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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

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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.