potentialities: rather than constituting an unquestioned routine, alternatives are perceived as options and are realized or routinized at a specific point in time and perceptibly institutionalized for others. In the Roman empire, which was characterized by intensive cultural exchange, expansion and migration, and by voluntary and involuntary cultural transfer (through Jewish prisoners of war for example), the resulting dynamic is intensified further. Recent

studies, of changes in provincial burial practices in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD for instance, suggest that these developments may be interpreted in terms of a thrust of individualization. From this perspective, frameworks of religious action are not essentialized into stable organizations with clear external boundaries. The focus is instead on their open and precarious character. Four topical fields take centre stage here.

1) Routines and inventions of ritual action: both modern and ancient diagnoses of the conservatism of religious institutions are confronted with the historical fact that “alien” gods were introduced, new cults founded and rituals “invented” (such as fetal rituals). The “success” of such inventions was directly dependent on whether it proved possible to persuade the social environment that the new practice could be hooked up with extant traditions, that it promised concrete achievements in a given set of circumstances and made good on this promise. Yet individual innovations and variations appear not only in the establishment of new institutions, but in how people deal with existing ones. Thus, in the early days of the imperial period the urban shrines of the Roman world were joined by a profusion of further installations that changed significantly the character of sacred spaces: altars, e.g., might disappear almost entirely or be reduced, as it were, to symbolic institutions. Often, variations lack discernible consequences, merely leaving behind exceptions within larger finds of votive gifts and sacrificial practices, or are limited to very narrow temporal horizons. Here, as with those practices categorized as “magic”, the key thing is to compare trends and time horizons.

2) “Life cycle rituals” as individual religious options: concentrating on the social and collective dimension of such rituals, the specifically religious elements of these rituals were neglected, as was the fact that in the ancient world such rituals were practically never carried out collectively, that is, by all the members of a community at the same time, and, most pertinently, in the same way. We intend to interpret this type of ritual as one component of a range of religious options, available to the individual or grouping as a means of dealing with individual biographical crises. Much the same applies to burials, with their wealth of variations; here, broadly based comparative studies could provide pointers to differences in ethnic, social and religious strategies of differentiation.

3) Changes in the religious structuring of the immediate social milieu: this milieu may refer to the smallest units of ancient societies, the *oikos* and *familia*; depending on the

period of time under examination, larger groupings may also form the immediate social milieu: *demos*, *phratry* and *phyle* in the Greek world, *gens* or *tribus* in its Roman counterpart. Groupings not defined by (fictive) kinship or vicinity, such as associations of craftsmen, which must also be understood as associations of worship and which often endure only for a short period, generate an immediate social milieu; in a broader sense, this also applies to patron-client relationships and military units. Ancient domestic cult may be considered of particular interest in this regard; here, we must bring together a highly diffuse range of research which, alongside foundation sacrifices for houses, includes everyday cults, life cycle rituals, trans-familial and specific family festivals and public cults in the domestic context.

4) Situational constructions of meaning and their exclusion: in the shape of philosophy, ancient Greece developed a form of systematizing reflection on religion that influenced both public discourses as well as individuals' private relationship with religion, without itself becoming an institutional component of the apparatuses of religious specialists – though this was to change in the Judaism and Christianity that existed during the height of the imperial period. In this field, attention will be paid to some hitherto neglected areas: private communication through letters, prayer texts, hymns and *gemmae* and systematic criticism of religious deviance. In this last case, it is not the reconstruction of the routine as norm that is to take centre stage, but rather the description and conceptualization of the transgression of norms as the illegitimate realization of religious options. This concerns both concepts such as *asebeia* and *superstitio* as well as the ancient use of the concept of magic.

## 2. Late medieval period and humanism, Reformation and denominationalization

The commonplace that the secular Renaissance or humanism discovered the individual and that Luther first asserted the right of the individual conscience requires, as noted above, correction and supplementation from a history of religion perspective. Traditionally, the relevant sources were read in the context of biographical interest in particular individuals or other specific phenomena and placed within general church or intellectual history. Since around 1980, the paradigm of denominationalization has instead viewed them primarily as mere examples of macrohistorical social change, for

denominationalization was considered a form of collective modernization. The task of the *Kolleg* research group meanwhile is to subject them to a third reading, as documents of religious individuality within a field marked by a variety of processes of differentiation, and as possible indicators of individualization. The key methodological problem here is likely to be separating topical from individual statements. Six groups of sources come under consideration here.

1) Religious historical texts from the late middle ages to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, including sermons, such as those by Martin Luther and other reformers, but also by Berthold of Regensburg or Bernardine of Siena, texts of the late medieval *Devotio moderna* together with their influence on Christian humanism (particularly *De Imitatione Christi*), writings by late medieval and early modern mystics, *Artes moriendi*, pastoral writings by the reformers, particularly Martin Luther, texts produced by the Jesuit orders and those close to them, such as the Marian congregations, especially the *Exercitia spiritualia* by Ignatius of Loyola and the *Ratio Studiorum*, which regulated the religiously oriented pedagogy of the Jesuit colleges; as well as pastoral writings, catechisms, the prayer books and hymnals used within the various denominations, confessional literature, particularly the Catholic variety, and finally deeds of foundation and wills.

2) Biographical and autobiographical texts, such as first-person documents of religious individuality of all kinds, especially biographies and autobiographies (particularly in view of the experiences of religious refugees or converts), with witch trials and inquisitions, Protestant and Catholic marriage practices and Protestant funeral orations as possible evidence of individual religiosity.

3) Catholic canonization processes as evidence of the construction of topical or individual *homines religiosi* or *feminae religiosae* and as evidence of the individual religiosity of the sources consulted.

4) Religious individuality in theological texts by humanists, above all Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Erasmus of Rotterdam, Catholic casuistry and the Jansenists' critical take on the Catholic practice of piety.

5) Church discipline and religious individuality in texts documenting denominationalization; the objectives and evidence of individual religiosity in visitation records and in reformed consistorial records as well as church discipline and religious

individualization in documents produced by the radical Reformation, among Baptists, Anti-Trinitarians, Spiritualists such as Franck or Schwenckfeld and among so-called atheists characterized by pantheistic religiosity or Giordano Bruno.

6) “Realia” as documents of religious individualization, ranging from the religious landscape, including wayside crosses, the religious wall decoration of residential and other buildings, through pilgrimages, votive tablets, the building of churches and the furnishing of churches (such as Loreto chapels or confessionals) to fine art, including depictions of saints as an expression of individual religiosity, and representations of benefactors.

Four types of investigation must be considered with respect to these source groups: the most comprehensive possible overall study of a temporally and spatially delimited field (such as religious individuality and its changing nature within the city of Erfurt in the late middle ages and early modern period); longitudinal studies (such as the development of the confessional as a manifestation of religious individualization); comparative cross-sectional studies (of votive tablets in Bavarian and Italian places of pilgrimage as an expression of religious individuality for instance); and individual text-oriented studies.

### 3. From the ‘saddle period’ (around 1800) to the 20<sup>th</sup> century: global perspectives

The era of enlightenment and revolution spanning the decades around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw massive social and cultural upheavals. Processes of religious individualization take on a new quality in this context. A changed perception of the contingency of social reality plays a particularly significant role in this *Sattelzeit* or ‘saddle period’ (R. Koselleck) and is very closely connected functionally with the increasing reflexivization and individualization of religion. As a result of the increasing reflexivity found in the ‘saddle period’, the internal connection between religious historical developments and the theoretical history of religions becomes tighter and the disciplines of philosophy of religion and “Comparative Religion”, which emerged in Europe and the USA during this period, themselves now form an integral component of religious history.

1) In concrete terms, against the background of the individualized forms of piety which emerged in the wake of “denominationalization” – Pietism being a prominent example – this simultaneously involved the momentous “turning of natural theology into philosophy of religion” (K. Feiereis) and the discovery of the central importance of individual

religious experience in the work of Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard and other authors. The relationship between performed religion and conceptual reflection upon it thus shifts towards the reflexive upgrading of individual experience. Key fields of study here are the habitus-forming effects of exemplary developments in the history of piety, such as pietist autobiography or Catholic baroque piety, the transitional forms situated between the religious and expressive individualization of *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism, extending to American transcendentalism, together with the explicit theoretical history of the concept of religious experience.

2) The discovery of the “varieties of religious experience” (W. James) was continued in the 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the philosophy of religion into the global history of religion, which was of course linked with new approaches in the philosophy of religion and theology, approaches characterized by an awareness of contingency and individualization. Hence, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by the new popularity of the concept of “religiosity” as a connecting link between individual and traditional religion (in the work of H. Siebeck for example). The explosion of ethnology, linguistics and religious studies from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards represents a key factor in such processes of individualization, but so far we have only the beginnings of an analysis of the role played by these burgeoning disciplines (H. G. Kippenberg).

3) Hence, the re-evaluation of individuality, plurality and contingency in the pragmatist philosophies of religion of Charles S. Peirce and William James, but also, for example, in the work of Ernst Troeltsch and Georg Simmel, is already part of the “dual cultural revolution” (G. Hübinger) that occurred at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This not only generated, in the shape of the *Lebensreformbewegung* or “life reform movement”, a plethora of individualized cults and movements (“Himmel Fimmel”, is a key word here), but also engendered a renewed surge of reflexivization, induced by the challenge of Darwinism and the strengthening natural sciences in general, but just as much by the fact that now, in the West, non-Western religions appear not only as an object of ethnological interest, but for the first time as “live options” (W. James). This points to the need for action theoretical studies of the relationships between theory formation and practices of individualization within the medium of religion, as tackled already in the work, as yet by no means investigated in sufficient depth, of Ernst Troeltsch, whose approach straddles

the genres of diagnoses of the era and philosophy of religion. On the theoretical level, however, the many and varied connections between the various aspects of the topic of individualization, whether rooted in religion or hermeneutics, philosophy of science or even philosophy of nature (Dilthey, neo-Kantianism, Peirce, Bergson, Whitehead, etc.), also remain largely unexamined as yet.

4) Finally, there are many good reasons to interpret the new worldwide wave of religious individualization from the 1960s onwards in light of a set of circumstances that had already emerged before the First World War, and which was of course then modified radically by the experience of the two world wars: the exhaustion of the Cartesian self-understanding of Modernity, geared towards certainty and the absence of doubt, which gave rise to new ways of accessing the archive of cultural potentialities. The connections intimated here between developments in the history of religion and in history generally, historical changes in experiences of contingency and in processes of individualization, have so far gone largely unstudied and are thus to be the key focus of our research. Here, it is very useful, with R. Bellah, to distinguish between four dimensions of individualization, the religious, civil-republican, expressive and utilitarian, which may enter into historically contingent coalitions or states of antagonism. How processes of individualization may be articulated within the medium of religion, and the consequences of this for society as a whole, depend crucially on the relationships between these four dimensions. Here, with reference to the 1960s, the key aim will be to analyze developments, which differ greatly from one culture to another, in terms of their path dependency, and hence to do justice to the fact that, in Western Europe, trends towards individualization and secularization often go hand in hand, while processes of individualization in the USA remain far more within religious communities, while at the same time leading to new forms of the reception of non-Western religions and patchwork religiosity.

5) Here, the examination of contemporary developments in Asia promises to produce a more finely differentiated picture. Common assumptions about the secularizing effects of individualization, as often derived from the diagnoses of such writers as P. Berger, have proved untenable (H. Joas).

The differing pathways of processes of secularization in Europe, the USA and, for example, Japan, shed light on a fact of fundamental methodological significance to the work of the research group: religious individualization cannot be viewed in isolation. It interacts in a variety of ways – and in very different ways in different cases – with other social dimensions of the process of individualization. By paying attention, on the methodological level, to the patterns of relationships between the parameters of individualization, it becomes possible to discern connections and reconstruct developments that easily elude a purely disciplinary perspective. The rise of individual religiosity in the wake of the *Lebensreformbewegung*, for example, can be understood as a specific combination of expressive and religious individualization only if we leave largely out of account its civil-republican aspect and reject entirely its utilitarian dimension. This ‘differential analysis’ of individualization also proves particularly fruitful with respect to theories of modernity, because it allows us to relate the internal tensions of the secularization model to the multi-dimensionality of the process of individualization and thus render it more readily comprehensible. Here, attention to the social historical contexts of religious individualization and methodological interest in the processes of performance, negotiation and communication go hand in hand.