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### BOOK REVIEWS

#### *Sociology and Psychology*

BAWIN-LEGROS, BERNADETTE/SCHROD, HANNELORE: *Le couple rythmé par ses crises: Un regard croisé entre une sociologue et une thérapeute de famille*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015. – 159 p.

Dans cette étude les auteurs abordent, à l'aide de cas cliniques, quelques grandes crises que traversent les couples aujourd'hui, en passant de la formation du couple au risque de la rupture, la naissance des enfants, la recomposition familiale, l'influence des nouvelles technologies et la retraite. Les chapitres successifs du livre renvoient à ces tranches de vie, dans un monde lui-même en crise et en pleine mutation. L'objectif des deux auteurs est de tenter de mieux comprendre quelles crises découlent, d'une part, du contexte social, et de l'autre part, du fonctionnement (ou du dysfonctionnement) relationnel au sein même du couple. L'originalité de ce livre réside donc dans cette approche en binôme: le regard d'une sociologue (Bernadette Bawin-Legros), qui depuis longtemps s'interroge sur le couple, la famille et la solidarité intergénérationnelle, et d'autre part d'une thérapeute familiale d'inspiration systémique (Hannelore Schrod). Il n'est pas toujours facile de trouver un équilibre entre ces deux perspectives. En effet, la sociologue appuie

sa réflexion théorique sur des faits objectivés par des enquêtes, tandis que la thérapeute (systémique) cherche à aborder les personnes non seulement au niveau individuel, mais dans une compréhension familiale globale.

L'ouvrage révèle son intérêt justement par cette tension. Cette double orientation est l'occasion d'apporter un regard plus neuf en plus original sur des crises encore parfois mal cernées. Une crise peut se produire à n'importe quel moment de la vie, plus particulièrement quand une page se tourne. Il devient alors important d'essayer de comprendre plus précisément ce qui est à l'origine du déséquilibre relationnel. Souvent le «déraillement» d'un couple est dû à ce qui n'a pas été pris (suffisamment) en compte dans la relation, soit parce que les partenaires ont évolué, soit parce que certains aspects de leur personnalité, qui avaient été mis de côté pendant les premières années de la relation, remontent à la surface et créent un éloignement, voire une rupture. En dehors des déclencheurs de crises bien connus, tels que la naissance d'un enfant, la perte d'un emploi, la mort d'un proche, les auteurs mettent aussi l'accent sur le rôle des médias sociaux et des nouvelles technologies, dont l'impact sur les couples (et les familles) peut être particulièrement grand et parfois dévastateur. En effet, que ce soit la jalousie, la surveillance du compte de l'autre, les disputes ou les infidélités réelles ou virtuelles, les réseaux sociaux mettent bien de mariages à l'épreuve. Les médias sociaux modifient non seulement l'espace conjugal,



mais redéfinissent l'infidélité en interrogeant nos valeurs et nos croyances.

*Geert Fasseur, Anvers*

BURKART, GÜNTER: *Soziologie der Paarbeziehung: Eine Einführung*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018 (Studententexte zur Soziologie). – x, 413 S.

Wie kann eine Paarbeziehung beobachtet und beschrieben werden, worauf ist zu achten? Darüber entfaltet Günter Burkart sein Lehrbuch in 15 Kapiteln. Detailreich entfaltet werden die Einzelfragen, besonders unter der Einbeziehung der empirischen Daten.

Im Prolog versucht der Autor den Begriff „Liebe“ soziologisch zu fassen. Er bezieht sich auf die wichtigsten Veröffentlichungen und weist auf eine erste historische Veränderung hin. Heute ist die Liebe „ein Magnetfeld menschlicher Sehnsüchte“ und „das Ergebnis unserer eigenen Entscheidungen“ (2). Schon spricht er von den Gegenwartsphänomenen, dem Internet, der Wissenschaft und der Biochemie – jeweils in gut einer Seite und ohne eine in allen Punkten nachvollziehbare Ordnung. Genau dies ist eine der Hauptschwächen der Veröffentlichung, dass Ungleiches kurz und knapp aneinander gereiht wird – wieder in „1.3 Soziologie der Liebe“ mit 7 Unterüberschriften verschiedenster Art auf vier Seiten. Die begriffliche Schärfe und die methodisch klare Zuordnung fehlen. Einzig die Angabe der empirischen Quellen ist zuverlässig und genau.

Das zweite Kapitel entfaltet soziologische Perspektiven. Dabei unterscheidet B. ausdrücklich die Soziologie von Reflexionen der Psychologie. „Die Paarbeziehung gehört zu den kleinsten Einheiten von ‚Gesellschaft‘.“ (232) „Eine Theorie des Paares sollte erklären können, warum in modernen Gesellschaften die überwiegende Mehrheit der Individuen sich in der biographischen Paarbeziehung wiederfindet, warum das Leben in einer Paarbeziehung eine so hohe Bedeutung hat.“ (24f.)

Im 3. Kapitel folgen historische Betrachtungen, ein Kapitel zur Paarbildung (Kap. 4)

und dann zur Paardynamik (Kap. 5) – gerade hier wäre ein leichter Zusammenhang herzustellen. Die Kapitel 6-8 beschreiben verschiedene Formen des Zusammenlebens (mit und ohne Trauschein, getrennt Lebende, Trennung und Scheidung). Weitere Kapitel reflektieren das Verhältnis von Individuum und Gesellschaft, Geschlechtnormen, Sexualität zwischen Monogamie und Polyamorie. Dem folgen wiederum Kapitel, die die soziale Wirklichkeit der Arbeit, der Rationalisierung und Interkulturalität berühren. Schließlich endet die Sammlung mit dem 15. Kapitel über „Mediatisierte Liebe und die Zukunft des Paares in der globalisierten Welt“ (343).

„Welche Bedeutung kommt heute noch der Ehe zu?“ (Kapitel 6.7, 138 -141) So fragt B. und beginnt zunächst wertend: „Trotz der Normalität des nichtehelichen Zusammenlebens gilt die Ehe immer noch als legitimierte und rechtlich privilegiert Lebensgemeinschaft von Mann und Frau.“ (138) In diesen vier Seiten wird 12 Mal mit dem Begriff „noch“ die vorhandene Wirklichkeit relativiert, um schließlich die Folgerung zu ziehen: „Wenn es um das Zusammenleben und die Sexualität geht, dann hat die ‚feste Beziehung‘ die Ehe abgelöst.“ (141)

Das abschließende Unterkapitel „15.11 Romantische Liebe in der globalisierten Welt“ (366-369) stellt immer noch unterschiedlichste Forschungserträge – sowohl bezüglich ihrer regionalen und kulturellen Verankerung, der Ethnologie, der Ökonomie und der Systemtheorie – nebeneinander, eröffnet den Blick auf die Globalisierung und die Bedeutung der Medien und bleibt ratlos. Gerade, wenn es nicht gelingen kann, Beziehungen klar nach einem Deutungsmuster zu beschreiben, ist es notwendig, die Thesen und Antithesen, die differenzierten Positionen ausdrücklich darzustellen und in ihrer Gegenläufigkeit zu identifizieren. Das aber geschieht leider nicht ausreichend.

Dem Buch fehlt die Konsistenz und der rote Faden, der dem/r Leser\*in ermöglicht, eine gute Übersicht und eine vertiefte Einsicht zu gewinnen. Er/sie muss selbst die vielen Informationen in einen Zusammenhang setzen, der ihm die Beziehungswirklichkeit erschließt, eine Wirklichkeit, die zudem



höchst plural ist. Für die Form des Lehrbuchs wäre es angemessen, lerndidaktische Impulse zu setzen, neben den Fließtext weitere Quellen, Lesehinweise und v.a. Zusammenfassungen vorzulegen – immerhin hat der Rezensent wenige Tabellarische Übersichten gefunden. Auch wäre es hilfreich, die 15 Kapitel in logischen Zusammenhängen zu größeren Überschriften zusammenzuführen oder den Text mit einem ausführlichen Stichwortverzeichnis zu erschließen. So steht Vieles nebeneinander. Die erschlossenen Quellen als solche, auch etliche statistische Angaben helfen weiter, sich mit dem Themenfeld zu befassen. Die gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Deutungen und Einordnungen kommen jedoch zu kurz.

*Richard Hartmann, Fulda*

MACVARISH, JAN: *Neuroparenting: The Expert Invasion of Family Life*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. – IX, 116 p.

This book contains six chapters, starting with “What is Neuroparenting”, followed by “The Claims of Neuroparenting”. Macvarish then delves into “Neuroparenting and the Quest for Natural Authority”, and further examines this parenting move under a broad sociological aspect in chapter 4, “Neuroparenting and the State”. The next chapter sees how the sociological effect of neuroparenting backfires on individual families. The final chapter concludes with an explicit evaluation on the problems of neuroparenting.

Using highly charged emotional words, the author incisively criticizes neuroparenting. Nonetheless, if readers look beneath the apparently highly partial and biased examples, they may appreciate M.’s earnest effort to alert neuroparenting supporters to reconsider this new wave.

M. uses pictures from UK government reports, the shrunken brain of a 3-year-old extremely neglected child alongside the brain of a normal child, to situate the rise of neuroparenting in UK policy (1). He defines neuroparenting as “a way of thinking which claims that ‘we now know’ (by implication, once and for all) how children ought to be

raised” (2). He “quotes”, in a satirical tone, how various politicians had normalized early intervention in parent training. M. contends that the underlying issue is not only one of a parenting deficit but also that “the relationship between families and the state is being reconstructed” (16).

M. scrutinizes critically how different agencies, including book authors and policy-makers, turn some neuroscience facts of infancy brain development into “pseudoscientific metaphors” and “killer facts” to support political arguments of discarding economic stagnation, entrenched inequality, and stalled social mobility (31) as the cause of deprivation. He criticizes their conceptualization – “a problem generated by the poor-quality parenting carried out by poor people” (30). Neurobiologisation is actually pathologizing normal family life. “A critical response” would be to examine (37) these claims, and a political discussion of neuroparenting regarding parents faced with the prospect of a brain-impaired child (37) is needed.

M. relates how neuroparenting, as a cult guide to infant care, relies “on the authority of nature” (41), on “the authority of science as nature’s modern interpreter” (41), and on the theories of maternal-infant “bonding” and “attachment” (46). Parenting is not learning “on the job” but “training by external experts” (48). Society is changed “by improving the nurture of the next generation” (50). Molding the child becomes a communal project. Neuroparenting advocates mutability by expert-led intervention, especially in the first three years. “The problem represented by differential class- or race-based child ‘outcomes’ is redefined as one of inadequate knowledge and expertise.” (56) Neuroparenting is “an attempt to avoid moral and political questions by using science and nature as an eternal, universal, unquestionable source of truth” (57).

The idea of a “parenting deficit”, “parenting support”, and the early intervention approach found their way from the USA into the UK at the turn of the twentieth century. The UK later led the way in “parenting support”, parenting “expertise”, and a “parenting workforce”. “Neuroparenting entrepreneurs” see poverty, racism, poor parenting, and



domestic violence as consequences rather than causes of problematic emotions. Objective measures of parental improvement for policy evaluation were established with the rise of a “therapeutic state”. M. contends that “neuro-parenting thinking is the expansion from ‘problem groups’ who are distinguished by the lack of adherence to social norms” (74).

The “first three years movement” focuses on state intervention to improve the parent. Chapter 5 sees how this movement got “into the home” (78). Neuroparenting experts instrumentalize everyday family life by stressing parents’ need to: (1) actively and consciously consider everyday actions as significant for the child’s long-term development; (2) do more talking, smiling, singing, counting, playing, reading to children; (3) follow professional parent support workers’ advice. (79) The love and care that parents spontaneously carry out, such as absent-mindedly nuzzling our newborn’s head or singing to the baby is to positively influence the parent-child bond and facilitate language development (88). One will ask, “If baby care and child-rearing are no longer intimate pleasures, why would parents continue to undertake this endeavor?” (92)

M. points out time and again that neuroparenting raises scientific expertise above parents in addressing babies’ needs. Mothers are highly pressurized to fit into intensive motherhood. The family becomes a place of risk, where parental input is instrumental in nature to improve outcomes, deviating from nurturing by love and care. Family relationships risk being diminished by the imposition of external imperatives on the parent-child relationship (95) and parental authority and intergenerational relationships will be undermined. The child’s needs become “expert-identified” (105). M. further relates neuroparenting to increasing inequality between middle class and the poorer and less-educated group. Finally, M. summons the need to defend the privacy, intimacy, and autonomy of family life against the wave of neuroparenting.

People interested in the sociology of family life and child development may find this book useful and interesting.

*Pui-Ling Chau, Milton Keynes, England*

RUBEL, BARBARA: *But I Didn't Say Goodbye: Helping Families After a Suicide*, 3rd ed., Kendall Park, NJ: Griefwork Center, Inc., 2020. – 220 p.

Written for “clinicians and families working together to help children and adults after a death by suicide”, this third edition of *But I Didn't Say Goodbye* is in two parts, the first, theoretical background and the second, application through story. The adult and expert voice in which the first part is written is in sharp contrast with the adoption of the 11-year-old narrator’s voice through which Barbara Rubel tells the story. Her use of two voices facilitates the processing of theoretical material in the first part, and the child’s voice in part 2 engages the reader affectively despite an initial feeling of irritation. This third edition allows Alex, the young narrator, to add a comment from ten years later at the end of each chapter, a device used to show the healthy integration of the tragic loss of his father to suicide.

Published eleven years after the second edition, R. includes a succinct and accessible account of what is known about suicide, updated by the scholarship of the last decade on “the sociology, psychology and neuropsychology of suicide” (19). Part 1, entitled “What is Postvention? The Act of Helping those Affected by a Suicide” (35), is only twenty-eight pages in length. It categorises those impacted by the death, from those marginally exposed and affected, through to the family members and close friends and those who experience a high level of self-perceived psychological, physical, and emotional impact for a considerable time after exposure to the suicide of another person. (31)

R.’s affective and intellectual grasp of the impact of a death by suicide shows in her ongoing commitment to keeping abreast of developments in research and practice to help both families and clinicians. The preface makes it clear how the book is to be used, to be read from beginning to end, not to be dipped into. This is a workbook, with set questions at the end of each chapter of Alex’s story and two grief processing exercises in the appendices. It also gives a clear description



of what each of the ten chapters in the story is demonstrating as they move through different stages, from the worst day, the day of the death, through to the first anniversary. R. lays out the territory, based on the six mourning theories she has chosen “that propose ways for the bereaved to cope with mourning” (46). She then shows, through the characters, how to respond therapeutically to the many ways distress is expressed by the people affected. The story illustrates “normal” reactions, those of a fully functional family, for the most part. She adopts a clear position, that normal grief reactions are not pathological but a “healthy” response to the pain of the loss of a loved one in such heart-breaking circumstances, and that these reactions differ depending upon the relationship with the dead person. That this is not always the case is dealt with in Part I, which incorporates a discussion of complicated grief or Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder PCBD, a candidate disorder listed in DSM-5 appendix under “Disorders Requiring Further Study” (39). R. includes thirty of Worden’s list of factors affecting reactions to a death by suicide, a trauma which changes lives forever (40). In Alex’s family, his mother’s expression of conflicting emotions helps Alex to express his anger and love, highlighting the need for clinicians to help parents help their children.

Other factors impacting on the outcome are included: secondary losses if financial problems result from suicide and lead to loss of the home and/or a change of school, culture and religion, and resilience. As R. quotes: “the purpose of spirituality and religion is to present an outlook of hope, relief, coping, or meaning in life” (44) – it seems to me that this is more an outcome of faith, powerful when it is shared by the grieving family. Post-traumatic growth (50) is a beacon of hope in all of this. Also included are short helpful sections on what helps children of different ages, on postvention in the American death system and on helping clinicians deal with the death of a client by suicide.

I was left feeling that the terrain had been well mapped, and that the circumstances of the suicide, the history of the relationships, the community support available, and the

psychological and spiritual resilience of those left behind would determine the outcome for the individual and the family. The extensive references, and additional resources and readings, point the clinician to where answers to less normal trajectories might lie.

*Jean Marsh, Hebden Bridge*

SWAMI, VIREN: *Attraction Explained: The Science of How We Form Relationships*, London-New York: Routledge, 2016. – 273 p.

How do we form relationships? Even more precisely, what attracts two persons to begin a new relationship? The author attempts to answer this question with the help of extensive research and numerous experiments and studies carried out in the fields of psychology, sociology, and social psychology. There is no separate introduction, but the opening chapter serves the purpose by stating clearly the objective of the book and the direction it intends to pursue. It begins with an outright rejection of “unscientific” ideas on relationship formation propagated by theories of magic and mystery, common sense, self-help industries, and pick-up artistry. In their place, the present study explores four major factors that could possibly affect the process of forming a relationship, namely, geographical proximity, physical attractiveness, similarity, and reciprocity. The chapters that follow verify in a systematic manner the veracity of these hypotheses.

Chapter two examines how geographical and social *proximity* exerts an effect on relationship formation. Through many observations, hypothetical experiments, and online surveys, the author concludes that physical proximity indeed sets the stage for a new bonding, and familiarity lubricates its further development. In simple terms, the chances of initiating any new friendship or romantic relationship increases when two people live near each other and interact constantly.

That is not automatic, though. The second factor, *physical attraction*, too, plays a major role in bringing two people together, especially



in the case of a romantic relationship. Along with this chief factor, chapter three delves also into the impact of attraction from the perspective of men and women separately, to verify the truthfulness of gender-biased judgments in this regard. Even more interestingly, it attempts to “explain” why physical appearance matters in initiating a relationship.

Experience reveals, however, that physical attraction alone is not enough. Hence, chapter four delineates many other qualities, such as personality, sense of humour, warmth, confidence, honesty, understanding etc., which could literally increase the possibility of enhancing the initial attraction. The analysis of “close time effect” in this regard makes not only interesting reading but also offers a sharp intuition into how even a banal situation serves the cause. Through a careful analysis of many psychological experiments, it is shown that physical attractiveness is a dynamic factor, which, coupled with other factors, influences greatly the development of a relationship.

Do we like people who express a liking for us? In chapter five the author explains why the “principle of reciprocity” generally works, especially the “dyadic” reciprocity more than the “generalised” one in the case of a romantic relationship. However, he is quick to add that the effects of reciprocity are not always straightforward. Many personal, relational, and existential factors determine the reciprocal attraction, like the perceived motive, the sacrifice involved, the tactics and strategies used in the initial interactions, the effectiveness of chat-up lines, etc. Of particular importance for intimate relationship formation is the quality of self-disclosure of the people involved.

Finally, chapter six investigates the oft-repeated claim that similarity breeds attraction. Drawing on the results of diverse psychological tests and studies, the author confirms that similarity does matter to the formation of relationships. He, then, goes on to explain why certain forms of similarities exert a real effect on relationship formation. Instead, the idea that opposites attract is more complex than generally thought to be.

The concluding reflections in chapter seven are very helpful, because they confirm

the ideas the reader gradually formulates in his or her mind while reading the results of so many real, hypothetical, and on-line experiments in the preceding chapters. The author comes to the conclusion that formation of any human relationship, especially an emotional and romantic one, involves a convergence of many factors. An accurate prediction in this realm is a near-impossible task. Factors such as chance, luck, stress-management, personal past experiences, etc., weigh intensely on beginning a new relationship. The most fundamental reason for this is that people are complex. Forming a committed relationship is indeed tricky.

On the whole, the book makes interesting reading and offers numerous subtle intuitions into relationship formation. In continuity with his own previous analyses and reflections on related themes, the author arrives at a wise conclusion that no single factor can fully explain how and why two people enter into short-term or lasting relationships in the busy crossroads of life. Complex and mysterious as they are, human beings behave in a manner that evades every attempt to circumscribe it within predictive frameworks. Hardly, therefore, would one disagree with the major findings and conclusions of this book, notwithstanding the inherent limitations of any empirical study. However, it must be said that due attention to factors such as culture and age difference would have certainly enriched the reflections even more. Social interactions are culturally determined to a great extent, and the formation of relationships too is significantly influenced by cultural norms, values, and expectations. Similarly, the needs and aspirations of people change as they advance in age, and hence many new factors enter into the question of bonding.

Moreover, given the versatility of human choices and the increasing incidences of break-up in relationships, one wonders at the appropriateness of words such as “explained” and “science” in the title and subtitle of the book. In reality, the chief findings seem to move towards “wonder” and “art” of forming relationships.

*Sahayadas Fernando, Rome*



WALDRON, VINCE: *The Middle Years of Marriage: Challenge, Change and Growth*, New York, NY: Lang Publishing, 2017. – 175 p.

Vince Waldron, assisted by students doing research in a Communication and Aging course, has offered a valuable book that includes data from hundreds of interviews with couples in mid-life marriages. The work is divided into three sections. The first, which deals with foundational issues, provides an overview of marriage for those in midlife (understood here as 40-65) in the United States. This initial chapter gives an introduction to current demographics as well as additional meaningful information such as diversity, health, finances, and then offers some evaluation of this age group using Erikson, Levinson, and Duval to provide a scholarly context for this population. The second chapter (as well as the final chapter) offers information related to the course from which much of the research derived, the methods, analysis, as well as the interview schedule.

The bulk of W.'s text analyzes and categorizes the data into four excellent chapters. The Challenges and Changes chapter details the issues unique to people in this demographic. The remaining three deal with strategies and mechanisms that have allowed people to successfully navigate this distinctive time in married life, Protecting, Coping, and Growing. Each of these sections include stories from their research which put very relatable faces and names on the issues that many couples in this period of life will face. Included are very helpful tables, multiple examples, and stories that will help readers understand and relate to the ideas being offered. One example in the Protecting chapter are the tables offered on Protective Practices and Protective Words and Phrases. After introducing the concept and research related to the issue of protecting one's marriage, W. breaks down the language and terms needed for a couple to practice and master the strategy in a manner that any couple could understand and begin to use in daily life. Additionally, W. addresses many

specific challenges facing midlife couples such as physical health, relocation, empty nest, death, financial troubles, boomerang children, sexuality, addiction, and care for elderly parents. Readers will relate to, and benefit from the challenges raised, and the focus on enduring these hardships together.

The book concludes with the two final chapters that offer the Methods and Measures (described above) and a chapter devoted to resilience theory and its application to this demographic group. Defined as the "processes associated with successful stressor management, or the combination of personal and social characteristics that allow a relationship or social group to deal with serious stressors in a manageable way" (147), this chapter breaks down the theory and explains its application. As with the earlier chapters, this section delivers strong research in a digestible format, sharing excellent recent research with examples and visuals to help couples or those in professional practice implement the ideas in lived experience.

Overall, W.'s work is a very valuable text for those interested in dealing with issues causing problems in their midlife relationship as well as for those involved in fields related to marriage and family. As mentioned above, the book includes excellent current research and the hundreds of interviews undertaken by students in W.'s course, which results in a timely and relevant read that points out problem areas for couples in this demographic, and solutions and positive ways to deal with the inevitable issues that arise for couples at this point in life. The research is presented in a very user-friendly way, and the stories included from the interviews will help couples to see that their struggles and challenges are typical and manageable. The chapters on Protecting, Coping, and Growing offer a variety of positive strategies that all couples can implement in their lives to deal with stressors in order to "rethink the design, [of their relationship] choosing an approach that better matches the changing landscape of midlife" (95). The book is highly recommended.

*Randall Woodard, Saint Leo, FL*



WITTING, CAROLINE: *Reproduktive Autonomie: Über das Potenzial eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, Münster: Aschendorff, 2018 (Studien der Moraltheologie: Neue Folge; 10). – 228 S.

„Reproduktive Autonomie“ ist ein Begriff, der in unterschiedlichen Kontexten Züge eines Konfliktbegriffs aufweist. Drei Felder – die Entwicklungen der Reproduktionsmedizin, die die Gesellschaft und das Individuum (die Frau bzw. Mutter in erster Linie) affektieren, ethische Reflexionen angesichts der Elternschaft und der Fortpflanzung und letztendlich theologische und kirchlich amtliche Diskussionen – nähren die Vermutung, der Begriff und dessen praktische „Übersetzungen“ führten das Gespräch zwischen Vertretern der drei genannten Bereiche zu einem semantischen Chaos oder wenigstens zu unüberbrückbaren Missverständnissen. Die Autorin Caroline Witting anerkennt die semantischen Schattierungen des Begriffs: Autonomie als medizinische oder global kulturelle Machbarkeit des Menschen, als Verneinung eines politisch-rechtlichen Eingreifens oder staatlicher Regulierung dritter Instanzen zwischen Lebenspartnern bzw. zwischen Mutter und Kind, als Freiheitsspielräume im Hinblick auf lebenskräftige Entscheidungen, als Entscheidung im Dialog, als Freiheitsereignis im Sinne eines Gottesgeschenkes und einer göttlichen Aufgabe usw. – dies alles beziehe sich auf aktuelle Handlungsweisen und tiefgründige Überlegungen, die eben die Differenzen zwischen (ideologischen) Positionen aufweisen. Die Autorin wird es nicht bei „Differenzen“ bewenden lassen: Ihr Anliegen beinhaltet mehr als die Offenlegung eines semantischen Diskussionsfeldes, sondern es führt zu Annäherungsversuchen zwischen unterschiedlichen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen und Entwicklungen innerhalb katholischer (lehramtlicher) Diskurse des letzten halben Jahrhunderts. Aus ihrem – gelungenen – Versöhnungsversuch möchten wir vier zentrale Punkte hervorheben.

Zunächst sei darauf hingewiesen, dass die Autorin die Diskussion über reproduktive Autonomie nicht zu einer rhetorischen Debatte bezüglich Selbstbestimmung im

Sinne des Schwangerschaftsabbruchs einengen möchte. Sie intendiert eben den gesamten Bereich der Reproduktionsmedizin zu berücksichtigen, samt ethischer Verwendung des Begriffs Autonomie und theologischer Deutungen desselben. Hier zeichnet sich gerade das Anliegen ihrer Arbeit aus: eine differenzierte Analyse des Begriffs vorzunehmen, damit ein bedeutsames Potential für eine theologisch-ethische Reflexion von Fortpflanzungsprozessen zutage tritt. Im Anschluss an dieses Anliegen weisen die Ergebnisse ihrer Untersuchungen zur reproduktiven Autonomie nicht nur auf ein Spannungsfeld zwischen katholischer Kirche und moderner Gesellschaften hin, sondern auch und vor allem auf einen wichtigen Beitrag zu einer argumentativen Betrachtung der Reproduktion aus der Perspektive der theologischen Ethik.

Das Spannungsfeld bezieht sich auf den Wissenszuwachs im Bereich der Reproduktionsmedizin: Der Umgang mit jenem Wissenszuwachs sei, so die Autorin, eine der wesentlichen ethischen Herausforderungen: Die sittliche Verantwortungsfähigkeit wird zwar vorausgesetzt, aber die Schwierigkeiten, mit welchen die Betroffenen angesichts immer neuer Wissenschaftsmöglichkeiten und gesellschaftlicher Erwartungshaltungen konfrontiert werden, werden nach wie vor ausgeblendet. Die bedeutsame Frage drängt sich auf: Wie könnte man innerhalb der Kirche und auf einer breiten gesellschaftlichen Ebene Frauen und Männer bei ihrer Entscheidungsfindung unterstützen? Welches Wissen nützt ihnen wirklich – so lautet in verschiedenen Variationen die Paraphrase ihres Anliegens. Diese Fragestellung läuft auf zwei wesentliche Schritte hinaus: ethische Analysen und theologische Lektüren und Deutungen.

Aus dem ethischen Bereich werden zwei Ethikerinnen herangezogen, die in der Debatte angesichts reproduktiver Autonomie auf der semantischen Ebene überbrückende Einsichten entwickelt haben. Zum einen meldet sich Hille Haker, zum anderen Claudia Wiesemann in der Debatte. H. Haker übersetzt den Begriff der reproduktiven Autonomie mit „elterlicher Verantwortung“,





innerhalb derer die Annahme des Kindes konstitutiv ist und Selbst- und Fürsorge seitens der Eltern ermutigt werden. Hier kündigt sich keimhaft eine theologische Ethik an, nach der Eltern ermutigt werden, aus ihrer eigenen Kindschaft, aus der eigenen Herkunft und der unbedingten Liebe und Annahme durch Gott ihre eigene begrenzte menschliche Verantwortung und die nach Unbedingtheit strebende Annahme ihres Kindes abzuleiten.

C. Wiesemann tritt der erwähnten Übersetzung bei, indem sie die Ermöglichungsgrundlagen der Erfüllung von Selbst- und Fürsorge beim Namen nennt: Es handelt sich um Bildungs- und Informationserweiterung und vor allem um Vertrauen als moralisches Prinzip einer Ethik der Fortpflanzung – und zwar im Rahmen aller Betroffenen bei der Entscheidungsfindung. Bei beiden Ethikerinnen stellt sich heraus, dass reproduktive Autonomie nicht in erster Linie mit reiner Selbstbestimmung oder Selbstbestimmungsrecht zu tun hat, sondern vor allem mit der selbstbewussten Fähigkeit der Subjekte, die sich als fragile Akteure einer geteilten Vertrauenspraxis in einer kollektiven Autonomie verstehen. Die Handlungsspielräume angesichts der Weitergabe des Lebens werden von ihr dermaßen geachtet, dass die an der Reproduktion beteiligten verantwortlichen Subjekte unverzichtbarer Bestandteil ihres Autonomieverständnisses sind.

Die theologischen Lektüren und Reflexionen stellen sich als der wesentliche und überraschende zentrale Punkt heraus. Mosaikartig erwähnen wir: Analyse fundamentaler Texte des kirchlichen Lehramtes und (deutscher) Bischofskonferenzen, Deutungsversuch der moralischen Prinzipien I. Kants, Ausgangsbeobachtungen theologischer Anthropologie bezüglich menschlicher Freiheit als Gabe und Aufgabe Gottes und Andeutungen des Potentials reproduktiver Autonomie für die theologische Ethik. Besonders aufschlussreich sind in diesem Zusammenhang die Analyse und Deutung des päpstlichen apostolischen Schreibens *Amoris laetitia*. Die Autorin beschreibt nicht nur die semantischen Verschiebungen, die sich innerhalb der lehramtlichen Texte aufweisen, sondern deutet jene

Verschiebungen von einer Frontstellung Kirche-Moderne angesichts der reproduktiven Autonomie in Richtung einer Integration des Begriffes in einen ethischen Rahmen einerseits und einer potentiellen Eröffnung eines theologischen Diskurses andererseits. Denn letztendlich beziehe sich, so die Autorin, reproduktive Autonomie auf verantwortete Elternschaft aufgrund von drei Merkmalen – Mensch als moralisches Subjekt, Verbindung mit betroffenen Personen, Berücksichtigung einzelner Situationen –, die auch theologische Relevanz aufweisen in dem Sinne, dass sie auf eine Aufgabe der theologischen Ethik verweisen, die die Stärke des christlichen Glaubens eröffnet, indem er den Menschen hilft, mit dem Nichtwissen umzugehen und eine zuversichtliche Sicht auf das eigene Leben zu gewinnen. Sich selbst einschränkend erwähnt die Autorin, die konkrete Ausfüllung der genannten Ethik sei noch weiteren Untersuchungen zu unterziehen.

*Geert Faseur, Antwerpen*

VANSTEENWEGEN, ALFONS: *The Good Enough Couple: Rules for a Relationship*, Chennai: Prowess Publishing, 2019. – x, 179 p.

This book is aimed at partners who live together and who want to establish a better relationship. The original version was previously translated from Dutch into German, Italian, Afrikaans, Greek, Spanish, Hungarian, Chinese, Turkish, and French. The book consists of eleven chapters that cover a range of issues on relationship and marriage. A short summary at the outset of every chapter indicates the focus of the chapter in question. Subtitles in italics help to structure the text. Throughout the book, Vansteenwegen uses the term “marriage” in the broad psychological sense of the word. It thus refers to a great variety of forms of living together with their own meanings and definitions.

The author conceived of his book as a do-it-yourself guide to relationship problems full of solutions. On the basis of concrete testimonies and real-life examples from his own practice, he offers insights into how a



marriage can work and which methods to use to resolve conflict. The work contains thus a few models, points of view, and the framework of a basic marriage so it becomes clearer where the exact issues may be. The author also aims at assisting partners in finding solutions, and he makes suggestions on how to handle different situations. He also clearly indicates when not to muddle along, but rather consult a specialist.

The first introductory chapter deals with some fundamental questions on living together and marriage, including: Is living together with a partner still a viable reality today? Can a marriage succeed “naturally”? What is an equivalent relationship and what are its conditions? V. starts from the observation that reality sets in fast when living together and that differences are part of that. That is normal. And one could even say that it is healthy. Being married can and will lead to several issues that are unavoidable.

Chapter two discusses the topic of standing up for yourself in the relationship. V. focusses on topics such as independence, self-assurance, and exclusive ownership. The following third chapter first deals with the different means that partners use to acquire territory within a relationship, including, among others, flattery, helplessness, guilt induction, and blackmail. Subsequently, it describes what the appropriate answer to these techniques could be.

The fourth chapter focusses on a very important theme in relationships: communication in the broad sense of the word. Indeed, many issues between partners have to do with “communication”. Every behaviour in a relationship is communication. What are the different aspects of communication? What are the contradictions in communication between partners, and how can you avoid them? At the end of the chapter, V. formulates fourteen of rules communication as advice to improve communication between partners.

In chapter five the author deals with another important theme in relationships: thinking about myself and my partner. The way people perceive themselves influences how they perceive their relationship. Sometimes the way partners see themselves and each other

is extremely exaggerated and incorrect. They fool themselves with these myths. This chapter discusses these myths and provides tips. Besides general interaction, i.e. talking and listening to each other, there is another central theme in a relationship: sexuality. Chapter six explores this theme in three steps: sexuality as interaction, three languages of sexuality, and personal sexual history.

Chapter seven talks about emotions and how to handle them. Being in a relationship implies feeling at ease with your partner and sharing emotions. V. emphasizes in this chapter that these emotions will determine the durability and stability of the relationship. The eighth chapter deals with phases and transitions during the course of a marriage. Generally speaking, there are seven phases that are all followed by a transition period. Because the author explicitly focusses on cohabitation, he does not discuss the first phase of laying a foundation for a marriage and the last phase of being the surviving spouse. The other phases are passed in review: (2) distancing yourself from the family; (3) welcoming children; (4) dealing with adolescents; (5) the so-called empty nest; (6) retirement.

Chapter nine elaborates on decisions that come with a serious long-term relationship: divorce or progressive change. The author provides a few added rules for planned changes within a marriage and enumerates several devices to assist relationship changes. Chapter ten talks about constructive conflict resolution and contains helpful tips on how to fight in a healthy manner, including three methods of negotiating. The final chapter focusses on raising children. It is not an easy job. V. draws a parallel between the relationship models he previously described and the relationship between parents and children even though this relationship is completely different. The book concludes with an epilogue: Is love a verb? The author focusses on the main line of approach in his work: he considers living together in a relationship and marriage something you can work on.

Although the first edition of this work dates back to 1988, the content remains very relevant and necessary to our times. Its content is universal and applicable to couples



worldwide. The concrete testimonies and real-life examples are still very familiar and can easily be translated to one's own context. In that respect, it is commendable that the English-speaking world will now also have access to this bestseller, even if the cover looks a bit old-fashioned.

*Els Agten, Hasselt*

ZAVATTINI, GIULIO CESARE (ed.): *Talking with Couples: Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy of the Couple Relationship*, London: Karnac, 2015. – XVIII, 119 p.

This book is a result of an educational experience of a group of psychoanalytic psychotherapists who have worked with couples for some time. They use a relational approach, shifting emphasis from interpreting and constructing the past toward the process of engaging partners and the therapist in the same sessions, in order to reconstruct and reflect on their encounters with each other in the present.

In chapter one, Laura Dallanegra analyses the history of psychoanalysis and couple relationships, opening up avenues for today's psychoanalytic thinking and practice. She begins from the Freudian notion of the mind as an individual embodiment of relations in the family and the ensuing influences. She shows that currently psychoanalysis lays emphasis on what happens when two minds come into contact, a fact that is ongoing, rather than merely encoding one individual mind. She introduces the concept of field as an environment which allows partners and the analyst to become active in counseling. She argues that each member comes with their mental package, causing mental mating, which creates an unexpected middle ground from which the relationship is healed.

In chapter two, Barbara Bianchini and Lidia Vitalini trace the movement from individual sessions toward interpersonal approaches. With a clinical example, they show the link from the partners' family toward the *analytic third*, an environment which grows in counseling, facilitated by the

analyst. This unconscious third unveils infantile yearnings which partners project on each other, making their relationship out of convenience, resulting in an *unconscious fit*, but protecting their inner selves from intrusion by the other. When the motivations are unfulfilled, the relationship suffers because the partners return to their adolescent behaviors and suffocate their relationship, preventing it from growing toward maturity in facing their current family situation.

In chapter three, Maria Adelaide Lupinacci and Giulio Cesare Zavattini analyze the relationship between the partners as equals and the mental state of the therapist. This equality is made possible by making them understand the background of each other's behavior in their former families. The authors use an equal triangular approach, whereby the partners form the sides of the triangle and their relationship becomes the third. With the facts of the family such as daily issues and the coming of the children, this triangle may be disturbed, even reversed. The therapist intervenes for clarity and questioning to make the partners come to a mature and fulfilling relationship, thus restoring the equilibrium.

In chapter four, Marina Capelo tackles the technical matters of the therapist at work. These include how the therapist reacts during the sessions and how to maintain the right perspective and promote reciprocity. By the use of a triadic diagram, she shows that what needs to be healed are the partners as the two sides of the triangle and their relationship as the third side. The partners go to the sessions with the feeling that they miss the third entity, namely, their relationship which they wish to be restored. The other technical matters involve the right setting: the length and frequency of the sessions, stability, which involves the regularity of exchanges and reflections. There may be need for a second therapist. The therapists look for the dominant features of the sessions' atmosphere in order to help create hypotheses which help this process. The sessions are not merely reconstructing the past but are constructive, basing themselves on the relationship between patients and the therapist.



In chapter five, Fabio Monguzzi gives the theoretical summary of the book. He maintains that in joint therapy what is at stake is the relationship between the partners, a fact that must be managed in the process of therapy. This process looks at the psychic complementarity of the partners, their shared ideas and internal objects. In interpreting couples' difficulties, the therapist analyzes emotional reactions and the reciprocity of the couple. Their past histories are important, but they are not sufficient in understanding the current circumstances. Some of the problems in this approach are how to resolve the tensions between the partners in order to get the process moving and how to regulate emotional explosions in the process. Once the therapeutic space is internalized, partners can offer each other psychological containment, relational intimacy and understanding.

This book is relevant to those working with couples in the process of therapy as well as couples who feel the need to restore their troubled relationships. This approach is relevant to today's emphasis on the need to talk to each other as a means of resolving conflicts. When this is not possible among couples themselves, this is made possible in counselling sessions. The book is rather technical, but by the use of clinical examples, this difficulty is solved.

*Petri Assenga, Nairobi*

### *Cultural Perspectives*

BUNTING, ANNIE/LAWRANCE, BENJAMIN N./ROBERTS, RICHARD L. (eds.): *Marriage by Force? Contestation over Consent and Coercion in Africa*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016. – XIV, 343 p.

Many girls in Africa are coerced into marriage because of their lack of capacity or freedom to give consent. They are married either too young (between the age of nine to fourteen!), or they are given to people they don't love. This is what the book terms "Marriage by force", and those in it become

permanent slaves who earn their living by sexual services, labor, and reproduction.

Contentious issues here include arranged marriages whereby a girl, predicted even before birth, is given to someone who could even be of her father's age. The woman belongs to her husband as property. If the husband dies, she is inherited by her husband's relative. Likewise, a girl can be given as credit to service a loan (pawn) taken by her father. Other cases include kidnapping girls during war for the combatants. The evidence that wives in these marriages are not happy is that some of them try to escape or kill their husbands and even try to commit suicide.

Structurally, besides the wonderful introduction which gives the entire panorama of its contents, the book is divided into three parts. Part one explores this situation at the time of colonial rule and the struggles by the colonial masters to address it. Part two shows how the newly independent African states addressed it. Part three presents contemporary perspectives in this regard. The area under investigation is the entire continent but presented by region. Research is done in one country in a given region as a representation.

Part one covers chapters one to four. In chapter one, Richard L. Roberts presents the situation in French West Africa, particularly in Sierra Leone with regard to war situations. In chapter two, Olatunji Ojo explores the issue in Igboland (Nigeria), mainly with regard to the marriage of the freed slave girls. In chapter three, Brett L. Shadle shows the Kenyan situation and its long history, which culminated in 2014 in the *Kenya Marriage Act* that set 18 as the age of marriage. In chapter four, Francesca Declich analyses the situation in Southern Somalia under Italian administration. The main issue here comes from Islam, which has a low age for girls' marriage. Since the main concern for the Italian administration was labor, they did not bother much with regulations which could not further the colonial interests.

Part two covers chapters five to eight. In chapter five, Elizabeth Thornberry presents the current struggle against customary forced marriages in South Africa (*ukuthwala*). In chapter six, E. Ann McDougall gives the



situation of concubinage in Mauritania, which is permitted by the Quran and the reluctance of the various administrations to intervene. In chapter seven, Bala Saho presents an interesting situation in Gambia where women are forced into marriage by traditional beliefs and superstitions. In chapter eight, Benjamin N. Lawrance and Charlotte Walker-Said bring to light these issues by presenting the legal claim by asylum seekers who use the forced marriage claim as justification. This chapter extends the topic under discussion to include sexual minorities such as gays, lesbians, and transgender persons who are persecuted for not conforming to the traditional forms of marriage.

Part three gives the contemporary perspectives of the topic under discussion, covering chapters nine to thirteen. In chapter nine, Mariane C. Ferme analyzes the concepts under discussion in relation to the local and international legal processes, including various organizations led by women. In chapter ten, Judith-Ann Walker presents the situation of mass marriages in Northern Nigeria organized by the state in order to safeguard the Islamic tradition in favor of men. In chapter eleven, Muadi Mukenge presents a plea for the modern African woman against all forms of oppression. In chapter twelve, Stacey Hynd describes forced marriage as a form of death. In chapter thirteen, Emily S. Burrill presents the history of violence against women as an embodiment of a continuous trauma which needs care in handling.

This book has successfully managed to paint the actual situation of many marriages in Africa which are entered into under coercion, by which the woman is the victim. It highlights the enduring problems of bride price/wealth and economic limitations which make schooling difficult for girls in comparison to boys, cultural/religious beliefs which influence early marriages for girls, and civil wars through which girls are abducted mainly for sexual services. It is a must-read for all who are involved in women's emancipation, and should be a compendium for the voices against gender inequality.

*Petri Assenga, Nairobi*

CONG, XIAOPING: *Marriage, Law and Gender in Revolutionary China, 1940-1960*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016 (Cambridge Studies in the History of the People's Republic of China). – xvi, 327 p.

Liu Qiao'er (刘巧儿), a famous 1950 Ping opera (评剧) is the thread that links the chapters of this book and accompanies us in the understanding of how the social and cultural influence of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) legal practices was a main element in the construction of marriage and gender relations in the period between 1940 – so still in a period of political uncertainty – and 1960.

This Ping Opera, presented on Beijing's stages to accompany the promulgation of the revolutionary new Chinese Marriage Law, was based on a real and influential legal dispute that happened in 1943 in the Chinese Communist based area Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region (BR). The case, known as Feng v. Zhang, was about a dispute between two families over a traditional marriage contract. Refusing her father's will to marry her to a rich landowner, the young woman became an emblem for women who wanted to fight against the old marriage practices. This legal dispute, which had several literary and musical transpositions, became a way to promote a new concept of self-determination (自主) that inspired women to choose their own mate in marriage.

The book starts by describing the socio-political and socio-cultural situation of the BR at the beginning of the Second World War. The author describes how late imperial practices were challenged by the 1911 revolution or by the May Fourth Movement, but the people bound to tradition and the choice – more or less explicit – of the government to adapt its policies to some of the local customs so as not to antagonize the local inhabitants prevented a radical change in the marriage practices. Through the reading of historical documents and of the motivations of the judges in charge of these cases, the author skillfully reconstructs the slow cultural integration of the new rules and regulations on marriage.

Another important point in the book is the passage, within the legislative discourse,



from the term *Ziyou* (自由 freedom) to the term *Zizhu* (自主 self-determination). There is a subtle semantic difference between the two terms: while *Ziyou* in its classical acceptation indicates a free decision arising from one's unrestrained volition, which may possibly include negative connotations such as lawlessness and arbitrariness (141-142), the term *Zizhu* emphasizes the subjective power in making a decision regarding a specific issue (147).

Through this transition in terminology, which is considered by the author as a cultural process, *Zizhu*, or self-determination, became a new principle for marriage based on legal practice. The outcome of this was the improving of the position of women and their living conditions in marriage.

The following chapters, which are based on an empirical investigation of the 1943 Feng v. Zhang legal dispute, and above all on the cultural and social description of how this legal dispute, which happened in a remote village of the border region, became a legal, political, and cultural exemplar on the national stage.

This extensive work, based on new data to which the author has recently had access, shines new light on the role that the Chinese revolution had on rewriting the role of women in family and society. The Chinese revolution and the legal practices produced by it produced a new cultural environment. What the author seems to invite us to read between the lines is that the experience of the revolution and the practices related to it can only be read and interpreted by placing them within the framework created by Chinese culture and symbols.

This book is a very interesting work that gives an original contribution to the historical knowledge of a period and a theme, that of Chinese marriages, previously known only through stereotypes and dated works.

*Marco Lazzarotti, Heidelberg*

CRONIN WEISFELD, CAROL/WEISFELD,  
GLENN E./DILLON, LISA M. (eds): *The  
Psychology of Marriage: An Evolutionary*

*and Cross-Cultural View*, Lanham, MD:  
Lexington Books, 2018. – xiv, 372 p.

The editors of this volume, a married team of evolutionary psychologists and a colleague, assert this work presents thirty years of research exploring what makes marriage a species-wide form of human behavior, while accounting for adaptations to different cultural values and perceptions. The book is a collection of articles from 35 contributors, including researchers in China, Russia, Turkey, and the UK; each chapter/article has its own bibliography and is a standalone work.

Part 1 of 4 presents the editors' methodology, including detailed descriptions of their main research instrument, the Marriage and Relationship Questionnaire (MARQ). This instrument was translated and adapted to the different cultural contexts where it was applied. The articles in Part 2 are primarily based on this tool, while those in part 3 include other methodologies.

Part 2 presents articles/chapters on application of the MARQ in the United Kingdom, Turkey, Russia, China and Brazil. As well there are chapters on USA Latino, African American, and gay couples. These articles focus on reporting data from responses to the questionnaires described above; they are not in-depth discussions of the issues inherent in the questions. For example, the chapter on marriage in Turkey, which is better written than others, describes data regarding differences in marriage satisfaction between self-choice vs. arranged marriages, and between couples who lived autonomous lives vs. those embedded in multigenerational families. The chapter on marriage in Brazil presents data on cultural differences in marriage within this large country, and describes findings regarding the effect of children on marriage satisfaction, showing similarities between the Chinese and Brazilians vs. other cultures.

While findings such as the foregoing are quite interesting, it is impossible for this reviewer, a non-expert on these methods, to evaluate the validity of the data. The quality of the writing varies significantly among these articles, and some are based on references



that are quite old, not a surprise since the editors tell us they are presenting thirty years' worth of research. Nevertheless, I would have valued more consistent, explicit contextualization of older research in terms of more contemporary material.

Part 3 presents data about behavioral traits in marriage, namely attractiveness, religiosity, humor, sex, infidelity, and marital conflict, each treated in a separate article. For instance, data was collected about perceptions of attractiveness from different cultural perspectives, and other data describe cultural differences regarding long term marital satisfaction and physical attraction. The article on religiosity measured this reality in terms of its contribution to marital satisfaction, marital quality, and longevity of the marriage. It shows the level of assent by couples in seven different cultures to questions about (a) the significance of religious beliefs about marriage, (b) belief in divorce, (c) whether marriage is a public commitment. The chapter on humor is intriguing, those on sex and infidelity more predictable. The chapter on sources of conflict in marriage shows that across cultures lack of kindness is one of the main sources of marital dissatisfaction.

The following summary discussion after describing data about marital conflict shows that discussion of the data's implications is not the forte of this volume. "As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, perhaps the key to a successful marriage is not only avoiding contempt and undue criticism, but also actively displaying kindness and positive affect." (275)

Part 4 discusses ethical considerations such as informed consent and proposes ways of addressing these considerations in different cultures. Practical advice is offered to those considering doing research outside the USA. Finally, the authors offer a chapter labeled "Toward a Model of Marriage", where they include a list of sixteen generalizations they feel have been supported by the findings of the different articles presented. These generalizations are articulated in evolutionary terms. It is not clear to me how the chapters on cross-cultural marriage similarities and differences supported all these generalizations

about evolutionary psychology. I am not persuaded by the assertion about a number of marital behaviors described as biologically selected rather than culturally determined, nor did I see a persuasive discussion regarding to what extent a behavior might be determined by biology and how much by culture. For instance, item no. 3 states, "Traits that enhance mate value, success in remaining married, and success in raising children have been selected for." (319) I did learn new material about cross-cultural views of marriage and differences between cultures in what makes for marital satisfaction.

In summary, this work seems useful as a reference tool for those interested in data driven research on cross-cultural issues in marriage. As a non-expert in this type of research, I cannot evaluate the validity or up to date nature of the data in the various articles; this remains for me a significant question.

*Diana L. Villegas, Manizales, Colombia*

DANAHER, JOHN/McARTHUR, NEIL (eds.):  
*Robot Sex: Social and Ethical Implications*,  
Cambridge, MA-London: The MIT Press,  
2017. – 314 p.

This edited volume offers a wide and diversified spectrum of opinions on the social and ethical implications of human-robot sex. More precisely, it analyses the possibility, meaning, and consequences of human beings engaging in a "sexual act" with a highly sophisticated sex robot. The editors have grouped together the fifteen essays that make up the book in six parts and develop various perspectives gradually and systematically. The brief introduction to each part anticipates in a way the ethical viewpoint of the authors.

The introductory part begins with the essay of J. Danaher who offers a working definition of robot sex or sexbot, its historical development, and the features of those which are currently available in the market. While doing so, he introduces the reader to the major philosophical, social, and moral predicaments that such a development implies. The subsequent essay by M. Migotti



and N. Wyatt deals with the very idea of having sex with robots by discussing the nature and possibility of human-robot sex.

Part two offers three different but inter-related arguments in favour of human-robot sex, even as these authors try to dispel the initial and rather spontaneous doubts and questions that such a technology raises. N. McArthur argues that sexbots would provide people a realistic and intensely satisfying sexual experience. Similarly, J. Danaher, B. Earp and A. Sandberg analyse step by step the major objections to the development of sexbots and conclude that these arguments are vague and unpersuasive. Therefore, the call for a blanket ban on the development sex robots is not warranted. Finally, E. Di Nucci contends that sexbots will be “beneficial” to all, especially to those who are not able to enjoy the wellbeing that sexual pleasure brings because of their disadvantaged existential conditions of life.

In the following three essays that constitute part three, the authors attempt to offer arguments against the possible human-robot sexual act. To this effect, N. Herzfeld recalls the true significance and purpose of sexuality and a variety of objections to such a sexual behaviour from the perspective of Judeo-Christian sacred Scripture. In addition, J. Danaher pools together a wide range of criticisms against the use of robot sex and outlines its ethical challenges from the perspective of a “Symbolic-Consequences Argument”. However, he ends on an uncertain note because of the possible caveats also in his arguments. The final essay of L. Strikwerda in this part unearths the possibility of developing a child sex robot and compares it with the prevalent entirely computer-generated child pornography. This is done to highlight its legal and moral implications, especially from the perspective of virtue ethics.

After having viewed the human-robot sex from the perspective of human beings and the society, part four looks at this development from the viewpoint of the robot itself. It attempts to answer the question whether or not such a sex might be good or bad for the sexbots themselves. For example, S. Petersen envisages that highly sophisticated sexbots, in

the near future, would indeed experience pain or pleasure and would even have goals and values attributed to their behaviour. Instead J.D. Goldstein revisits the sexual ethics according to the New Natural Law Theory and shows how human fulfilment can be achieved if and when a sexbot is made capable of establishing the basic good of “complete friendship” with human beings. This would eventually pave the way for a “foundational justification for the moral possibility of sex with robots” (175).

Moving beyond the general question of human-robot sex, part five debates the possibility of a loving relationship between human beings and sex robots. According to M. Hauskeller, the sex robot might give the impression of being a lover and companion, but it can never be a human person, for it would always lack self-awareness and self-concern. Even if a sex robot is designed and programmed to provide more sexual satisfaction than a human partner, in all creative ways imaginable, it would never be equal to a real person. Sex understood as a particular form of companionship and communion between two persons can never be achieved with a sexbot. In the following essay, S. Nyholm and L.E. Frank explore the possibility and desirability of “love” between human beings and advanced sex robots. They refute such a possibility by analysing the meaning of “being a good match”, the distinctive particularity that human lovers value each other, and the understanding of “commitment” involved in a sexual act.

Where do all these developments and discussions lead? In the concluding part of the book, three authors reflect on the future of robot sex in human life and society. To begin with, drawing on two empirical surveys on people’s reactions to the existence and use of sex robots, M. Scheutz and T. Arnold outline their “benefits” and underline the necessity of going beyond narrow discussions on sexuality towards intimacy and companionship which future sex robots might provide. J. Carpenter applies *attachment theory* to explore how people might gradually develop a deep attachment to the “robot sex worker” as an alternate way to fulfil their desires and longings. Finally, M. Adshade argues that the





arrival of a new technology gradually changes social behaviour. The advancement in contraceptive technology has radically changed the social perception of sexuality and has widened the possibility of sexual relationships. Similarly, the “sexbot-induced social change” too would particularly affect the meaning of sexual intimacy and marriage in the years to come and would almost certainly lead to the evolution of marital norms and institutions.

The present volume forms part of the growing literature on the impact of developing robots on personal and social life in general, with a special focus here on its implications for human sexuality. In general, the book gives the impression of taking a sort of “open ethical stand” on this delicate issue by merely juxtaposing a wide variety of evaluations of possible human-robot sex. In fact, the two editors of the volume belong to the opposing camps of arguments. One might argue that this might very well be an option.

As for the arguments, the authors who look favourably upon the possibility of sex with robots tend to reduce the moral goodness to the mere “benefits” it might bring to the users. Those who are sincerely concerned about its development and use underline the elements that constitute a human sexual act, but in the end they, too, seem to evince a certain uncertainty about the strength of their own arguments. Some other authors easily succumb to the inevitability of such a development in the future.

Undeniably, as a whole, the book offers some valuable inputs and insights into the social and ethical implications of human-robot sex. It brings out rather clearly the various issues involved in it. At the end, however, the reader closes the book with the impression that nothing could be done against such a technological development and everything that is technically possible will eventually be accepted or tolerated after the initial hesitation and fear. A couple of essays on the true meaning of “human sexuality” and the real nature of a robot, no matter how “intelligent” and “reactive” it be, would have balanced better the arguments discussed in the book.

*Sahayadas Fernando, Rome*

DILLON, MICHELLE: *Postsecular Catholicism: Relevance and Renewal*, New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. – 214 p.

Michelle Dillon presents a revelatory, insightful, and challenging perspective on American Catholicism in particular, but also on Catholicism as a whole. It is revelatory, as she deftly reveals dichotomies within the Catholic Church, bringing tensions which must be dealt with and integrated or which leave the Church unable to bring the Good News to people living in a postsecular world. It is insightful, weaving together historical fact and nuanced interpretation to develop a picture of a Church certain of its past while uncertain of the way forward, yet containing within itself the wherewithal to discern and develop that way. And it is challenging, as it reveals not only a Church struggling as it is forced to leave behind the language and culture that made faith intelligible for centuries while retaining the faith which that language and culture expressed, and to develop a new language whereby it can live within, converse with and share the Good News with postsecular society.

With Hauerwas, D. argues that postsecularity calls for mutuality, requiring “ongoing dialogue, tolerance, and active engagement between religious and secular actors”. This requires that the actors “speak *with* and not merely *about* one another”. Such a practice, D. insists, calls for a “contrite modernity”, one in which the Church recognizes not only that it must work with others in the building of the kingdom, but that it can and should (as Benedict XVI did in 2010) recognize and apologize for the scandalous actions that have taken place within it, even to the point of owning up to the Church’s own failings in leadership.

While clearly hopeful that the Church is up to the task, D. wisely indicates that the findings in her book “suggest” it is. While I agree, it is here, perhaps, that I am less hopeful than she that the Church in the USA will be as able and willing to do so, tied up as it appears to be in political ideology, and will need more to exercise a “contrite modernity” by following where the Church in other parts of the world might lead.



D. shows that Catholics, living within and members of post-secular society, more and more exercise an interpretive autonomy when considering Church teachings. She points to several ironies in this regard: that such interpretive autonomy is legitimated within Church teaching; that interpretive autonomy actually preserves attachment to Catholicism; and that Catholic advocacy of inclusive participation in the sacraments is driven by belief in their sanctity. Such ironies are to be celebrated, not despaired of for, as per Francis A. Sullivan, assent to Church teaching is not an automatic or mechanical response, but the outcome of a deliberative, cognitive process.

A further and very important irony is that “postsecular expectations open up space for the Church to step in (anew) and articulate an ethical path for contemporary society”. As such, the Church needs to prepare itself for that work.

Drawing extensively on the Synod on the Family (2014-2015), D. points to the way Francis is leading the Church into a practical application of active engagement, severely discomfiting some along the way, yet leading to understandings and agreements that are deeper, more nuanced, and better received by members of the Church, and by society, than the usual unilateral declaration would have been.

As D. persuasively argues, “secularization is the settled reality of Western society”. That given, “postsecular Catholicism cannot deny the press of secular experiences and expectations on the articulation of doctrine, and must adjust to the fact that the Church’s relevance among Catholics and society at large lies in dialogue *with* secular realities”.

Regardless of where one finds oneself choosing to stand in the Church, D.’s work calls for and opens the way to a new way of engagement, a way made concrete through the leadership of Francis, and which enables the Church to converse with post-secular society, bringing the Good News to the world. As such, it is an important contribution to the life of the Church, and of the society in which the Church lives.

*Ray Temmerman, Winnipeg*

KAMALUDIN, MUHAMMAD: *Cultural Perception of Marriage among Muslims*, Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2016. – XXII, 216 p.

It seems from a reading of the text that the author is not writing in his “first” language, but that in its own way alerts his readers to his main concern, which is the understanding of marriage in Islam, the Book and Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed, i.e. that which the latter saw, heard, and approved, and the Salaf, traditions of interpretation (215). The Glossary helpfully introduces the reader to some key vocabulary and concepts (209-216). His aim is two-fold: to distinguish the essential commitments of marriage from accidental and harmful cultural/national accretions, and to commend the essential characteristics of marriage irrespective of nationality or ethnicity. He speaks of himself as a “new Muslim” (xii), with some thirty years’ experience of “counselling and working with dysfunctional marriages”, giving particular attention to the rights of women in marriages, women regarded as “jewels in our crown” (50, 13). He indeed has a particular perspective on marriage which he shares with his readers, in that he reminds them of “the golden rule” that in every act of worship “knowledge (MUST) precede the action”, and that “marriage is one of the greatest acts of worship” (168). He includes four “Case Studies” of discussion with couples negotiating or living through divorce (lawful but “hated by Allah”) (85-149), and one “Observation” concerned with a woman who has re-married her former husband and has thus restored their relationship together much to the benefit of their young son (151-155).

It goes without saying that patterns of marital relationship are “heterosexual” but allow for polygamy (138), though “Advice to the Muslims in the West” (157-175) clearly attempts to alleviate “male” privilege, not least when an intelligent wife hopes to obtain a degree or professional qualification, given what that will imply for her husband and the disposal of his time (157-159). This is just one example of how responsibility for the inner world of “home” and “work” outside the



home prompts modification of a tradition of the sharing of responsibilities between women and men which originated in a profoundly different culture and range of possibilities for either and/or both.

That apart, there is one point of paramount importance, which is that marriage is not so much undertaken by two “private individuals”, who nonetheless hope for “a blissful life, and guaranteed security for themselves” as well as for their children but entails relationships with the other members of their inter-generational families and of society at large (6-7, 10). If this is to be possible, someone needs to pay attention to distinctions of race, background, lineage, and language (138), and a crucial role in negotiations between a couple and their respective families is that of the “Walli”, preferably a close male relative of a prospective bride, but if necessary someone else to represent her (13, 22-23). Negotiations concluded, the prospective bridegroom initiates the offer of marriage, the bride having freedom of choice in making the decision to marry him as an equal partner (53). Their mutual responsibilities include shared “sexual etiquettes”, how to rear children, and identification and transformation of “negative behaviour” (33-74).

As a consequence, and important within as well as beyond a marital relationship, the author includes six reflections on the phenomenon of anger (177-205), the last of which is concerned with “the harvest of the tongue” (203-205). Anger may indeed be justifiable, even praiseworthy (133), but it is patience which is “a shining light” and, as it were, has its own virtues, among which are discretion, forbearance, courage, generosity, and initiative (200-201), a particular example of the author’s discernment which could well be developed in itself and as an example of a wider range of virtues. All in all, this book has much to offer to non-Muslims as well as helping to dislodge ill-informed prejudice about how Muslims may conduct the heterosexual procreative marriages which remain the focus of Muslim tradition, not least given the range of other options concerned with how human beings may conduct themselves in various modes of interchange and relation-

ship in socially and politically unstable societies. By the way: The cover of the book with a woman head to toe obliterated in black, seems to be completely at odds with the view of women in marriage the author is trying to commend.

*Ann Loades, St Andrews*

RATHMAYR, BERNHARD: *Geschichte der Liebe: Wandlungen der Geschlechterbeziehungen in der abendländischen Kultur*, Paderborn: W. Fink Verlag, 2016. – 351 S.

„Geschichte der Liebe: Wandlungen der Geschlechterbeziehungen in der abendländischen Kultur“ – der vollständige Titel verweist bereits auf diverse Aspekte, die möglicherweise einerseits den/die Leser\*in interessieren und andererseits Orientierungspunkte für eine kritische Besprechung darstellen. Es handelt sich um die folgenden Aspekte: „Geschichte“ und „Wandlungen“, „Liebe“ und „Geschlechterbeziehungen“ sowie die „abendländische Kultur“.

Der Autor Bernhard Rathmayr beschreibt im vorliegenden Band eine lange historische Entwicklung, die letztendlich zu der Ausbildung einer Architektur der Liebe führt. Diese Architektur wird von unterschiedlichen Konzeptionen bestimmt, die bis in die Gegenwart ihre Spuren und Narben hinterlassen und unsere heutige Vorstellung von der Liebe und Liebesbeziehungen gezeichnet haben. Bereits in der Einleitung legt der Autor dar, dass hier die Geschichte eines Kampfes – um die Machtverhältnisse zwischen Männern und Frauen, zwischen Individuen, die sich auf alle möglichen Arten verwirklichen möchten, zwischen Herrschaft und Unterwerfung – erzählt werden soll. Dieser Kampf wird von rhetorischen Figuren modelliert, die sowohl die Beobachter des Weltgeschehens als auch die Leser\*innen dieses Buches vergeblich nach jeglichem Sinn für eine harmonische Entwicklung zwischen den Liebespartnern suchen lassen. Sowohl die Darstellung von Individuen und Liebespartnern als auch ihre Beziehungsmodelle scheinen im Laufe ihrer historischen Entwicklung auf ein „Babylon



der Liebe“ und damit ein Wirrwarr aus bildlichem Realismus und realistischen Bildern, die tief in die Gedanken und Körper von Frauen und Männern eindringen, hinauszulaufen.

Diese Geschichtsschreibung zielt dabei nicht auf die Wiedergabe von Kausalzusammenhängen ab. Dies ist nicht nur der Fall, weil bestimmte Vorstellungen von der Liebe und von institutionalisierten Beziehungsformen – wenn auch in fragmentierter Form – über Jahrhunderte weiterleben, sondern vor allem deshalb, weil der Autor selbst eine Form der Geschichtsschreibung vertritt, die gerade keine linearen Entwicklungslinien (mit Ursache und Wirkung) bei der Deutung von Erotik und Liebe erkennen lässt. In der Mitte des Buchs (217–218) erläutert der Autor seine diesbezüglichen Auffassungen.

Dabei stellt das Buch kein chaotisches Durcheinander dar. Das Gegenteil ist der Fall: Jedes Kapitel beginnt mit einer hervorragenden Zusammenfassung der zuvor dargestellten Entwicklungslinie(n) und zeigt auf deutliche, didaktisch aufbereitete Art und Weise Ansätze für neue Möglichkeiten der Ausprägungen von Liebe auf. Als unterhaltender Erzähler führt uns der Autor zudem durch Beispiele aus der Literatur, Kunst, den populären Medien sowie durch tiefgründige Betrachtungen auch in Bezug auf andere – soziologische und psychologische – Beobachtungen und Untersuchungen. Der/die Leser\*in gewinnt damit ein Verständnis für die zwei Säulen der westlichen Architektur der Liebe – nämlich der genealogischen und der romantischen Liebe des frühen und Hochmittelalters. Ausführlich behandelt wird zudem die eheliche Liebe, die bis in die heutige Zeit fortbesteht. Diese zeigen jeweils in ihrem Kontext die starke Spannung zwischen dauerhafter Liebe (als ein Versprechen, das es umzusetzen gilt) und der intensiven erotischen Liebe (als Erleben der Gegenwart, das sich nicht wiederholen lässt).

Der/die Leser\*in in brennt geradezu darauf zu erfahren, wie sich die architektonischen Trageflächen in zeitgenössische Liebesinstitutionen und die Auffassungen von der Liebe übertragen lassen. In den letzten beiden Kapiteln des Bandes lässt der Autor zahlrei-

che Anthropologen, Philosophen, Soziologen und Psychologen – Frauen und Männer – Revue passieren und präsentiert mit großer Vorsicht sein eigenes Programm. Er formuliert varianten- und abwechslungsreich unter zahlreichen Verweisen auf untersuchte Theorien und beobachteten Realitäten – und paraphrasiert dabei sich selbst – das unausweichliche und unentwirrbare Spannungsfeld des Gegensatzpaares der Leidenschaft und der dauerhaften Liebe.

Die zuletzt beschriebenen Jahrzehnte zeigen, wie aus diversen Gender-Perspektiven immer wieder neue Ausprägungen entwickelt und in experimenteller Form umgesetzt werden. Das zentrale Programm beschreibt abschließend eine Art Ideal der ehelichen Liebe: Diese wird von den unterschiedlichen Formen des Zusammenlebens, in denen Individuen ihre intime Liebe ausleben möchten, ergänzt oder sogar bereichert. Der Autor plädiert dafür, in dem „Babylon der Liebe“ mit ihrer Vielfalt an Formen nicht nur das Entstehen von Chaos zu erkennen, sondern vor allem neue Traditionen und Sensationen, die von unterschiedlichen Arten der praktizierten Liebe getragen werden (301–304). Es geht darum zu erkennen, dass es nicht nur eine einzige Kunst der Liebe gibt, sondern unterschiedliche Ausprägungen, in denen Intimität und Sexualität als wertvoller Ausdruck ernst genommen werden können.

Der Autor drückt sich dabei vorsichtig und hypothetisch aus. Seine Überlegungen zur Anerkennung heterogener Ausprägungen der Liebe und vor allem zur Akzeptanz von Liebeskulturen und Liebesformen durch staatliche Instanzen stellen keine rabiaten theoretischen Forderungen dar. Sie zeugen meines Erachtens von einer aufrichtigen Suche nach der Umsetzung von institutionalisierten Beziehungsformen oder von denjenigen, die es noch zu institutionalisieren gilt. Diese Arbeit wird von zahlreichen Untersuchungen zur Geschichte gestützt und wirft wiederum ethische Fragen auf, die der Band bzw. der Autor nicht mehr behandelt. Eine derartige wissenschaftliche Untersuchung fordert eine philosophische und moraltheologische Reflexion ein, beispielsweise mit Bezug auf Verletzlichkeitsbegleitung für Individuen



und den Rechtsstatus der Frau bzw. des Mannes und ihrer spezifischen Beziehung zu Erziehungs- und Vorsorgeregelungen, damit geprüft werden kann, ob das geforderte „Babylon der Liebe“ nicht besser unter Quarantäne gestellt werden sollte.

Geert Fasseur, Antwerpen

STAŚKIEWICZ, JOANNA: *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Polen? Zum Wandel der Geschlechterverhältnisse in der katholischen Kirche in Polen nach 1989*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2018. – 360 S.

Feminismus ist kein neues Phänomen, wird in allen Ländern verbreitet und beeinflusst das Verhältnis zwischen den Geschlechtern. Es gibt mehrere Strömungen der Frauenbewegung, die eigene Merkmale aufweisen, von den spezifischen Problemen der einzelnen Gesellschaften gekennzeichnet sind und die Herausforderungen widerspiegeln. Spezifische Merkmale hat auch die feministische Bewegung in Polen, was zum Gegenstand der Studie von Joanna Staśkiewicz wurde. In ihrem Buch zu den katholischen Frauenbewegungen in Polen nach 1989 vertritt sie die These, dass sich in Polen nach 1989 keine katholische Frauenbewegung herausbilden konnte, die sich für den Wandel der Geschlechterverhältnisse in Kirche und Gesellschaft einsetzte. Es gibt zwar in Polen katholische Frauenbewegungen, sie sind aber stark an die Amtskirche gebunden und fungieren als ihr Sprachrohr und werden dem Problem der Geschlechtergerechtigkeit nicht gerecht.

Das besprochene Buch ist nicht die einzige Studie zur Frauenbewegung in Polen, was die Autorin selbst im Forschungsstand zugibt und in anderen Abhandlungen polnischer Autoren zu diesem Thema bespricht. Die katholische Frauenbewegung ist für S. eine Gruppe vernetzter Frauenorganisationen, die sich für die Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter innerhalb der Kirche einsetzt und zur Überwindung der patriarchalen Strukturen sowie der Benachteiligung der Frauen in der Gesellschaft beiträgt. Ein Teil

dieser so verstandenen Frauenbewegung ist der sog. „neue Feminismus“, der in Polen unter Bezug auf die Lehre von Papst Johannes Paul II. verbreitet wird.

In ihrer Studie, die methodologisch eine Diskursanalyse ist, stellt S. die einzelnen katholischen Frauenorganisationen in Polen und ihre Ziele dar. Zu den kirchennahen katholischen Frauenorganisationen, die eine starke Bindung an die katholische Lehre aufweisen, mit der *pro-life* Bewegung verbunden sind und konservativ-traditionelle Geschlechterrollenaufteilung befürworten, zählt sie den Polnischen Verband Katholischer Frauen, das Forum Polnischer Frauen *Die Frau in der gegenwärtigen Welt* und den Verein *Forum Katholischer Frauen*. Von diesen Organisationen wird *Amicita Sole* unterschieden, ein Verein, der die Position der Frau in der Kirche im Geist des „neuen Feminismus“ erforscht und fördert. Es werden auch die Aktivitäten der internationalen ökumenischen Organisation *YWCA Polska* erwähnt, die zwar von der offiziellen Lehre der Kirchen unabhängig ist, zugleich aber den Zielen der verschiedenen Kirchen entspricht. Dieses Bild der polnischen katholischen Frauenbewegungen ergänzt S. durch einen Exkurs über die Hörerinnen des Senders *Radio Maryja*, die sie nicht ganz korrekt, aber doch abwertend als „eine fundamentalistische Bewegung der *catholic rights* mit dem männlichen Anführer Pater Rydzyk“ bezeichnet (101).

Zum Bestandteil der feministischen Organisationen nach 1989 gehört die Subjekthaftigkeit der Frau, was mit dem Recht auf persönliche Freiheit, Selbstbestimmung, Achtung der Menschenrechte und der vom Geschlecht unabhängigen Gleichheit verbunden ist. Für die katholische Frauenbewegung in Polen schließt der so verstandene Diskurs zur Achtung der Frauenrechte eine klare Anti-Abtreibung-Gesinnung ein. Die Debatte zum Schutz des ungeborenen Lebens und *pro-life* Aktivität gehört zum Identitätsmerkmal der katholischen Frauenbewegung, dient zugleich als Faktor der Abgrenzung von der feministischen Bewegung der zweiten Welle und wurde sogar zum Repräsentationsfaktor während internationaler Konferenzen. Die spezifische Identität der katholischen



Frauenbewegung wird am Beispiel der Diskussionen zum Abtreibungsgesetz in Polen dargelegt. Auch wenn hier die Diskussionen der letzten Jahre unter der national-konservativen Regierung und die Demonstrationen gegen eine Verschärfung des Abtreibungsgesetzes nicht erwähnt werden, erwähnt S. eine auf Neutralität in dieser Debatte und auf Gewissensentscheidung gerichtete Position von *YWCA Polska*. Die Frage nach dem Repräsentationsanspruch der polnischen Frauen und damit verbundenen Diskussionen über die Rolle der Frauen in der Gesellschaft wird am Beispiel der UN-Frauenkonferenz in Peking genannt. In diesen Diskussionen werde seitens der katholischen Frauenorganisationen eine Rhetorik über gefährliche Ideologie vonseiten des UN-Feminismus, die in ihrer Radikalität dem Kommunismus gleiche, besonders erkennbar.

Sowohl die Beschlüsse der UN-Weltfrauenkonferenz als auch die Verordnungen der Europäischen Union zu Genderfragen wurde in Polen eine gute Gelegenheit für die Aktivität der Frauenorganisationen für die Gleichstellungspolitik. Auf diesem Hintergrund haben auch die katholischen Frauenorganisationen ihre eigene Position vertreten und den „neuen Feminismus“ als Verteidigung der katholischen Anthropologie mit dem Grundsatz der Komplementarität der Geschlechter verbreitet. In der Auseinandersetzung haben die katholischen Frauenorganisationen die internationalen Gleichstellungsbestimmungen als Bedrohung für die traditionelle Geschlechterordnung und für die Familienwerte angesehen. S. beschreibt die Auseinandersetzungen um die Gleichstellungspolitik in Polen, die Anti-Gender Debatte nach 2012 und dabei auch die starke Verbindung der katholischen Frauenorganisationen mit der Position der Amtskirche in Polen. Es werden nur ganz kurz die wenigen Stimmen erwähnt, die konstruktiv zu den Diskussionen über die Genderfrage beitragen und bestätigen wollen, dass es in der katholischen Kirche in Polen auch Frauen gibt, die zum Dialog mit dem feministischen Diskurs bereit sind.

Im Diskurs zum Feminismus wird von der institutionellen Kirche und die katholi-

schen Frauenorganisationen in Polen der Marienkult einbezogen. Maria gehört seit Jahrhunderten zum national-katholischen Konzept der Weiblichkeit und in den jüngsten Diskussionen zur Stellung der Frau in Kirche und Gesellschaft wird sie im Diskurs zum Feminismus verwendet. Laut S. handelt es sich dabei um nationale Legenden, Projektionen und Konstruktionen, die im Laufe der Geschichte entstanden und zu einem selbstbewussten Frauenbild umgeformt wurden. Im Buch wird die Genese des polnischen Marienkultes, seine politische Dimension und die Mütterlichkeit Marias erläutert und Maria im Diskurs der katholischen Frauenorganisationen vor allem in der *pro-life* Bewegung als neue Feministin dargestellt. S. erwähnt verschiedene Interpretationen der Mutter Gottes in Bezug auf das heutige Frauenbild und verweist dabei auf den Mythos der Mutter Polin, was bezüglich des polnischen Marienkult eine Übertreibung ist.

Ein fester Bestandteil der katholischen Frauenbewegung ist das Streben nach Aufwertung der Position der Frauen in der Kirche und ihre Teilnahme an den kirchlichen Diensten. S. beschreibt mit Recht die Stellung der Frauen in der Kirche in Polen als „schweigende Anwesenheit“, was bedeutet, dass die Frauen die Kirche besuchen, aber in ihr nichts zu sagen haben. Als Gründe für diesen Stand der Dinge zählt die Autorin die allgemeine geringe Beteiligung der Laien in der Verantwortung für die Kirchengemeinschaft in Polen, Mangel an kirchlichem Gemeinschaftssinn, Säkularisationsprozesse und den Mangel an katholischen Frauenbewegungen zugunsten der größeren Teilnahme der Frauen in der Kirche.

Das Buch von S. analysiert kritisch die Motive, Inhalte und Aktivitäten der katholischen Frauenorganisationen in Polen. Sie beschreibt verschiedene katholische Frauenorganisationen und ihre Aktivitäten auf dem Hintergrund der polnischen Geschichte und gegenwärtiger kultureller, religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Probleme und Herausforderungen. Auf diese Weise werden dem/Leser\*in nicht nur die einzelnen katholischen Frauenorganisationen nahegebracht, sondern auch eine Sicht auf die gesellschaftlichen



Problemen angesichts der Stellung der Frauen in Kirche und Gesellschaft. In der Schlussfolgerung konstatiert S. die Nicht-Existenz einer polnischen Frauenbewegung, die auf das Fehlen von Anerkennung der Geschlechtergleichheit durch die katholische Kirche verweise. Wenn auch einige im Buch angeführten Thesen einseitig formuliert werden, findet man darin doch reichhaltiges Stoff zum Überdenken der traditionell-konservativen, aber auch der liberalen Positionen der Frauen in Kirche und Gesellschaft.

*Konrad Glombik, Opole*



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