Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity

Edited by
MAREN R. NIEHOFF
and JOSHUA LEVINSON

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Fashioning this Volume

Maren R. Niehoff[1]

The roots of the Western (Christian) Self, with its emphasis on uniqueness and interiority, have fascinated scholars for several generations. Augustine usually plays a key role in narratives sketching a linear development from antiquity to modernity, and points to a clear progression from social forms of living with an outward orientation to the emergence of a robust Self turned inward.[2] Given the prevalence of such a focus in modern scholarship, it may come as a surprise that the present volume contains no article on Augustine. This volume gathers the fruits of a conference and a lecture series in memory of Yohanan Levy, which took place in the summer of 2018 at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem. Experts in different disciplines convened to discuss constructions of the Self, forms of self-fashioning, and conceptions of individuality in Late Antiquity. No teleology is constructed here, no climax envisioned towards which authors gravitate (or from which they deviate). Indeed, no claim is made about Late Antiquity as a time when the real individual Self was discovered, and the ground prepared for Medieval and Modern European notions.[3]

We instead offer horizontal perspectives on constructions of the Self and illuminate them by comparison to processes of self-fashioning and forms of individuality, highlighting the fluid boundaries between these notions. Committed to a rigorous interdisciplinary approach, we study philosophical, literary, historical, and material evidence, arguing that these different aspects should not be set apart, but rather appreciated as complementing each other. The Self, we suggest, is rarely completely isolated and exclusively turned inward, but usually shows some awareness of its environment and social embeddedness. *Vice versa*, self-fashioning and constructions of individuality often imply a dimension of introspection and self-awareness. The enormously complex relationship between

[1] Thanks to Teresa Morgan for her extremely helpful comments on a draft of this chapter.

[2] See esp. Misch 1907; Brown 1967; Taylor 1989; Stroumsa 1990; Koch 2008; Marion 2012. Fuhrer 2008 offers a fresh literary analysis of the *Confessions*, taking Augustine's political concerns into account.

[3] See also Kugel 2017: 259, who humorously comments on the discovery of the Self in ever new periods, depending on the respective scholar's field of specialization. He concludes: "On balance, it seems unwise to approach this matter in terms of *the* individual; a closer look reveals that such an absolute creature does not exist even today, as for its 'emergence,' it seems to come and go even within a single society in a single period."

interiority and exteriority is investigated here in a great variety of sources from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Rather than focusing on one specific tradition, we give equal attention to "Pagans," Jews, and Christians as participants in broader cultural discourses.[4]

We recognize multiple discourses illuminating notions of interiority and exteriority, bearing in mind the dependence of each construction on a specific society, religion, or philosophical school. We ask not only how philosophers reflected upon themselves and defined the kernel of the human personality, but also how figures from jurists and rabbis to architects and emperors endeavored to direct the construction of interiority, self-fashioning and individuality by creating spaces for the experience of individuality and self-reflection, which could then be inhabited by those under their influence. In other words, we approach our subject both from below, namely, from the perspective of the experiencing individual, and from above, namely, from the point of view of authorities in a position to influence the self-perception of others. On both levels, we appreciate the impact of the constructor and avoid essentializing any specific construct. We also investigate the reciprocal relations between the two realms, pointing to ways in which society shaped the Self and the individual, and *vice versa*, how individual self-definitions affected society.

Our approach is emphatically interdisciplinary and moves away from an exclusive focus on select philosophical treatises, which have been given special attention in the study of the Self. We aim for a more integrative perspective that includes letters, legal texts, Bible commentaries, historical treatises, and material culture, which are usually the domain of literary scholars, experts of exegesis, and historians. We also cross linguistic boundaries and examine sources in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Rabbinic literature, which is usually left out of studies of Late Antiquity, is an important part of our project and illuminates the diverse ways in which Jews saw themselves and contributed to wider discourses.[5] Christian authors, both orthodox and heterodox, are integrated as parts of the overall picture, interacting with others, not as magnets towards which the gener-

[4] I use "Pagan" in inverted commas to signal that this term reflects an external perspective, as stressed by Fédou 1988: 31–7; Belayche 2018.

[5] While rabbinic literature is the largest literary corpus of the Eastern Roman Empire, it has been virtually ignored in standard works, such as *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Bowersock et al. 1999) and the *Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (Johnson 2012). However, the new *Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity* (Nicholson 2018), which engaged Philip S. Alexander as an area advisor, features a welcome number of entries on Judaism and rabbinic sources. Two leading journals in the field, namely *Antiquité Tardive* and *Journal of Late Antiquity,* feature only a handful of articles on the topic (Hezser 2006; R. Cohen 2016; Applebaum 2011; Balberg 2015; Watts Belser 2015). Goodman and Alexander 2011 drew attention to this state of scholarship and called for a bridging of the gaps. They offered a collection of introductory essays, which was accompanied by a collection of introductions to each of the major rabbinic corpora (Ben-Eliyahu, Cohn, and Millar 2012).

al discussion moves. Many "Pagans" populate this volume as vigorous discussion partners, not as losers in a historical battle.

This volume engages thriving discussions of the Self in Antiquity, which were largely initiated by a group of French scholars. Michel Foucault (1976, 1988) outlined the contours of the field by describing technologies of the Self in a variety of texts, paying special attention to Seneca's Letters. Foucault underlined the social embeddedness of discourses on the Self and pointed to implied structures of power, pre-Christian forms of sexuality, and non-confessional paradigms of self-examination. Vernant (1989) influentially distinguished between the individual within groups ("l'individu *stricto sensu*"), the subject ("le sujet"), and the introvert Self ("le moi"). These different categories are associated with specific literary genres: the individual with biography, the subject with "I" speech, and the introvert Self with strictly private, autobiographical writings. Based on this rigorous distinction, Vernant concluded that Classical Greece did not know the introvert Self and encouraged a clear separation of disciplines with emphasis on Augustine as a turning point. This distinction has remained influential until today, as can be seen in the recent collection of articles *Le moi et L'intériorité* (Aubry and Ildefonse 2013), which accepts Vernant's definitions, but identifies traces of interiority in a wider spectrum of literary genres than autobiography.

Following these beginnings, scholars of ancient philosophy have dominated the study of the Self. Christopher Gill (1996, 2006, 2009) offered seminal studies in which he analyzed philosophical discourses in view of literature and tragedy. Gill points to our modern predisposition for Cartesian categories and warns us not to look for inner and distinctly subjective notions of the Self in Antiquity. Proper readings of the ancient texts require a different approach and a greater sensitivity to the social embeddedness of personality. The ancient Self, Gill argues, is best defined as an "objective participant," which implies that individuals largely play the roles offered by their society. They remain oriented towards objective norms rather than developing an autonomous, inner personality. Gill's call for caution is well heeded in this volume, and ancient constructions of the Self are investigated with attention to their social context. At the same time, however, we move beyond the notion of an "objective participant" and investigate diverse combinations of interiority and exteriority. Furthermore, we extend the field of investigation by comparing "Pagan," Christian, and Jewish sources and by arguing that political authorities often constructed patterns of shaping the Self.

Several scholars have pointed to the central contribution of Stoicism to ancient discourses on the Self. Gretchen Reydams-Schils (2005) analyzed the Roman Stoics, especially Musonius Rufus, and pointed to their assumption of an irreducibly personal self, which departs from Platonic notions because it is embedded in the specific circumstances of each person. Social involvement does not need to be transcended in this school, but rather provides a space for self-

fulfillment and ethical action. Furthermore, Sorabji's encompassing study, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (2006) offers incisive studies of the human Self, personal identity, and self-awareness, ranging not only from Antiquity to modernity, but also from West to East. Sorabji emphatically argues for the rich variety of views in the ancient world and stresses that the Stoics developed a distinctly personal sense of the Self. Unlike Plato, who posits an ideal and universal, rational Self, which transcends specific character traits, the Stoics paid serious attention to the circumstances of one's life and individual traits. Sorabji draws attention to the literary genre of the biography, which became prevalent in Hellenistic times and encapsulates the growing interest in distinct personalities. Moreover, Sorabji's monograph *Emotion and Peace of Mind* (2000) analyzes inner-Stoic debates following Chrysippus' influential definition of the emotions as evaluative judgments, which require conscious assent. Seneca is shown to struggle with the problem of physical responses, such as shivering, which seemingly defy rational control and are thus not within the realm of assent.[6] Following Reydams-Schils and Sorabji, this volume pays special attention to Stoicism, while at the same time engaging Platonism. Several articles raise the question whether Stoic positions ultimately converge with Platonic ones, as both formulate normative and thus objective demands on the individual. Charles Stang specifically discusses Neo-Platonic authors as significant participants in discourses about the Self, and Karen King argues that Platonic ideas contributed to the construction of the Self in the Gospel of Mary.

Graver (2002, 2007) highlighted the centrality of the emotions for Stoic philosophers and their concern to examine, correct, and purify them. In Graver's reading, the Stoics promote a high degree of introspection to monitor the upsurge of emotions, which are understood as complex judgments about what we regard as valuable in our surroundings. The Stoics did not simply advocate an eradication of the emotions but aimed at a therapy, which elevates them to a higher, rational level and thus helps human beings to live the kind of life they are destined for as humans. In this volume, Graver further develops her approach by examining Seneca's notion of beneficence, which allows for a concrete relationship with the social environment and defines Self in terms of the Other.

Following Foucault, Shadi Bartsch (2006) studied Seneca in the context of Roman culture with special emphasis on literary analysis, feminist perspectives,

[6] See also the collection of articles edited by Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (2011), which investigates the notion of assent and human impulse in a series of Stoic philosophers. Of special interest to our volume is the essay by Wilfried Kühn, who highlights that the Stoics introduced the notion of self-attachment as a condition of self-preservation. Furthermore, Laurand (2014) offers a detailed analysis of Musonius Rufus, engaging with the scholarship on the Self. He argues that Musonius interprets marriage as a space which allows human beings to combine the care of the Self with the care for the Other. Wildberger (2006) addresses issues of individuality in the context of Seneca's broader notion of the world guided by providence.

and political background. Sexuality plays a key role in her work. Seneca's philosophy emerges under her pen as a form of inscribing oneself into society and using its structures as metaphors of the Self, rather than withdrawing from politics, as has often been assumed. Bartsch and Wray (2009) edited a volume on Seneca and the Self, which calls for a fresh appreciation of his contribution to ancient discourses and bridges the disciplinary gap between philosophy and tragedy. The third section of that volume, with articles on "Seneca and Roman Culture" by Elizabeth Asmis, Catharine Edwards, James Ker, and Shadi Bartsch, is especially relevant for our project, as it provides a paradigm for studying the connection between philosophical, literary, and political dimensions of the Self. In our volume, this paradigm is extended to a much broader variety of sources, religions, and cultural contexts, including material evidence as well.

The domain of Self-fashioning is usually occupied by literary scholars, beginning with Stephen Greenblatt, who coined the term in the context of Renaissance studies (Greenblatt 1980). Greenblatt promoted the New Historicist approach, which interprets literary works as part of broader cultural and political structures. On this view, the literary and aesthetic dimension cannot be isolated from the historical but must be appreciated as an integral part of it. Greenblatt's notion of self-fashioning has been fruitfully applied in Classical studies by Tim Whitmarsh, who eloquently analyzed authors of the Second Sophistic in situations of cultural hybridity within the Roman Empire (Whitmarsh 2001). Their fragmented Selves and ironical self-positioning within Greco-Roman society reflected and shaped their historical experience. In Whitmarsh's interpretation, the very act of writing constitutes the Self, which remains open to new reconfigurations on other occasions of written self-expression. More recently, two experts of Latin literature, Alexander Ahrweiler and Melanie Möller, edited a German-English collection of articles entitled *Notions of the Self in Antiquity and Beyond* (Arweiler and Möller 2008). This volume bridges the gap between philosophical and literary discourses as well as between Latin and Greek sources. The contributors offer close readings of a great variety of texts and address questions of self-reflection, individuality, and personal identity. Special attention is paid to connections between ancient and modern notions, without, however, positing a linear development based on theological continuity. Following these literary studies of Self-fashioning in Antiquity, our volume extends the field of investigation to include "Pagan," Jewish, and Christian texts as well as material evidence. The essays on Self-fashioning pay special attention to techniques of writing and the epistolary genre – a prime vehicle for constructions of personal selves. The fluidity of boundaries is underlined by the fact that Catharine Edwards discusses Seneca's self-fashioning in the context of Stoic philosophy and Matthew Roller in the first section concludes his essay on Cicero with remarks on Greenblatt's notion of Self-fashioning. The essays collected here move beyond previous studies by arguing that authors in positions of authority not only responded to struc-

tures of power in their society but also creatively shaped them for their implied audiences and communities.

Notions of individuality have predominantly been studied by historians. Recently, Clifford Ando and Jörg Rüpke have highlighted the agency and performance of individuals in the multifaceted world of the Roman Empire, Ando with emphasis on the relations between center and periphery, Rüpke with special attention to religious rites.[7] The two scholars have moreover collaborated to illuminate boundaries between public and private spheres in ancient religion and law (Rüpke and Ando 2015).[8] A landmark on the way to our volume is the collection of articles *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Rüpke 2013). This volume aims at getting beyond the traditional model of polis-religion and uncovers forms of private religiosity in a wealth of different sources, especially in material evidence and inscriptions. "Pagan," Christian, and even two Jewish sources from the Hellenistic and rabbinic realm are included. Forms of individuation have thus been exposed in ancient religions, which are independent of modern modes of conceptualization. Following the historical and interdisciplinary approach proposed by Rüpke, we focus in this volume on mechanisms of constructing individuality in "Pagan," Jewish, and Christian texts, but also pay attention to implied contours of self-reflection and introversion. Some of the contributions show close connections between the Self and the individual, while others underline their difference.

While Christian authors have generally been recognized as participating in discourses about the Self and even significantly shaping them, Judaism has prompted polarized discussions. Some scholars saw Jews as active participants in wider discourses, while others highlighted their isolation.[9] Notions of the Self and individuality have proven significant test cases, as they engage archetypal assumptions about the Jews as a tight ethnic group versus Greco-Roman individualists. In these controversies Philo of Alexandria has first come into focus, as he wrote in Greek and obviously engaged Hellenic traditions. Emile Bréhier (1950) pointed to Philo's adoption of Stoic notions of self-preservation and self-awareness. Maren R. Niehoff (2012) showed his innovative use of biographies, which narrate individual lives of distinct personalities. Moreover, Niehoff (2018) provided the first intellectual biography of Philo and argued for his increasing orientation towards Stoic philosophy, which was prevalent in Rome, where he spent

[7] Ando 2000, 2003, 2008; Rüpke 2006, 2010, 2011, 2016.

[8] Ando and Rüpke complement the insights of John Scheid 2013 (translated into English by Ando), who has studied notions of individuality in Roman religion, stressing its social dimension and warning us not to inject Christian, especially German-Protestant, notions into the discussion of ancient texts.

[9] Compare the divergent views of Stemberger 1987; Alexander 1990, 1992 a and b, 1998, 2011, 2016; Lappin 2000, 2012; Dohrmann and Stern 2008; Dohrmann and Yoshiko Reed 2013, who argued for mechanisms of integration, while Stern 1994, 2003; Schremer 2010; Rosen-Zvi 2011, 2017, argue for Jewish isolation.

several years as the head of a Jewish embassy to Gaius Caligula. In Niehoff's handling, Philo emerges as an author who became aware of playful ways of self-fashioning through writing and moved from Platonic, strongly transcendental models of selfhood to Stoic ideas about the individual as embedded in society.

Other areas of ancient Judaism have been drawn into the discussion of the Self. Carol Newsom (2012) ushered in new research into the construction of the moral Self in Biblical and post-biblical literature. Heeding her call, David Lambert (2016) and Françoise Mirguet (2017) studied constructions of the Self in Bible interpretation, showing that especially Hellenistic Jews of the Second Temple Period interpreted key-terms of the Bible as a code for interiority and inner emotions. Rabbinic literature has also been investigated with a view to the question whether notions of the Self-care can be identified. Steven Fraade (1986) and David Biale (1992) ushered in the discussion with studies of ascetic practices among the rabbis. Michael Satlow (2003) and Jonathan Schofer (2003, 2005) followed with detailed analyses of rabbinic texts, which suggest that Torah study was conceived as a kind of Self-care in Greco-Roman terms. Dina Stein (2012) and Joshua Levinson (2012) explored literary strategies of self-reflection in rabbinic literature, while Mira Balberg (2014) argued that the rabbis remapped the world of purity by introducing the Self as a conscious agent capable of self-reflection and self-awareness. Most recently, Ayelet Hoffmann Libson (2018) has shown that legal discussions in both *Palaestina* and Babylonia increasingly incorporate personal and subjective information, demanding of their clients to examine themselves and reflect upon themselves. By contrast, Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi (2018) confirmed the rabbis' staunch opposition to their environment and suggested that they remained oblivious to notions of the Self. This scholarly dispute finds expression in the present volume, too. While most contributors discussing rabbinic sources point to structures of Self, Self-fashioning, and individuality, Rosen-Zvi highlights the rabbi's unique sense of complete absorption in the Biblical text, which leaves no space for self-reflection.

Outline of this Volume

This volume is divided into three sections, each containing essays on "Pagan," Jewish, and Christian materials which are arranged in chronological order. The volume moves from "Constructing the Self" to "Self-fashioning" and "Self and Individual in Society," that is, from notions traditionally defined in philosophical terms to more literary and social domains. True to our interdisciplinary approach, we seek to underline the fluidity of boundaries between these categories and discuss aspects of social embeddedness, literary strategies, and material evidence in the first section, while connecting forms of Self-fashioning to both philosophical and social issues. Individuality, too, is investigated with a view to

the other two categories, namely, the introvert Self and literary strategies of Self-fashioning.

The section "Constructing the Self" opens with an essay by David Lambert, who reflects on modern inquiries into ancient forms of interiority. Alerting us to the dangers of projecting our own assumptions onto Antiquity, he argues that the Bible and its interpreters are a prime site for examining such retroactive imposition of interiority. Lambert investigates the test-case of the Hebrew expression *ta'avah*, which the Greek and Latin translators and interpreters of the Bible regularly rendered as "desire." Philo even embarks on a detailed explanation of inward desire and directs his readers how to control it. Lambert, by contrast, stresses that the original Hebrew use of *ta'avah* was far more bodily and socially embedded. In fact, its meaning is close to "demand" and presupposes interaction, akin to some cognitive models. Lambert's essay raises the question whether and to what extent interiority can be identified as a self-contained, isolated phenomenon. Interiority, he suggests, is better understood as one end of a complex scale, which usually implies some awareness of Other as well as a reinterpretation of earlier traditions. These issues resurface throughout this volume, especially in Joshua Levinson's analysis of rabbinic exegesis, in Catharine Edwards's discussion of Seneca's self-fashioning, in Mira Balberg's reconfiguration of memory and forgetting in rabbinic literature as well as in Alfons Fürst's study of Origen's exegesis.

Matthew Roller discusses Cicero as a Roman intellectual and offers an innovative analysis of the well-known four personae theory in *De Officiis*. Careful to avoid Cartesian categories, Roller draws on Elwin Hofman's four axes of the Self, which revolve around degrees of interiority, stability, holism, and autonomy. He argues that Cicero, based on Panaetius, develops notions of interiority, autonomy, and consistency, while stability remains marginal. Roller moreover underlines the social embeddedness of Cicero's Self by investigating the role of personal exemplars for the development of the individual *persona*, which is "up to us." Fashioning one's Self according to role models emerges as a distinctly Roman way of constructing and promoting oneself in society. Roller concludes his essay by studying the test-case of Cicero himself, who was a *homo novus* and thus keen on adopting role models from outside his family. A close reading of his use of Marcus Aemilius Scaurus as a model reveals that Cicero cleverly constructed him differently on different occasions, creating for himself alternative paradigms, which suited the respective contexts in which he acted and fashioned himself. The flexibility of the Self is thus intricately connected to the social context in which it is shaped and to which it responds. Roller's essay lays the foundation for other investigations into the contingency and flexibility of the Self. In the second section of this volume, Maren Niehoff investigates Rabbi Abbahu's different forms of self-fashioning in the changing contexts of his communal activity, while Tobias Nicklas in the third section points to the boundaries of individual Selves in situations of conflicting social duties within Christianity.

Margaret Graver explores Seneca's rather neglected treatise "On Benefits" and argues that this treatise provides important insights into the Stoic understanding of the individual's inner life. As we might expect from a Stoic philosopher, Seneca defines gift-giving and other acts of kindness in terms of the intention they express: a benefit is essentially a "transaction between minds." However, he also issues a qualifier to Stoic intentionalism, in that he emphasizes the observable results of acts of kindness, the way they impinge upon the world and other people. Further, he indicates how a committed Stoic can adhere to a strong conception of divine providence while also insisting on the freedom of individual action. In Graver's handling, the treatise "On Benefits" emerges as essential reading for the Stoic theory of action and equally for Stoic theology. Graver's study of Seneca anticipates Alfons Fürst's discussion in the third section, which treats Origen's notion of free will in the context of the Self and the Christian community.

Gretchen Reydams-Schils draws attention to the contribution of Stoic philosophy to the ancient discourse about the Self in relation to the Divine. She opens by reviewing Platonic and Aristotelian notions of imitating God as an ethics that aims at an ideal and thus de-personalized Self. In these philosophical traditions, she argues, the specific qualities of a person as well as her social connections are ultimately transcended for the benefit of a universal ideal that is not strictly speaking Self but identified with the normative Divine. The Stoics, by contrast, develop a robust sense of the Self, which remains personal even in the face of god. Her prime example is Musonius Rufus, the first century CE Roman philosopher, who suggested that the Divine embraces virtues which are utterly human. Thus, when human beings imitate the deity, they do not transcend humanity, but on the contrary implement their own pristine values via an imitation of the deity. Reydams-Schils' essay anticipates other contributions dealing with the tension between the Self and the Divine. Yair Furstenberg treats this topic in the context of the rabbis, and Charles Stang does so regarding several Neoplatonists. Eve-Marie Becker takes up the topic with regard to Paul.

Karen L. King investigates the Gospel of Mary, a second-century Christian text that elaborates the appearances of the risen Savior to Mary and other disciples in the Gospel of John by reference to a Platonizing philosophical approach to the Self. The Gospel of Mary identifies the true Self as non-material, composed of the soul and guided by the mind. This "inner human" is identified with the Johannine descending and ascending Son of Man, whom the reader is asked to "put on," based on Paul's language of spiritual clothing. Rooted in the transcendent Good, the Self is to overcome the Powers of ignorance and wrath that rule the world by means of study, visions, and ritual performance in this life, and at death by ascent beyond time. King concludes by asking how the Gospel envisions human beings, who accept its strongly transcendental interpretation of the Self, as actually living in this world.

Yair Furstenberg asks whether the rabbis participated in broader Greco-Roman discourses about self-cultivation. Focusing on the Tractate of the Fathers, the only extant wisdom text of the rabbis, which has already drawn a lot of scholarly attention, Furstenberg proposes to nuance previous insights by stressing the rabbis' transformation of Greco-Roman notions. While indeed familiar with such wide-spread ideas as self-knowledge and choice of individual lifestyle, the rabbis translated them into distinctly religious images of being judged before God. Furstenberg concludes with a comparison to Epictetus, who also integrated the Divine into his discourses, but – unlike the rabbis – did not turn his god into the judge of one's actions, but rather related to him as a helper on the way to one's own self-perfection.

Charles Stang studies notions of the double Self among Neo-Platonists and its effect on the worship of the "Pagan" gods. Stang examines Plotinus, the founder of Neo-Platonism, and two later representatives of that school, namely, Porphyry and Iamblichus, who are known for their dispute about the role of ritual. Plotinus formulates an influential theory of the Self as fundamentally doubled, insisting that each embodied individual has an undescended intellect, a sort of counterpart abiding forever in the intelligible realm. While Porphyry endorses this model of selfhood, promoting contemplative ascent as a means of deification and a replacement of ritual practice, Iamblichus insists that human beings are fully exiled from the intelligible realm. In his view, the divine double descends into embodiment and requires salvation through "theurgy." Stang concludes by drawing attention to some later echoes of the notion of the doubled Self.

Joshua Levinson argues that rabbinic Midrash not only interprets Scripture but does so by creating a new dialogical interiority for its characters. He focuses on one specific Midrashic collection, Genesis Rabbah, and employs the literary categories of direct and indirect modes of representation to highlight how the Biblical characters are transformed by the rabbis into divided and conflicted selves. The inner dialogues and introspections, which are attributed to the Biblical characters, become a vehicle for the reader's self-examination and foster a certain type of divided consciousness; of being both inside and outside the text at the same time. Treating rabbinic Midrash, which is composed in Hebrew and Aramaic, Levinson shows that the rabbis shared broader sensibilities and considered introspection as an important feature of their religious heroes. This investigation into the construction of an inner Self through Bible exegesis is complemented by Mira Balberg's analysis of rabbinic instructions regarding an individual's memory and forgetting.

Laura Nasrallah investigates constructions of the Self through light in a variety of Byzantine sources, ranging from the sixth-century Riha fan and the contemporary philosopher Philoponus to church mosaics and architecture. She explores Philoponus' theory of vision to show that, rather than simply understanding sight as extramissionist or intramissionist, he emphasizes the medium

through which light as activity or *energeia* can be experienced. Some early Christian churches are, moreover, identified as spaces which orchestrate a Self, bathed in sensory experiences that provided the possibility of transformed knowledge by means of light, the sound of the Cheroubikon hymn, the shine of mosaic tesserae depicting the eyes of the cherubim, and the flash of the Riha fan with its cherubim, mouths open, silvered, gilt, niello. Nasrallah's analysis is undergirded by feminist insights about the Self, produced in relation to others. Her essay anticipates the discussion by Sarit Kattan Gribetz in the third section, who also engages feminist perspectives, as well as other essays investigating constructions of the Self from above (Edward Watts discussing Haga Sophia, Maren R. Niehoff analyzing Rabbi Abbahu, and Mira Balberg studying rabbinic Halakha).

Edward Watts concludes the first section of the volume with a study of the imperial church Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Relying on extant material remains and historical reports from the sixth century, Watts outlines the architecture of the church and its impact on the sensory experience of the worshippers. He argues that the architecture was specifically designed to encourage the individual's interior self-regard. Hagia Sophia's decorative schemes not only invited the worshiper to see him or herself as part of a new religious community that linked Jesus, Justinian, and Constantinople as the new Rome, but also prompted her to craft a new Christian self that suited a Roman imperial hierarchy. Material and textual sources thus combine to tell the story of an imperial construction of the Self from above, which ensured that the individual worshippers understood their experience in terms that reaffirmed a specific Roman and Christian identity.

The second section of this volume deals with forms of Self-fashioning in various cultures and focuses on strategies of writing which constitute or reflect individual personality. The section is opened by Catharine Edwards, who examines Seneca's Epistles and asks whether the epistolary genre provides privileged access to the individual personality and spontaneous self-expression, as has traditionally been assumed. This assumption is problematized by an investigation into the full complexity of Seneca's Epistles and their construction of a personalized author and addressee. No other literary genre seems to provide so much information about the specific physical and mental situation and character of the writer and his friends. Seneca moreover stresses the philosophical importance of addressing the concrete failings of individual people. At the same time, however, Edwards shows that the Stoic project of self-improvement, which the Epistles advocate, encourages the transcendence of individual deviations from the norm as each person aspires to resemble the perfect wise man. Facing these literary and philosophical complexities, Edwards concludes that Seneca is ultimately reluctant to let go of at least one lasting aspect of an individual *ingenium*, the author's individual style of writing. The very act of writing thus constitutes a form of self-fashioning, which defies ethical norms and philosophical conventions. Edwards'

article anticipates the discussion of unique individuality in Origen, presented by Alfons Fürst in the third section.

Eve-Marie Becker investigates the question of individual authenticity in the epistolary genre through a close reading of Paul's Letter to the Philippians, which she compares to Cicero's writing of personal letters from exile to his friends and family back home. She argues that Paul's and Cicero's letters do not reflect an inner Self constituted outside of them, but rather provide their authors with an opportunity to write and thus to shape their own Selves. Both authors write in circumstances of personal deprivation and exile from their communities, using the letter to make themselves present to those dear to them. In this sense their letters function as a *parousia*, and, in the case of Paul, also as a mediated *parousia* of Jesus. Relying on Foucault's insights, Becker analyzes Paul's literary devices to present himself to his readers and offers a novel, literary approach to the question of his Self, which is usually treated with emphasis on the Letter to the Corinthians and inner conflicts described there.

Ilaria Ramelli draws attention to a rather more neglected aspect of the Church Father Origen, namely, his self-fashioning by polemics against competing groups of Christians. Studying autobiographical passages in letters and other writings, Ramelli shows that each of Origen's personal characteristics is developed by contrast to others: his philosophical expertise against the literalist "Philistines," his honest leadership in contrast to the false bishops, his energetic work as an interpreter and philosopher against lazy contemporaries, who fail to take care of themselves and make progress. Origen often models himself as a victim of attacks, comparing himself to the crucified Christ. To highlight the social dimension of Origen's self-fashioning, Ramelli concludes by investigating the effect of his self-image on subsequent writers, underlining that he successfully transmitted the notion of his adamant personality. Origen's oppositional form of self-fashioning follows in the footsteps of Paul and highlights the far more accommodating style of Seneca and Rabbi Abbahu, who is discussed in the next essay.

Maren R. Niehoff investigates Rabbi Abbahu's role in mediating Roman law in late third-century Caesarea, the capital of the Roman province with a prominently Latin culture. Studying a letter of Abbahu, a story about his judgement at court as well as examples of his Bible interpretation, Niehoff points to the changing style of his self-fashioning. While using remarkably diplomatic language in his letter to colleagues in Tiberias, who opposed Tamar's appeal to Roman jurisdiction, Abbahu openly confronts a complainant at his rabbinic court in Caesarea and insists in no uncertain terms on the implementation of a Roman betrothal contract. As a Bible exegete, Abbahu once more chooses a diplomatic mode, constructing Biblical couples as monogamous partnerships, blessed by God and conforming to Roman law. Given the compilatory nature of rabbinic literature, these images of Abbahu may not be altogether true to his historical personality, yet they are nevertheless highly significant. They show that the redactors of the

rabbinic documents preserved images of a deeply hybrid personality which fashioned itself in view of Rome and shaped new forms of traditional Judaism. Rabbinic sources, written in the periphery of the Empire, illustrate how metropolitan Roman notions were debated, integrated, and locally anchored. The case of Abbahu furthermore shows the dynamics of constructing the Self both from below and from above, as his own self-fashioning vis-à-vis Rome shaped the experience of the Jewish community under his authority.

Irmgard Männlein-Robert examines two prominent "Pagan" philosophers, who migrated from the Greek East to Rome, namely, the Neo-Platonists Porphyry and Plotinus. Analyzing Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* as well as more sporadic evidence from other writings, Männlein-Robert asks why these two intellectuals chose Rome rather than Alexandria or Athens as their destination. Plotinus, she shows, was initially attracted by the new intellectual options available in the capital of the Roman empire and possibly also by social networks existing already before his arrival. Roman benefactors and prominent students quickly surface in his texts and indicate his successful integration, which then served as a magnet for other intellectuals, such as Porphyry. The latter's migration to Rome involved an intellectual re-orientation and a distinctly Roman self-fashioning. Most significantly, Porphyry began to dedicate his works to Roman figures, thus creating and advertising a network of Platonists in Rome, which was conceived as an alternative to both Plato's ideal republic and contemporary Christian communities in Rome. In the case of Plotinus and Porphyry, their Roman self-image had considerable consequences for their reception, as their works were translated into Latin and transmitted to the Middle Ages. Männlein-Robert's essay complements Charles Stang's discussion of Plotinus und Porphyry in the first section, which focuses on their Platonic notions of a double-self. Her argument about a connection between the mechanism of self-fashioning and the transmission of ancient works also resonates with Ilaria Ramelli's parallel claim about Origen's reception.

Reuven Kiperwasser concludes the second section of the volume by analyzing three stories about a Babylonian rabbi migrating to Palestine. Applying Derrida's notion of unconditional hospitality as an ideal, which potentially challenges the contours of the host's Self, Kiperwasser argues that the different narrators construct themselves in the process of telling the story of Rabbi Zeira's uneasy integration into their culture, which is unknown to him. The first Palestinian narrator is both attracted and repulsed by the Otherness of the Babylonian, creating an interrupted and hybrid authorial Self, while the second narrator completely alienates him and thus reflects a more homogeneous sense of Self. The third narrator is Babylonian and exhibits a benevolent indifference. Kiperwasser argues that narratives, as products of culture, express the tensions and perturbations of that culture. The narratives analyzed here imbricate self and society, representing a vital resource for shaping identities. Kiperwasser's comparative analysis of

anonymous narrators complements the preceding discussions of identifiable authors, such as Seneca or Paul, who were interpreted in the context of their time. In the case of the anonymous rabbinic narrators, society plays a part to the extent that it appears in the story itself, as an expression of the narrator's self-fashioning.

The third section of the volume investigates the connection between Self, individual and society, asking whether these categories constitute separate, perhaps even contrary notions, or instead complement each other and share fluid boundaries. Clifford Ando opens the section by asking how individuals are conceptualized in Roman law and whether they are ever conceived as autonomous from social networks and civic organizations. Examining the law and legal arguments regarding personal status, exile, and resident aliens, he argues that Roman law does not assume any essence of the individual. No interest is even discernable in positively defining the individual in some particularity of personality, apart from his or her imbrication in networks of social, economic, and juridical relationships. Above all, Roman law is concerned with transitions between social categories and changes in relationships. Roman pragmatism goes so far as to retroactively sanction the illegal appropriation of Roman citizenship, provided that the perpetrators had been unaware of their mistake. Ando concludes that Roman law addresses individuals only in so far as they are part of social organizations, leaving questions of interiority to private and local initiative. The various forms of interiority that are discussed in this volume can thus be recognized as filling in the gaps intentionally left open by Roman jurists. The rabbis, for example, fill in this gap, as Mira Balberg subsequently shows, by constructing halakhic procedures for individual memory and forgetting.

Jörg Rüpke draws attention to the individual within structures of urbanity and lived religion. Social structures, he argues, provide privileged access to the specific experience of individuals. After a brief review of ancient philosophical approaches, Rüpke highlights the potential of studying cities as a space for constructing the Self, as they draw individuals out of their traditional contexts and habits. Cities emerge as marketplaces of religious, cultural, and philosophical options, which mediate between local traditions and imperial norms. The individual living in the cities of the Roman Empire or moving to them is thus prompted to make new choices and position him- or herself within new coordinators. Rüpke concludes by studying the test-case of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a second-century Christian text from Rome, which invites its readers to situate themselves in relation to the physical and spiritual features of the imperial capital. This example of a Christian Self constructed in the urban context of Rome complements the picture of Rabbi Abbahu in Caesarea and Neo-Platonic philosophers in Rome, as discussed by Maren Niehoff and Irmgard Männlein-Robert in the second section.

Sarit Kattan Gribetz investigates individual reactions to national catastrophes by analyzing pregnancy metaphors in 4 Ezra, a Jewish text from the late first cen-

tury CE, which she compares to the early modern memoirs of Glikl of Hameln. The author of 4 Ezra writes during the decades following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, at a time of great eschatological expectations, and presents a series of hypothetical pregnant women and mothers to answer existential questions about himself, the cosmos, and time. Glikl, on the other hand, is an historical mother, who describes her experience of pregnancy and political upheaval in a period of similar eschatological expectation, namely, during the time of Sabbatai Zvi. Kattan Gribetz suggests that analyzing ancient texts, such as 4 Ezra, in conversation with later works that engage ancient traditions allows us to theorize constructions of the ancient Self in new ways, including perspectives that are otherwise missing from the extant texts.

Mira Balberg analyzes discourses about memory and forgetting in the Mishna, the earliest rabbinic document. She shows that the rabbis introduce a completely new notion of forgetting, which is no longer negatively connotated as in previous Jewish texts, but rather seen as a normal and inevitable phenomenon. Forgetfulness is built into the individual Self and helps the rabbis to consolidate their power by integrating wider circles of Jews into their extraordinarily demanding system of Halakha. Mishnaic subjects not only might forget things in the course of their efforts to observe the law, but they are supposed to forget, because the rabbis would otherwise not have much to offer them. The forgetful subject is the one who affirms the need for close religious guidance provided by the rabbis and belies the notion that one can be entirely self-reliant in one's observance of the law. Balberg concludes that scenarios of forgetfulness are literary capsules that contain the dynamics of the halakhic Self as envisioned by the rabbis: a person with good intentions, but a strong tendency to forget and fail, who subordinates himself to rabbinic authority to rectify his mistakes. This study of the construction of interiority within the boundaries of rabbinic authority argues for close connections between Self, individual, and society, complementing Catharine Edward's discussion of Seneca, who fashions himself as a moral authority and his implied reader as in need of his advice. Balberg's analysis also resonates with Joshua Levinson's investigation into literary strategies of constructing the Self in rabbinic exegesis and with Alfons Fürst's discussion of Origen, who also imbricates Self and individual.

Ishay Rosen-Zvi offers a comparison between Origen and the rabbis as homilists, arguing that their different understandings of themselves vis-à-vis the text and society reflect contrary anthropologies. Origen emerges in his Homilies on Exodus, especially on the Song of the Sea, as an allegorist, who highlights the spiritual relevance of the Biblical text for his audience. Unexpectedly, he constructs a community precisely by means of a non-literal interpretation, inviting his hearers to transform themselves on the model of Scripture and Platonic philosophy. The rabbis, by contrast, are found to be immersed in the details of the canonical text to the extent that they do not explicitly refer to historical

events and refrain from constructing an individual Self. Rosen-Zvi identifies the latter phenomenon as a quintessential aspect of the rabbis' turn inward, which refuses to engage Greco-Roman culture and its ideal of self-cultivation. He thus challenges the insights presented by other contributors to this volume, especially those of Yair Furstenberg, who argues for rabbinic transformations of Greco-Roman notions of the Self.

Alfons Fürst investigates Origen's notion of Self and individuality, as developed in discussion with ancient philosophy and the needs of his Christian community. Fürst begins with a close reading of Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah*, in which the Church Father develops the notion of a unique personality regarding both the soul and the body. Jeremiah's expression "I sat alone" stimulated Origen's lively interest and prompted him to formulate an ethics of singularity, which is based on Classical Greek models of Self-Care and renders the individual in-imitable. Such individuality is assumed by Origen to be a basic fact of the human personality, which has not emerged as a result of a conflict with society and lays the foundation for freedom of action. The latter is defined as self-determination, grounded in a strong notion of the Self and introspection, which enables individual volition and action. Fürst moreover shows that Origen takes a robust sense of individuality into account when delivering his sermons to his community, which he addresses as a group of distinct individuals. Fürst's conclusions complement the insights of Ishay Rosen-Zvi, who also discussed Origen as a community-builder with a strong notion of individual Self, while challenging Ilaria Ramelli's emphasis on his polemical struggles with others.

Tobias Nicklas concludes the volume with an analysis of two fourth-century Christian figures, whose personalities transpire in letters, namely, Copres, an otherwise-unknown character from Egypt, and Synesios, bishop of Ptolemais. Despite their different circumstances, both faced situations of conflict with higher authorities threatening to compromise their personal commitments. Copres encounters Diocletian's imposition of pagan rituals at court procedures and circumvents them by appointing a deputy. Synesios is elected as bishop but hesitates to accept the responsibility because it conflicts with his previous life as a Greek philosopher and spouse. Their letters illuminate how the conflict is solved and raise intriguing questions about the flexibility of the Self. While Copres is very brief and indicates no deeper conflict, Synesios invokes his "inner self" and "conscience" against the expectations of society. Ultimately, however, he subscribes to a practical philosophy allowing him to play different roles in different social contexts. This study of Late Antique Christian letters provides an appropriate closure for the numerous treatments of letters in this volume. Seneca and Rabbi Abbahu have emerged here as using letters to transmit a rather more normative Self, while Paul and Origen became visible as authors expressing more personal, yet highly relational, epistolary Selves.

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