Religious Construction of Coherence in Life Narratives

Popp-Baier, U.

[Link to publication](#)

RELIGIOUS CONSTRUCTION OF COHERENCE IN LIFE NARRATIVES

Ulrike Popp-Baier

Ulrike Popp-Baier
University of Amsterdam

RELIGIOUS CONSTRUCTION OF COHERENCE IN LIFE NARRATIVES

1. Religion, meaning and narrative

At the end of his famous study *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* published in 1902, William James concludes that the interest of the individual in his or her private personal destiny is pivotal in religious life:

> Religion, in short, is a monumental chapter on the history of human egotism. The gods believed in – whether by crude savages or by men disciplined intellectually – agree with each other in recognising personal calls. … Today, quite as much as in any previous age, the religious individual tells you that the divine meets him on the basis of his personal concerns.[1]

Several decades later, in an impressive effort to develop a theoretical framework for a cultural analysis of religion, Clifford Geertz referred to Max Weber's delineation of the problem of meaning and provided a general classification of these personal concerns: bafflement, suffering and a sense of insoluble ethical paradox.[2] Geertz identified these issues as radically challenging the presupposition that life is meaningful, and that people can chart an effective course accordingly. With these challenges, Geertz argues, "any religion, however 'primitive' which hopes to persist must attempt somehow to cope".[3]

In psychology of religion, this problem of meaning and its challenges have received remarkably extensive consideration in recent years. In the fourth edition of the textbook *The Psychology of Religion. An Empirical Approach* the authors suggest "the need for meaning" as a framework for psychology of religion.[4] They assume that the search for meaning is central to human functioning, and that religion is uniquely capable of facilitating that search. In addition, they suggest that the cognitive, motivational and social aspects of this endeavour offer the necessary directions "for a rather 'grand' psychological theory to understand the role of religion in human life".[5]

This perspective is compatible with the prominent coping approach within psychology of religion, which addresses the way people deal with life's problems, with suffering in a broad sense by referring to religion as part of people's general orientation system. Most empirical research has addressed how people cope with serious illnesses, other life-threatening events, bereavement and other tragic events in life by referring to the many resources religion has to offer.[6] As Pargament has already argued,[7] and Granquist and Moström have recently confirmed,[8] the saying "there are no atheists in foxholes" is not true. Some empirical studies have demonstrated that people facing serious threats in their lives are no more inclined to turn to religion than those without these stressors. The idea of a causal link between distress and religiosity has not yet obtained sufficient empirical substantiation. These findings remind us of one assumption in Geertz' cultural theory of religion, namely that

---

[1] James 1985: 491.
[2] See Gertz 1973.
[3] Geertz 1973: 100.
[4] Hood, Hill and Spilka 2009.
[5] Hood, Hill and Spilka 2009: 12.
[6] See Pargament 1997; 2011.
[7] Pargament 1997.
[8] Granquist and Moström 2014.

the so-called problem of meaning is not "the basis upon which those beliefs rest, but rather their most important field of applications".[9]

According to the cognitive science approach within religious studies, the problem of meaning can not explain religion or offer basic ingredients for a grand psychological theory of religion. Advocates of this approach insist on the naturalness of religious ideas and explain the cultural transmission of religious concepts such as gods or spirits by demonstrating that these concepts are by-products of important cognitive devices developed by humanity through evolution.[10] Still, arguing that our human cognitive architecture is responsible for the cross-cultural prominence of some religious concepts does not explain why some people adopt these concepts and include them into their orientation systems, while others do not. Nor is it clear why these concepts are pivotal in the orientation systems of some people but are only marginal in the orientation systems of others. Or why some people are strong believers, whereas others refer only reluctantly to religion or include religious ideas in their imaginations, hopes or fears.

Many researchers in the broad field of religious studies now agree on a discursive understanding of religion, on religion as a shifting category variously used to describe cultural phenomena related to social groups, material practices and mental states depending on the interests of those doing the defining.[11] Therefore, hardly anybody wants to explain "religion" anymore, the scientific "why" and "how" questions related to the discursive category "religion" are subtler than some provocative book titles might suggest.[12] Within the confines of a cognitive science approach, Justin Barret describes the scientific endeavour of "explaining religion" as "explaining how mental tools working in particular envrironments resist or encourage the spread of these ideas and practices we might call 'religion'".[13] The scientific questions in the context of a cognitive science approach address causal explanations at the level of implicit cognitive processes. The cultural meaning-centred approach explores above all how people use religious resources (such as symbols, doctrines, rituals, social support etc.) to attribute meaning to what happens to them. The "why" questions address mainly rational and narrative explanations at the level of reasons, rules and narratives. Psychologists of religion, however, also seek causal explanations at the level of cognitive, motivational or social processes.

Be that as it may, the concepts of meaning, meaningfulness and meaning-making have received widespread attention, both in psychology of religion and in psychology in general, rekindling interest in narrative, especially in life narratives.[14] Psychologists interested in personal meaning systems and in individual efforts of making meaning of the events and experiences in one's own life, in the lives of others, and in what happens in the world have argued that narratives are the way in which people make sense of and derive meaning from their experiences.[15] As several authors have maintained, life stories are one of the chief ways that individuals make sense of their lives. This "sense-making" process takes place first by constructing coherence, forming links between different elements of one's life and integrating the past, present and future of one's life into a meaningful whole.[16]

2. Religion and coherence in life narratives

Following Charlotte Linde and Tilman Habermas and Susan Bluck enables us to distinguish life story (Linde) from life narrative (Habermas and Bluck).[17] Linde understands the life story as a "discontinuous unit" consisting of all the stories told by an individual during the course of his or her lifetime, in which he or she makes an important point concerning him or herself, his or her experiences, and his or her world view.[18] Life narratives are the actual stories covering a life-span perspective, the stories that come to surface, for example, in research contexts via biographical-narrative interviews.

The concept of religion used in this paper has to be broad enough to address varieties of references to "religion" in life narratives. Within this paper, therefore, I shall not draw an "etic" distinction between religion and spirituality and shall interpret religion very broadly, including the traditions of what qualify as world religions, as well as so-called alternative notions of the transcendence or the sacred in people's lives. This preliminary understanding will be sufficient to reconstruct the perspectives and vocabularies of people

---

[9] Geertz 1973 : 109.
[10] See Boyer 2001.
[11] See Aghapour 2014: 713.
[12] See Barrett 2011.
[13] Barrett 2011: 231.
[14] Recently some scholars conducting research on lived religion in the broad field of religious studies have also become especially interested in narratives, referring in their research to a narrative turn in the social sciences (cf. Ammerman 2014: 7).
[15] See Waters, Shallcross and Fivush 2013: 112.
[16] See Linde 1993; Baerger and McAdams 1999; Habermas and Bluck 2000; Habermas 2010.
[17] See Linde 1993; Habermas and Bluck 2000.
[18] Linde 1993: 4.

concerning this subject. Inspired by Niklas Luhmann's sociology of religion[19] and by Hubert Hermans's concept of the dialogical self in personality psychology[20], personal religiousness is conceptualized as communication about religion emerging especially in life stories and life narratives as intra-individual and inter-individual communications. This approach makes it possible to conceptualize linguistic and cognitive coherence as a mental phenomenon and as a discursive phenomenon as well.[21]

The interesting question is then: how can communication about religion in life narratives contribute to a coherent life narrative?

Roy Baumeister, in his famous and by now classical study *Meanings of Life* already argues that "[a] coherent life story is more easily derived from a higher level [of meaning] than built up from lower levels".[22] Religions may be understood as global belief systems or as part of such belief systems[23] that enable people to derive meaning from them in constructing a life story.

Habermas and Bluck devised the term autobiographical reasoning for the "activity of explicating the biographical relevance of memories. Autobiographical reasoning creates links between remembered events and other distant parts of one's life and to the self and its development. It refers to the remembering subject's life as the relevant frame of reference, thereby implying the life story".[24] The authors relate four types of coherence to their concept of autobiographical reasoning, focusing on causal coherence and thematic coherence as expressing the unique interpretative stance of the narrator.[25] All types of coherence may be enhanced by communication about religion in life narratives. As Hahn and also Wohlrab-Sahr have argued, religious institutions function as generators of biographies by ritualizing decisive passages of human life and asking pious individuals to plan, interpret and evaluate their lives according to the norms and standards of the global belief systems connected to these institutions.[26]

Especially relating religious or spiritual change implies enhanced autobiographical reasoning in order to position one's own life story in the context of one or more global belief systems and to articulate the change adequately. This autobiographical reasoning implies the construction of multiple coherences (in particular causal-motivational coherence), sometimes accompanied by a meta-communication about the coherent composition of the *fabula* about the *sjuzet*. Becoming religious or becoming spiritual in the sense of intensifying a religious or spiritual perspective on life or in the sense of moving a marginal issue to the center of one's personal interests or, still more dramatically, in the sense of undergoing a complete conversion usually implies constructing a life story and telling life narratives under particular circumstances. A narrative about becoming religious usually implies that the narrator will combine some kind of discontinuity with some kind of continuity to convey what has happened to himself or herself.[27]

In my research on a Charismatic-Evangelical women's group over 20 years ago, I conducted biographical-narrative interviews with women who had experienced a conversion. Some of these women interpreted the changes after conversion as a development, while some conceptualised them as healing experiences, others understood conversion as a decisive step in the journey to their true selves and a contribution to their self-realization, and still others experienced their life after conversion as a life full of miracles.[28] Conversion has often been linked to giving up bad habits, customs and life-orienting principles or maxims. Telling about these changes and breaks and the discontinuity between before and after, however, implies a certain continuity and coherence in relating the situation after to the one before, thus relating different events, episodes, experiences and emotions to one another in the context of a unifying life story. Otherwise, the differences could not even be articulated and, as a consequence, could not be interpreted or explained as more or less profound changes in one's life.

Let us consider, for example, how one of my interviewees, Mrs Zimmermann, opens her life story: She starts with the year of her birth (1945) and talks about her family's circumstances at this time, explaining that her father had to work hard to rebuild their lives after the war, and that he was perpetually overworked, and, as a result, she adds:

---

[19] See Luhmann 1998.

[20] See Hermans 201.

[21] For the conceptualiaztion of linguistic and cognitive coherence as a discursive phenomenon as an alternative to the conceptualization of this kind of coherence as a mental phenomenon, see Brockmeier 2004.

[22] Baumeister 1991: 21.

[23] See Park 2005.

[24] Habermas 2010: 3.

[25] Habermas and Bluck 2000: 750.

[26] See Hahn 1987; Wohlrab-Sahr 1995.

[27] In this paper religious change will be limited to becoming religious or becoming more religious. It will not include becoming less religious. Religious change in the sense of becoming indifferent to religion or losing faith will not be discused here. Conceivably, this kind of religious change might make life narratives less coherent, which is not ne cessarily bad. For a celebration of incoherence in life stories see Hyvärinen, Hydén, Saarenheimo and Tamboukou 2010.

[28] Popp-Baier 1998

"…. that I actually did not have much from my father. And that became later really important, eh, I have to tell this now, because there is a connection between this and what changed after my conversion…"[29]

In these sentences Mrs Zimmermann starts telling the interviewer about her relationship with her father, that she did not have had a good relationship with her father, that there was actually no father figure in her life, as she adds later. And this is one of the things that have changed. After her conversion, as she tells later, she got a wonderful relationship to a father figure, to God as her father, she then could experience the love of a father, something that she previously lacked. Articulation of this change implies the biographical relevance of her memories about her relationship with her father in her childhood. In addition, this articulation is apparently conducive to some meta-communicative reasoning in the sequence quoted above, because Mrs. Zimmermann is not only announcing a thematic coherence within the context of her life story by mentioning a thematic connection between particular circumstances and experiences in one period of her life (childhood) and changes after her conversion in another period of her life (adulthood). She also explicitly addresses her audience (i.e. me, the interviewer) and explains why she has to tell what she does.[30]

In a later project, biographical-narrative interviews have been conducted with women who joined Shamanistic groups. One of these interview partners, a Dutch woman describing her spiritual development as an adult, starts her life narrative with clear biographical arguments, constructing a framework of a global causal-motivational coherence between events and experiences in one part of her life and particular interests and activities in a later part of her life:

"My life story …, now, I, eh, I am now 30, and, eh, I was born in B., lived there for 19 years, eh …., yes, during these first 19 years a lot of important things did in fact happen and have steered me in a certain direction, so to speak…". [31]

And then, this woman Paulien elaborates on the things that from her perspective have been responsible for her later spiritual interests and activities. It is her spiritual worldview, including the idea that what happened earlier in her life has been "motivationally" meaningful for her later life, that allows this kind of autobiographical reasoning.

Whereas Paulien starts her story without elaborating on her spiritual worldview at the beginning of her life narrative, other narrators cannot help but do precisely this to make their life stories understandable. Marijn Bouwmeester, for example, also conducted biographical-narrative interviews for her research masters thesis about women who became active in the so-called "spiritual holistic milieu" in the Netherlands.[32] One of her interview partners started her life narrative as follows:

"OK [laughs], my brains are already pondering about what to tell, and what not to tell, because, well, you can never tell everything, mmh, I think it was important for me, and uh, it surfaced later as well, mmh, that when I was very young, when I was four, that I was very ill, mmh, I had a gastric haemorrhage, which is a disease that ordinarily affects elderly people, and mmh, well, I do not know yet exactly how I will tell that. Chronologically or not. No, I will just tell why, why it was important to me. I see myself and human beings in general as spiritual beings who travel to earth on an outing and not as terrestrial human beings who may sometimes do something spiritual, and.., mmh, when I had just arrived here on earth I was somewhat disappointed, so to speak. So that is how I have always felt about having been seriously ill, like … that it is really very different what I had planned. Therefore, that has been an important point for me. And … yes, I then chose to stay here, but it has been, it has actually, mmh, always been in the back of my head, that, well I might also not be here, so to speak, I could just return. I have always felt a bit like that."[33]

---

[29] English translation of the following transcript of an original German interview segment: "…dass ich eigentlich net viel von meinem Vater hatte. Und das ist nachher auch wirklich wichtig, äh, ich muss das jetzt erwähnen, weil das auch in Zusammenhang steht, was sich nachher jetzt nach meiner Bekehrung da geändert hat."

[30] We can speculate about the motivation concerning this metacommunication. Perhaps Mrs Zimmermann gets the impression that the audience could otherwise not understand why she is telling something about her father in her early childhood, or she may feel guilty about blaming her father in a certain way. But to understand what "God has done in her life" this negative memory needs to be told.

[31] English translation of the following transcript of an original Dutch interview segment:
"Mijn levensverhaal, -- nou, ik, eh, ben nu dertig en, eh, ik ben geboren in B., negentien jaar gewoond. Eh ---, ja, er zijn wel veel belangrijke dingen gebeurd in de eerste negentien jaar die me ook heel erg in een bepaalde richting hebben gezet, zeg maar."

[32] See Bouwmeester 2013.

[33] The text above is the English translation of the following transcript of an original Dutch interview segment:
"Ok (lacht), ja mijn hersens zitten inderdaad gelijk al, ohh wat zal ik vertellen, wat niet, want ja, je kan nooit alles vertellen. Euhmm, het is denk ik voor mij belangrijk geweest eiuh, is later ook wel teruggekomen, euh, dat ik toen ik heel jong was, toen ik vier was, dat ik heel ziek ben geweest. Euhm, ik had toen een maagbloeding, dat is eigenlijk een bejaardenziekte. En euhm, ja nou, ik weet nog niet precies hoe ik dat nou zal vertellen. Chronologisch of niet. Nee ik vertel d'r maar gewoon bij waarom, waarom dat belangrijk voor me is geweest. Ik zie mezelf en mensen in het algemeen als spiruele wezens die een uitstapje naar de aarde komen maken en niet als aardse mensen die misschien af en toe ook iets spiritueels doen. ennn, euhm het is, het is mij euh, toen ik net hier op de aarde kwam eigenlijk ook wel een beetje tegengevallen zeg maar. Dat euh dat

This interview segment embodies a sort of double reasoning: a biographical and a meta-communicative one. On the one hand, the interview partner ponders about what she should tell and how, while on the other hand she interprets a critical life event, a serious childhood illness, by referring to a spiritual orientation she adopted later in life, and this is how she interprets something that overcame her as having been structured by her own expectations, experiences and decisions. The meta-communication of this interview partner is interwoven with the life narrative. She wants to tell what has been important to her and apparently decides that a serious illness she had at age four has been important, in part because something similar has happened to her later in life as well. But then the next "narrative question" confronts her: Should she tell her life chronologically or not? She decides not to do that and informs her interview partner immediately about why this illness has been important, and how she feels about diseases in later life. And this means telling something about her spiritual world view. This way she can also convey more about the importance of this severe disease in the context of her "spiritually" interpreted life story. She understands herself and human beings in general as spiritual beings and she relates this and later diseases to her feelings and choices as a spiritual being, evaluating her experiences with life on earth. It is about feeling disappointed and about the decision to stay or not to stay on earth. This spiritual life reflection not only inspires the meta-communication about a relevant and coherent life narrative but also provides strong causal-motivational coherences for rendering an illness during childhood meaningful and alluding to a meaningful understanding of diseases in later life. It is about "life on earth as an option," and every illness appears to remind the main character in this story of this option.

Interestingly, in this case the spiritual world view also enables articulation of repetitions. This requires a different mode of storytelling: The chronological mode has to be replaced by a cyclical one, enabling establishment of coherence by repetition. Or, alluding to Eliade, one could say that the "terror" of the chronological life history has been escaped by introducing the "eternal" return of meaningful episodes in a life cycle.[34]

Whereas Paulien, who joined a Shamanistic group, relies in the interview segment quoted above on one of the usual assumptions underlying autobiographical reasoning in telling a life story, namely the assumption that particular events, occurrences and experiences have had influenced the subsequent course of one's life, Bouwmeester's interview partner articulated a far more unusual way of autobiographical reasoning and relating events and occurrences in her life to choices and decisions she has made. Her life story reveals what may be described as an unusual way of subjectivization,[35] combined with a cyclical view that is "antihistorical in intent."[36] Suffering and death are subjectivized by being related to struggles, deliberations, choices and eventually decisions of the spiritual being, evaluating existence on earth and contemplating a return to the spiritual realm whenever she decides.

Generally, the temporal sequence of succession of the events in the story might be said to have been thematically re-arranged in the narrative by the spiritual word view. In all three examples that have been discussed so far, this has been made possible by using *prolepsis*, an anachrony that may be described as the "narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event (or a change or an interpretation), that will take place later."[37] An anachrony may extend into the near or distant past or future (scope of the anachrony) and may consist of a story that is short or long (extent of the anachrony).[38] The extent of the anachrony in the examples quoted above is minimal and more or less alludes to changes that happened later or is an allusion to or the abstract of an insight someone acquires later in life. These future changes or insights are part of the autobiographical reasoning of the narrator, they give the narrated event or condition a specific biographical meaning. The reach of the anachrony is determined by the point in time that the religious change has taken place in the life story. In all cases chance, contingency or arbitrariness are eliminated, the temporal order of a life history is captured in the web of a cohesive and meaningfully structured life story.[39]

In a sense, a certain "load of 'predestination'" might be said to surround all these narratives.[40] This may be reinforced by religious concepts connecting the life of the narrator to a meaningful past. Such concepts will offer the narrator additional possibilities to disengage from the chronological sequence of a life story he or she wants to relate in a life narrative. Another anachrony, the *analepsis,* which is the narration of an event that took place

gevoel heb ik er zelf altijd bij, bij dat ik flink ziek ben geweest, zo van, nou dat is toch wel heel anders euh, dan ik euhm, ik van plan was eigenlijk. Dus dat is voor mij een belangrijk punt geweest. En (..) Ja, ik heb toen wel gekozen om, om hier te blijven, maar 't is, 't is wel euhm, altijd een beetje op de achtergrond geweest van nou, ik kan ook niet hier zijn zeg maar, ik kan ook weer gewoon, gewoon terug. Dat heb ik atlijd een beetje gehad."

[34] See Eliade 2005.
[35] See Taylor 1991; Heelas and Woodhead 2005.
[36] Smith 2005: xvi.
[37] Genette 1980: 40.
[38] Genette 1980: 48.
[39] See also Genette 1980: 57
[40] Genette 1980: 67. With these words Genette is characterizing *Manon Lescaut* and *The Death of Ivan Illich*, because these novels start with informing the reader about the end of the story.

earlier than the point in the story the narrator has reached,[41] could be expected to play an important role in the context of autobiographical reasoning in these life narratives.

Let us examine, for example, one of the biographical-narrative interviews from Karen Holtmaat's study on the role of Buddhism in the coping processes of Western Buddhists.[42] One of her interview partners was Eddie de Vries, who mentioned at the start of the interview that he was gay, and that this had not changed during his life, nor did he need it to. He went on to describe a problematic relationship with his father, explaining how he was not in touch with his true self for many years. Living in a Dutch city in his late twenties, he discovered Vipassana meditation and Theravada Buddhism. A long period of travelling in Asia and participating in retreats followed this initial encounter with Buddhism. In Buddhism, Eddie found a meaningful explanation for the problems he experienced in life, including his conflicts with his father.[43]

> "About my father, I know that I had a past life with him in America. We were brothers... In that life we had a large manufacturing business. I was the tough businessman, while he was the sympathetic brother. So our roles were reversed. That's why in this life I chose my father, to experience the other side …
>
> I feel that the karma with my father has now been restored. We have such a good relationship now. We even hug each other." [44]

Eddy's use of the word "choice" is remarkable in this context. He has chosen his father in this life. By using Buddhism as an "explanatory system"[45] or "coherence system"[46] in his life narrative, he interprets events and experiences in his life as results of events and experiences in past lives. And by introducing some intervening factors, namely his tasks, wishes and choices, he formulates complex, dense stories about what has happened in his life until now, especially about his strained but improving relationship with his father, embedded in multiple causal-motivational coherences by the processes of autobiographical reasoning. The Buddhist concepts of karma and reincarnation allow far reaching and extensive *analepses* in telling a life story. The *analepsis* to a past life in Eddie's life story enlarges the coherence concerning the narration of his relationship with his father. Although the extent of this common sense exceeding analepsis in the interview segment quoted above is small, it reflects a clear orientation concerning place (America), family relationship (brothers), social-economic context (large manufacturing business) and personality traits (Eddie as a tough businessman, his father as the kind-hearted brother). Referring to another life in the past, in which he and his father were brothers, allows overall causal-motivational embedding of his conflicts with his father and an explanation for the eventual solution of these conflicts.

3. Conclusion

If we want to address the problem of meaning in psychology of religion, we would do well to turn to life stories and life narratives. Religion as a cultural system remains a valuable resource for many people to make meaning in life by constructing coherent life stories and life narratives. Research in the social sciences on "coherence" has been dominated by Antonovsky's prominent concept of "sense of coherence" which has been understood as an internal disposition of the individual. It has been described as a universal construct that facilitates successful coping.[47] But, as Ville and Khlat argue, the empirical research connected to this concept has not yielded the expected insights.[48] In the meantime, some authors have suggested replacing the concept of a sense of coherence as an internal disposition with that of coherence as a product of sociocognitive work on self-narration.[49] Other suggestions for conceptualizing "coherence" in empirical research include coherence as a feature of the life story[50], as the product of autobiographical reasoning[51] or as a discursive phenomenon. [52] In psychology of

---

[41] Genette 1980 : 40.
[42] Holtmaat 2012.
[43] See Holtmaat 2012: 69.
[44] Holtmaat 2012: 73. The author also quotes the transcript of the original Dutch interview segment in a footnote on page 73: „Van mijn vader weet ik dat ik een vorig leven met hem heb gehad in Amerika. Toen waren wij broers. ...En in dit leven, in amerika was dat, hadden we een hele grote manifactuur, of stofzaak. We waren broers en ik was de foute zakneman en hij was de lieve broer. Dus de rollen waren omgekeerd. En daarom heb ik in dit leven die vader gekozen, om de andere kant te ervaren. .... Eh, ja en dat dat kerma met mijn vader dat is nu ook voor mijn gevoel helemaal opgelost. We hebben nu zo'n goede band met elkaar. We kunnen mekaar nu zelfs knuffelen."
[45] Linde 1987.
[46] Linde 1993.
[47] See Antonovsky 1987.
[48] Ville and Khlat 2007 : 1003.
[49] Ville and Khlat 2007.
[50] Baerger and McAdams 1999.
[51] Habermas and Bluck 2000.
[52] Brockmeier 2004.

religion, a similar shift from "internal dispositions" to "narrative manoevers" would be preferable.

References

AGHAPOUR, Andrew Ali (2014). "Defining 'Religion' as Natural: A Critical Invitation to Robert McCauley". *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 8: 708-715.

AMMERMAN, Nancy (2014). *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes. Finding Religion in Everyday Life.* New York: Oxford University Press.

ANTONOVSKY, Aaron (1987). *Unraveling the Mystery of Health. How People Manage Stress and Stay Well.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

BAERGER, Dana Royce, MCADAMS, Dan P. (1999). "Life Story Coherence and its Relation to Psychological Well-Being". *Narrative Inquiry* 9: 69-96.

BARRETT, Justin L. (2011). "Cognitive Science of Religion: Looking Back, Looking Forward". *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50: 229-239.

BAUMEISTER, Roy (1991). *Meanings of Life.* New York: Guilford Press.

BOUWMEESTER, Marijn (2013). *Women and Spirituality. A Study of Women's Motivations to Engage in Spiritual Groups and Practices.* Amsterdam: Unpublished MA Thesis University of Amsterdam.

BOYER, Pascal (2001). *Religion Explained : The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought.* New York: Basic Books.

BROCKMEIER, Jens (2004). "What Makes a Story Coherent ?" In Angela Uchoa Branco and Jaan Valsiner, eds., *Communication and Metacommunication in Human Development.* Greenwich: Information Age Publishing. 285-306.

ELIADE, Mircea (2005 [1954]). *The Myth of the Eternal Return.* Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

GEERTZ, Clifford (1993 [1973]). *The Interpretation of Cultures.* Hammersmith: Fontana Press.

GINETTE, Gérard (1980 [1972)). *Narrative Discourse.* Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Oxford : Basil Blackwell.

GRANQUIST, Pehr, MOSTRÖM, Jakob (2014). "There Are Plenty of Atheists in Foxholes – in Sweden". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 36: 199-213.

HABERMAS, Tilman (2010). "Autobiographical Reasoning: Arguing and Narrating from a Biographical Perspective". In Tilman Habermas,ed. *The Development of Autobiographical Reasoning in Adolescence and Beyond. New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 31: 1-17.

HABERMAS, Tilman, BLUCK, Susan (2000). "Getting a Life: The Emergence of the Life Story in Adolescence". *Psychological Bulletin* 126: 748-769.

HAHN, Alois (1987) "Identität und Selbstthematisierung". In Alois Hahn and Volker Kapp, eds., *Selbstthematisierung und Selbstzeugnis: Bekenntnis und Geständnis*. Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp. 9-24.

HEELAS, Paul, WOODHEAD, Linda (2005). *The Spiritual Revolution. Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

HERMANS, Hubert J.M. (2001). "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural Positioning". *Culture & Psychology* 7: 243-281.

HOLTMAAT, Karen (2012). *The Role of Buddhism in Coping Processes of Western Buddhists.* Amsterdam: Unpublished MA Thesis University of Amsterdam.

HOOD, Ralph W., HILL, Peter, C., SPILKA, Bernard (2009). *The Psychology of Religion. An Empirical Approach.* Fourth Edition. New York: Guilford Press.

HYVÄRINEN, Matti, HYDÉN, Lars-Christer, SAARENHEIMO, Marja, TAMBOUKOU, Maria (eds.) (2010). *Beyond Narrative Coherence.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

JAMES, William (1985 [1902]). *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature.* New York: Penguin Classics.

LINDE, Charlotte (1987). "Explanatory Systems in Oral Life Stories". In Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn, eds., *Cultural Models in Language & Thought.* New York: Cambridge University Press. 343-366.

LINDE, Charlotte (1993). *Life Stories. The Creation of Coherence.* New York: Oxford University Press.

LUHMANN, Niklas (1998). "Religion als Kommunikation". In Hartmann Tyrell *et al.*,eds., *Religion als Kommunikation.* Würzburg: Ergon. 135-145.

PARGAMENT, Kenneth (1997). *The Psychology of Religion and Coping*: Theory, Research, Practice. New York: Guilford Press.

PARGAMENT, Kenneth (2011). "Religion and Coping: The Current State of Knowledge". In Susan Folkman, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health, and Coping.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 269-288.

PARK, Crystal L. (2005). "Religion and Meaning". In Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal Park, eds., *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality.* New York: Guilford Press. 295-314.

POPP-BAIER, Ulrike (1998). *Das Heilige im Profanen. Religiöse Orientierungen im Alltag.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

SMITH. Jonathan Z. (2005). "Introduction to the 2005 Edition". In Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. IX-XXI.

TAYLOR, Charles (1991). *The Ethics of Authenticity.* Cambridge: Havard University Press.

VILLE, Isabelle, KHLAT, Myriam (2007). "Meaning and Coherence of Self and Health: An Approach Based on Narratives of Life Events". *Social Science & Medicine* 64: 1001-1014.

WATERS, Theodore E.A., SHALLCROSS, John F., FIVUSH, Robyn (2013). "The Many Facets of Meaning Making: Comparing Multiple Measures of Meaning Making and their Relations to Psychological Distress". *Memory* 21: 111-124.

WOHLRAB-SAHR, Monika (1995). "Einleitung". In Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, ed., *Biographie und Religion. Zwischen Ritual und Selbstsuche.* Frankfurt a. Main : Campus. 9-23.