POSTMODERNIST RELATIVISM IN CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

A return to ancient polytheism?

Lorena Ortiz Cabrero

Abstract Despite distancing themselves from traditional religions, (Western) post-secular societies are still heavily concerned with 'spirituality'. Within our working postmodernist framework, where 'truth', 'knowledge' and 'God' are found to be relative, this concern often translates into a combination of religiously inspired practices – such as (Hinduist) yoga or (Buddhist) meditation – and a scientific, modern approach to the knowledge of the world. This coexistence of practices brings to mind ancient polytheism. Could postmodern spirituality be considered a form of polytheism? This paper shows that postmodernist, relativistic belief systems share the *poly-*, or multiplicity of approaches to life and reality, but not the *-theist*, or conceptualisation of their beliefs as 'divine'.

1   Introduction

Past millennia have seen numerous belief systems and religions expand, diminish, or merge. The overarching trend of religious beliefs has evolved from polytheism into predominantly monotheism, followed by a generalised decrease in (Western) interest for institutionalised religions. For some scholars, this contemporary lack of religious fervour is a sign of widespread secularisation; for others, religiosity is not losing social significance but simply changing its form of expression, and thus creating individualised forms of religion (Pollack & Pickel, 2007). Wade Roof (1999) and Robert Fuller (2001) are some of the sociologists of religion who advocate for this second understanding of contemporary religion or spirituality. In Roof's (1999) view, the trauma of the 20th century has pushed those born after the Second World War to seek "something more—call it "values," "faith," "being centered," or finding "spiritual wisdom"" (p. 16).

For individuals with this drive for 'something more', religion and spirituality (here thematised as inseparably interlinked concepts) become a deeply personal issue that cannot be easily comprehended by institutionalised practices. Fuller (2001) narrates the account of a Catholic-raised woman who nowadays complements Catholic traditions with Tibetan prayer bells, amulets, crystals, and healing meditations. This eclectic mix of religious symbols, she argues, is better reflective of her deeply rooted, spiritual beliefs than any standardised religion could be. An inclusive approach such as this, although attractive for many individuals, is ideologically opposed to the exclusivity that predominant monotheistic religions ask of their followers. Is it possible to believe in Christ and engage in prayer to spirits, or in Buddhist meditation? Could this contemporary openness towards simultaneous (opposed) religious practices be reminiscent of polytheistic traditions?

To analyse this latter possibility, this paper compares traditional, ancient polytheism – predominantly Greco-Roman traditions, Hinduism, and Buddhism – and contemporary belief systems, understood as postmodernist, relativistic attitudes where 'truth', 'knowledge' or 'God' cannot ever be distinguished with certainty. Due to the scope of the paper, these attitudes, henceforth interchangeably denominated 'contemporary' or 'postmodernist,' have been restricted to those that are concerned with spirituality but do not entertain the idea of becoming an established religion. This definition thus excludes movements such as Wicca, which self-identifies as a religion and purposely attempts to recreate polytheism as seen in pre-Christian Europe (White, 2014). The paper explores a dimension of the postmodern society we live in, and its implications for our knowledge and belief systems with regards to contemporary religious discourse in Western culture(s).

This paper starts by finding similarities between traditional polytheism and contemporary belief systems, followed by a study of potential points of discrepancy. The analysis ends with a final reflection on the accuracy of the term 'postmodernist' and its epistemological implications in the light of some of the assumptions that are present during the comparison with polytheism. Finally, I conclude that contemporary (perhaps not-so-postmodernist) belief systems share the main characteristics found across polytheistic religions, but they differ in two vital aspects that prevent their full equivalence: the origin of the belief, and the meaningfulness it provides.

2   Tradition & Postmodernism: looking alike?

Traditional polytheism is often taken literally: *poly-*, many; *-theism*, gods; that is, simultaneous belief in multiple gods. However, there are certain necessary characteristics in the way polytheism comes to be. This section covers its two main features, drawn from literature on three big polytheistic traditions (Greco-Roman, Hinduist, and Buddhist), and investigates to what extent they are present in postmodernist belief systems. The two characteristics are: 1) the presence of multiple approaches to reality, and 2) a flexible paradigm.

The first defining element of traditional polytheism is its humble attitude towards transcendental reality, which, if existent, cannot be understood through one isolated explanation. The reality of the world and of the universe, as well as of any transcendental Being (God), is simply unknowable, and no human may ever grasp its totality (Daniélou & Gabin, 2007). However, as Hinduism takes into consideration (Mavalwala, 1966), humans can and will aspire to represent the Transcendent with their limited knowledge, and such enterprise must then include a multiplicity of conceptualisations or understandings. A total representation of the Transcendent, or Unknowable, cannot possibly be approached with just one input of knowledge (or one God, as all-powerful and all-knowing as it may be), "in much the same way as a sculpture must be observed from various angles to appreciate fully all its contours" (Mavalwala, 1966, p. 241).

This idea of multiple approaches to reality is also found in Buddhism, where the earliest texts already introduce an indefinite amount of 'world-spheres' or 'world-systems.' Each has its own gods and beliefs about the universe, which are incomprehensible even for the Buddha and, according to one of his stories, Great Brahmā himself (Gethin, 1998). Buddhist believers understand that each of these doctrines provides one limited strand of understanding; only through all of them together could they aspire to make up a complete image of the Transcendent.

Greco-Roman tradition formalises this understanding through their conception of gods and other divine figures: each of them is the representation of a particular force, in a universe formed by an aggregate of interrelated forces (Versnel, 2011). None of these forces or gods is possible to understand in isolation from others (Versnel, 2011). Thus, a multidimensional perspective is required to understand the universe in which we live.

The second attribute of traditional polytheism, flexibility, is a consequence of this interrelation amongst universal forces or gods. The limited knowledge of oneself requires humbleness when declaring that there might be a greater power than the self, or Higher Being. Even if there is consensus about the existence of a transcendental reality, there would be multiple possible expressions of it; none of them are right or wrong, only different. This awareness of the limited own knowledge requires great tolerance and openness. As Daniélou & Gabin (2007) explain in their analysis of Hinduism, it is possible to prefer and predominantly worship one particular representation, but this preference can never "become a denial of other faces of the divine" (p. 5). In Buddhism, this flexibility is expressed through the constant creation of gods according to individuals' understandings and experiences (Gries, Su, & Schak, 2012, p. 626), whereas the Greeks combine it with a level of humility that takes them to admit that sometimes they do not know who they are talking to: "Listen, sire, whoever you are" (Homer, as cited in Versnel, 2011, p. 39). This ambiguity and vagueness do not subtract from the religious experience or the weight attached to the divine – they simply allow for a more varied representation of the different realities in our world.

How are these features present in postmodernist belief systems? The first element, multiplicity of approaches to reality and the possibility of the Transcendent, is coincidentally a necessary characteristic of postmodernist relativism. Just as in Hinduist or Buddhist paradigms, postmodernist epistemology claims that there is no one objective and unified theory about anything; as Kirk (1999) states, "there is no God's Eye View" (Chapter 3, para. 1). In other words, there is no possible all-encompassing knowledge. Theories about 'truth' are always partial, and most importantly, they are irrevocably interrelated with feelings, values, and judgements, which are in turn interlinked with socio-historical processes (Hiebert, 1999, p. 39). Even religious forms and experiences, oftentimes approached as essentially similar across believers, are "culturally and ideologically grounded" in each individual (Katz, 1978, p. 66), All these variables reflect the traditional polytheistic attitude towards the universe as a network of forces that only together can aspire to represent the Transcendent.

In the field of religious beliefs, this postmodernist view has allowed individuals to return to what Cataldo (2008) considers a natural psychological state:

polytheism. According to her, humans have an inherent "tendency to relate to multiple numinous entities" (p. 51). This polytheistic tendency has been long suppressed by monotheistic imposition, but the postmodernist acceptance that all knowledge is contingent and mediated through diverse strands of perception has favoured its return to the societal mind in modern Western culture. Religion has stopped providing all the answers that individuals feel they need, and thus it is now possible and even encouraged to consider multiple approaches to understand the world, such as science *and* religion, or spiritualism *and* science. In this framework, no one doctrine is completely fulfilling and needs of others, complementary and interrelated, to better comprehend the world and ourselves, just as the Greeks considered their gods an unbreakable network of universal forces.

How to complement these different interpretations of reality in practice? That is an individual, relative task. As Gopnik (2017) argues, for example, some pursue a 'secularised' practice of traditional religions in which rituals are maintained for their spiritual value, but whose mythological origin and meaning are minimised to better conform to modern, scientific postulates about the world. Others prefer the opposite: a 'humanistic' system in which they subscribe to the values and teachings of a religious doctrine, while disregarding the religious traditional practices for their incompatibility with the scientific, non-superstitious modern society (Cipolla, 2007). Possibilities are thus endless, but they all assume that one isolated branch of belief, be it science or religion, is not enough to understand Life. Just as Buddhism accepts competing doctrines based on their explanatory virtues, so do postmodernist individuals view traditionally opposed dimensions such as religion and science.

Flexibility, the second attribute of traditional polytheism, is already present in this development of complementary beliefs, but it can be further observed in the postmodernist attitude towards epistemology. The postmodernist understanding that complete, objective knowledge is unachievable means that there is no possible basis from which to judge other people's 'truths' (Kirk, 1999, Chapter 3). This approach already presupposes, however, that there is indeed an unknowable truth outside ourselves, and such perception is not necessarily true of ancient polytheistic traditions, highly more varied and dependent on sociocultural processes (Katz, 1978). This epistemological discrepancy is further considered in Section 4, although it is here safe to assert that both ancient polytheistic and postmodernist traditions share a tendency to consider different and potentially competing 'truths' as valuable and enriching, rather than attempting to impose one's beliefs over others.

In practice, this attitude has led to the incorporation of traditionally religious practices such as Hinduist yoga or Buddhist Vipassana practice, commonly referred to as Buddhist mindfulness in the West, into the everyday life of

both scientific-oriented people and followers of other doctrines. Buddhist meditation, particularly, has become a frequent subject of scientific inquiry, ranging from its passive virtues – such as long-term cognitive enhancement (Crescentini, Fabbro, & Tomasino, 2017) – to its active promotion in medical sciences as therapy for depression (Morgan, 2003), for example. Hinduist yoga, on the other hand, has revealed itself as a growing practice across believers and non-believers, forcing monotheistic traditions to reconsider and adapt the flexibility of their traditions in order to include their followers' desire for a wider understanding of the world (Kremer, 2013). Overall, these tendencies thus show a great flexibility in potential ways of worship, clearly influenced and even derived from Buddhist, Hinduist and Greco-Roman traditions. Does the presence of this flexibility, along with the postmodernist approaches to reality, mean that these contemporary belief systems can be considered intrinsically polytheistic, however?

3   Are we coming from the same place?

If the previous section analysed the main attributes of traditional polytheism and their application in postmodernist system belief, the following considers two potential discrepancies that would separate traditional polytheism from postmodernist beliefs. They are the origin of these belief systems, and the type of meaningfulness they provide their believers.

With regards to the origin of belief systems, traditional polytheism presents in its three main forms – Hinduist, Buddhist and Greco-Roman – a purely divine conception. These are religions, first and foremost; regardless of the rituals and traditions that arise and evolve from the different understandings of the Transcendent, they all posit that their faith has been commanded by the gods themselves. As Burkert (in Versnel, 2011) explains about the Greek tradition, "a god cannot be constructed to fill a gap; one must come to know him, he must reveal himself" (p. 33). Hinduism and Buddhism presents similar language about the origin of their central texts. Knott (1998) states that Hinduism, for example, is understood by Hindus to originate "beyond human history" and "its truths [to] have been divinely revealed … and passed down" (p. 5). As a consequence of the central flexibility and variation within these traditions, however, sometimes beliefs about the concrete origin of both texts and Life itself depend on each community and the religious branch that they favour (Knott, 1998). In this regard, their tenet of flexibility and constant evolution undermines potential historical consensus. Nevertheless, there is an underlying assumption that their beliefs are true because the gods themselves revealed them to humans.

Second, these traditional polytheistic traditions undertake what is generally understood as the role of religion: to provide an overarching meaningfulness to the complex and confusing experience of life. As Alain Daniélou & Jean-Louis Gabin (2007) posit, this enterprise is usually addressed through the search of "the nature of the world, its origin, its raison d'etre", which may then lead to "a more or less abstract aspect of what we term the divine" (p. 3). Regardless of the varying degree of abstraction of said divinity, which differs from one polytheistic religion to another, these questions appear in all big religions, both poly- and monotheistic. According to Nietzsche (as cited in Young, 2006), polytheism takes this reflection one step further than monotheism, and (partially) answers these vital questions through the role models presented by the gods themselves. He believes that they are 'joyful' religions, insofar as they provide attainable, positive ideas about what is like to be human, unlike monotheism's unreachable and punitive ideals (Nietzsche, 2004). The variation and flexibility found in polytheism thus allows it to be an all-encompassing doctrine; a thorough reflection of all dimensions of humanity and life within which it is always possible to find the inspiration needed by each individual throughout their lives.

Are these characteristics found in postmodernist belief systems? The first feature, divine conception, is lacking in many relativist alternatives. Some of them, as those reviewed by Adam Gopnik (2017), aim at 'secularising' religious traditions such as Buddhism by only keeping and valuing the practical use of rituals (like meditation). The rest, that is, the theoretical and divine conception behind the practice, is often explicitly targeted and undermined: 'implausible' beliefs (by scientific, secularised standards) become 'metaphors', "a cosmological picture that works well [and that] shouldn't be held as a mark against … truth" (Gopnik, 2017, p. 73). This devaluation of divine concepts is present even in those relativistic belief systems in which doctrines and teachings are preserved. 'Humanism', for example, maintains only cultural aspects of (predominantly Christian) religion (Cipolla, 2007), while disregarding the fact that these sociocultural rules were most likely expressed and demanded by God(s), and formalised in the sacred texts for future social practice. For postmodernist conceptions, therefore, it is possible and perhaps even likely to hold attitudes similar to those of polytheism without maintaining their divine origin.

The second potential disparity, the meaningfulness provided by the belief system, is closely linked to the divine origin (or lack thereof) of postmodernist polytheism. Polytheistic divinities, besides determining the origin of life, also showed through their words and actions what is, or should be, important to humans. Some, like the Greek gods, displayed all facets of human temperament on this very earth, for us to see and emulate in our quest for happiness. In postmodernist systems in

which there are no divinities to have spoken their Truth, this top-down discovery of the meaning of life is not possible. On the contrary, believers may choose in what domains they feel they are lacking 'personal meaning' and find a suitable doctrine to fill this gap. Instead of learning "the language of polytheism … passively", as it happens in traditional polytheism (Burkert, as cited in Versnel, 2011, p. 33), postmodernism enjoys an active command of what it wants from its belief.

A potential danger that this active accumulation of diverse 'meanings' can bring is the possibility to choose certain dimensions of a system that fit our 'desire for meaning', and then disregard unsuitable elements from the same doctrine. This prospect, which is partially observed in the case of 'secularised Buddhism' addressed earlier, is touched upon by Blankesteijn (2004) in his satirical denouncement of websites and quizzes that promise to reveal the religion that most suits the reader by asking questions such as 'Do you consider cows holy?' This perception of religion as something relative, to all of which you need not adhere if you do not desire to, can lead to essentialisms such as 'the holiness of cows', and millennia-old traditions can be reduced to particular, often quirky, stories. The partial meaningfulness that a postmodernist believer may gain from this framework is thus highly different from the alleged all-encompassing meaningfulness that traditional polytheism offers.

4   Are we as postmodernist as we think?

Until now, this analysis has proved that there are similarities in the ancient and contemporary approaches to religious or spiritual practices, even if the focus of worship is not as well defined in current times as it used to be in divine-oriented ancient traditions. Before a conclusion on the religious nature of contemporary beliefs can be drawn, however, there is one last structural question to answer: is the basis of these contemporary beliefs as postmodernist as stated? This question could spark much philosophical debate, but this section briefly covers it through an epistemological consideration with regards to its relation to religion.

Many of the spiritual or religious attitudes that are here represented pride themselves on great tolerance and flexibility towards alternative religious forms. Individuals enjoy the thought of combining Catholic, Buddhist and undetermined forms of worship, as the woman in Fuller's (2001) account did. Epistemologically speaking, this attitude is due to the subjectivity brought about by postmodernism, where there are no possible objective truths and thus there is no point in fighting about whose version of 'reality' is best, for they all have an equally partial value (Hiebert, 1999).

This postmodernist attitude, however, when linked to religious understandings such as that of the Transcendent and the existence of Higher Being beyond all material reality, shows an essentially modernist assumption at its core: that there is a universal reality or truth. Therefore, a frequent question is whether and how such an all-encompassing higher reality can ever be (partially) perceived with our relative and limited human understandings. The absence of a single, definite answer hints at a postmodernist tolerance towards any potential explanation. But this approach already assumes that there must be a transcendental reality, or otherwise it would not make sense to even ask for a (partial) explanation. Thus, it is still closely linked with a modernist view of the world, according to which there is an underlying unified truth or reality that provides meaning to our experiences in the world (Hiebert, 1999).

Why is this at once modernist and postmodernist perspective so attractive, and what impact does it have on religious considerations? Intuitively, the uses of such an approach are great: it retains a unified sense of the reality with which we interact (modernist), while allowing for subjective and even contradictory understandings of how to best make use (and sense) of such a world (postmodernist). It is a way to find meaning, something *more* to everyday life (Roof, 1999), while keeping true to the ideals of tolerance and openness of contemporary times. Although still a current debate, this approach is considered by some scholars a natural phenomenon: postmodernism is arguably the logical consequence of modernity, derived from the modern failure to prove scientific theories undoubtedly true, but still sharing many modern underlying assumptions, such as the Cartesian scepticism and the constant search for better theories (Hiebert, 1999). How does this possible understanding apply to religious frameworks? As Matthew Bagger (2003) notes, the greatest danger it entails is perennial bias. Perennialism is the belief that all religions share a single, transcendent truth, regardless of the sociocultural conditions and belief systems in which they take place. Believing that everybody is talking about the same transcendental reality, even if they do it in a different way to one's own, may lead to an essentialist or reductionist consideration of these other perspectives.

The problems posited by perennialism and its reductionist framework are the focus of in-depth academic research, as are potential ways to surpass it (e.g. Bagger, 2003; Ferrer, 2002; Mccormick, 2006; Taylor, 2016). Jorge Ferrer (2002) is particularly critical of how perennial visions end up distorting the central message of religions in their effort to compare their associated transcendental experiences. He believes, furthermore, that this attitude leads to a ranking of religions, depending on how closely they approach the predetermined spiritual reality. He suggests an alternative to such a damaging epistemological account: participa-

tory spirituality. According to this perspective, reality cannot be taken to exist as an unknowable dimension outside ourselves, but as a dynamic construction between the consciousnesses of both individuals and the world around them (Ferrer, 2002; Taylor, 2016).

Steve Taylor (2016) posits a different alternative: a 'soft' perennial model that rejects both the perennial truth claims about a transcendental reality and the extreme relativism of Ferrer's participatory model. He believes that there can be a middle ground that better accounts for the objective similarities in reported spiritual experiences found across religions, while maintaining a relativistic acceptance of all possible interpretations, always "equally valid" (Taylor, 2016, p. 34).

Both Ferrer's participatory spirituality and Taylor's soft perennialism are thus in line with the relativistic dimension of postmodernism, but both of them push this limit by categorically rejecting the modernist assumption of an unknowable but undoubted transcendental reality outside ourselves. This limitation does not undermine the tolerance that contemporary belief systems share with ancient polytheism, but it does highlight a gap between relativism claimed in postmodernism and the essentialism provided by the underlying modernist assumptions; further development may be needed to shift postmodernism from a perennial to a truly relativistic consideration of the world and of the possibility of a transcendent reality.

5   Why does this matter?

Is it important that contemporary belief systems lack a divine origin and all-encompassing religious meaningfulness? Does this affect their potential categorisation as 'polytheism'? These are questions linked, perhaps, to a larger one: *what is religion?* This is of course a fundamental question in theology and religious studies, which has not yet been answered. However, if we simplify 'religion' as a belief in *anything* beyond the individual self, then postmodernist attitudes may well be considered polytheistic, for they display the two main attributes of this current of belief: they defend multiplicities to knowledge and to the Transcendent, and they demonstrate flexibility and tolerance for variations. If 'religion' is restricted to belief in *a divinity*, as it commonly is, then many contemporary beliefs, particularly those that aim at the secularisation of traditionally religious practices, cannot be categorised as religious, as they often lack a divine origin and the meaningfulness generally attached to the role models and teachings of the gods. This analysis shows that the discrepancies are not found in the *poly-*, that is, in the acceptance of multiple, flexible approaches to life, but in the *–theist* or conceptualisation of these approaches as divine.

Through this comparison, furthermore, the nature of contemporary beliefs proves to be more complex than simply 'postmodernist'; the present tolerance is typical of this epistemological current, but the underlying presumption of a universal reality beyond the individual self is modernist at its core. This latter premise is particularly problematic when applied to religious frameworks, for it results in a perennial bias that reduces the particular richness of diverse religions to a 'common core' of an existing but unreachable Transcendent. Religion scholars point to further relativism of this conception as a solution to the bias; postmodernism could benefit from a participatory or, at least, a 'soft' perennial take, which means furthering the relativistic approach and fully rejecting the assumption of an undoubted transcendental reality. Only then will postmodernist belief systems, in the absence of a cohesive idea of the Transcendent, truly recognise all epistemological positions equally.

Comparative studies such as this provide a relevant framework of study of our growing contemporary belief systems, but also open the door to further research about our current conception of 'truth'. It is thus a research field for which sociological, epistemological and theological expertise is needed, and comprehensive cooperation amongst these perspectives is required if we want to use the knowledge to better understand ourselves and the world in which we live.

References

Bagger, M. C. (2003). *Religious Experience, Justification and History.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Blankesteijn, H. (2004, February 5). Pick-a-religion. *NRC-Handelsblad.* [online] Retrieved from https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2004/02/05/pick-a-religion-7672721-a364437

Cataldo, L. M. (2008). Multiple selves, multiple Gods? Functional polytheism and the postmodern religious patient. *Pastoral Psychology, 57*(1–2), 45–58. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-008-0152-z

Cipolla, B. B. (2007, May 26). Is Atheism just a rant against religion? *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/25/AR2007052501953.html

Crescentini, C., Fabbro, F., & Tomasino, B. (2017). Editorial special topic: Enhancing brain and cognition through meditation. *Journal of Cognitive Enhancement, 1*(2), 81–83. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41465-017-0033-4

Daniélou, A., & Gabin, J.L. (2007). *Shiva and the primordial tradition: From the tantras to the science of dreams.* Vermont: Inner Traditions.

Ferrer, J. N. (2002). *Revisioning transpersonal theory: A participatory vision of human spirituality.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Fuller, R. C. (2001). *Spiritual, but not religious: Understanding unchurched america.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gethin, R. (1998). *The foundations of Buddhism.* Reading, UK: Oxford University Press.

Gopnik, A. (2017, August 7 & 14). What meditation can do for us, and what it can't. Examining the science and supernaturalism of Buddhism. *The New Yorker.* Retrieved from https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/08/07/what-meditation-can-do-for-us-and-what-it-cant

Gries, P., Su, J., & Schak, D. (2012). Toward the scientific study of polytheism: beyond forced-choice measures of religious belief. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 51*(4), 623–637. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2012.01683.x

Hiebert, P. G. (1999). *The missiological implications of epistemological shifts: Affirming truth in the modern/postmodern world.* Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International.

Kirk, R. (1999). *Relativism and reality: A contemporary introduction.* London: Routledge.

Knott, K. (1998). *Hinduism: A very short introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Kremer, W. (2013, November 21). Does doing yoga make you a Hindu? *BBC World News.* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25006926

Mavalwala, J. (1966). [Review of the book *Hindu polytheism* by Alain Daniélou]. *American Anthropologist, 68*(1), 241–242. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1966.68.1.02a00460

Mccormick, D. W. (2006). Indoctrination, diversity, and teaching about spirituality and religion in the workplace. *Organization Management Journal, 3*(2), 77-91. https://doi.org/10.1057/omj.2006.10

Morgan, D. (2003). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression: A new approach to preventing relapse. *Psychotherapy Research, 13*(1), 123–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/713869628

Nietzsche, F. W. (2004). *Ecce Homo and The Antichrist.* New York: Algora Publishing.

Pollack, D., & Pickel, G. (2007). Religious individualization or secularization? Testing hypotheses of religious change--the case of Eastern and Western Germany. *British Journal of Sociology, 58*(4), 603-632. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2007.00168.x

Roof, W. C. (1999). *Spiritual marketplace: Baby boomers and the remaking of American religion.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Taylor, S. (2016). From philosophy to phenomenology: The argument for a "soft" perennialism. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 35*(2), 17-41. https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2016.35.2.17

Versnel, H. S. (2011). *Coping with the Gods: Wayward readings in Greek theology.* Leiden: Brill.

White, E. D. (2014). Devil's stones and midnight rites: Megaliths, folklore, and contemporary Pagan witchcraft. *Folklore, 125*(1), 60–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.2013.860766

Young, J. (2006). *Nietzsche's philosophy of religion.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.