

Peik Ingman, Terhi Utriainen, Tuija Hovi, and Måns Broo (eds): *The Relational Dynamics of Enchantment and Sacralization: Changing the Terms of the Religion Versus Secularity Debate*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2016, 281pp.

This anthology is the result of the research project *Post-secular culture and a changing religious landscape* at Åbo Akademi University, Finland, and part of the series *The Study of Religion in a Global Context*, published in association with the International Association for the History of Religions.

The modern self-image, based on ideas from the Enlightenment and Weber's '*Entzauberung der Welt*', is an illusion, argues the French sociologist Bruno Latour. Contradictions between religion and rationality, magic and reason, are only constructions expected to separate the modern from the pre-modern. However, we have never been modern in Latour's view. We still live in an enchanted world, and the aim of this anthology is to reflect on *The Relational Dynamics of Enchantment and Sacralization: Changing the Terms of the Religion Versus Secularity Debate*. Using Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as their main theoretical premise, and with an interdisciplinary focus on Finland and the Nordic countries, the researchers seek to reflect on how to study 'things that look, sound or feel like religion from one angle or for a moment but that from another perspective and in another setting and moment do not' (2016, 2).

What then is religious, and what is secular: when and where, to whom and why? What can the ANT help us to see when secularisation seems taken for granted? Through the ANT the researchers seek to show how the interactions between humans and non-humans, ideas and processes, are situated in time and space. Both humans and non-humans are regarded as equally capable and active agents in these networks – networks that must be produced and reproduced to survive. To be enchanted is therefore defined in the anthology as a state and an event. The individual is enchanted by something. Sacralisation, on the other hand, is about participating and doing something in a special and structured situation (2016, 11).

It is interesting to note that the examples presented in the first and second part of the book, *Revisiting Enchantment and Animism and Political Concerns*, illuminate how women use a mix of what may be regarded as enchantment, animism, and religion to empower themselves individually and collectively. Institutional religion is challenged by newly invented rituals built on old traditions. Drums and cedar twigs become, for example, active and purifying objects or 'speaking persons' in a new eastern Canadian godparent ritual (Hornborg, Chapter 2). A statue of the Virgin is cared for like a human being – she *becomes* human – as four chosen *camaristas* bathe and dress her every day (Whitehead, Chapter 3). Women who believe in

angels are challenging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The church regards belief in angels as a childish and sentimental belief in magic by otherwise modern and self-conscious women (Utriainen, Chapter 7). Another example (Broo & Köningstedt, Chapter 4) discusses Western forms of yoga as a personalised idea, method, and active object transcending the actual practice of yoga.

As Meredith McGuire shows in her previous research (in *Lived Religion* (2008), for example), women – more than men – tend to draw on the boundaries between institutional and non-institutional religion, blending elements from different religions and spiritual traditions into a daily meaning-making resource. Women empower themselves, transcending everyday life through different rituals, practices, and material objects for personal and social agency. However, despite the positive possibilities for self-reflection, self-development, self-knowledge, and self-improvement, in my opinion there may also be a potential risk of self-control and self-surveillance in relation to religious ideas and objects that may have an adverse effect on women's ability to act.

New and traditional gender roles exist in parallel. Traditionally, women have primarily been expected to care for others, like the *camaristas* caring for the statue of the Virgin. At the same time, because we live in a health and wellbeing culture, it is legitimate for women to take care of themselves. Women may then be-

come both empowered subjects and less powerful objects in relation to the human as well as the non-human actors in a network, as when the dancers in Chapter 11 (Fujda) cover the mirrors in the rehearsal room because the mirrors have turned into living observers with – according to the dancers – intentions that are not only good.

In the third and final part of the book, *Academic Concerns*, I would have liked the authors to elaborate further on gender issues in relation to enchantment, magic, and religion, as well as on the floating and individual subject-object positioning in which the power and agency the individual attributes to herself encounters the power and agency she attributes to other humans and non-humans. As human beings, according to the ANT, we are constantly acting together with everything that surrounds us. What has been criticised, however, concerns, for example, the idea that there is no difference between human agency and the agency of material artefacts, animals, sacred places, and so on to interact and create a network which probably contains both consistencies and inconsistencies. The idea of there being equal conditions between humans and non-humans in terms of representing and actively expressing norms, morality, and ethics has also been criticised – a criticism that is considered in the anthology.

We live in a changing religious landscape in which there is a new visibility of religion in the public

sphere – not least through the many media platforms, the individualisation and commercialisation of religion, and previous and new waves of migration. The state and former state churches are challenged by the many other voices wishing to define what religion is or is not. Choosing a theoretical perspective is therefore always to opt out of other possible perspectives and ways of analysing the results of a study. In this anthology the authors have been consistent in using the ANT to test phenomena from the Nordic countries and different parts of the world. This is enriching for the reader and an opportunity to learn more about the ANT, and how it can be used in an interdisciplinary setting through largely ethnographic methods. Using the ANT also challenges the idea of a human dominance over non-humans. The new materialism examined through the ANT seems, however, apt at a time when questions about sustainability and the environment colour the general debate about the human impact and use of nature and material objects in an everyday and broader global perspective, not to mention a conceivable sacralisation of nature.

So does this anthology discussing the relational dynamics of enchantment and sacralisation change the terms of the religion versus secularity debate? It is not that concepts like enchantment and sacralisation are more neutral than religion and secularity, as the anthology itself states, but the authors show the complexity, possibilities, and limi-

tations of using these concepts as analytical tools with the ANT. The anthology convincingly shows that the tension between religion and secularity is a modern construction – a contradiction that seems out of fashion.

Anneli Winell

Uppsala University

ANNELI WINELL, PhD in the sociology of religion, Department of Theology, Uppsala University, and Stockholm School of Theology.