

Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture [10 (2016): 306–78]; this work takes global the kind of questions Ellingson addressed and finds that religious environmentalism has little traction within the world's predominant religions.) Thus, the best available evidence indicates that religion is not coming to the environmental rescue any time soon, if ever.

One final point. Ellingson notes the criticism often expressed by his religious interlocutors that secular, proenvironmental actors do not have but need a spiritual and moral grounding. He could have, however, noted that such claims are belied by research into the global environmental movement, including in my book *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (University of California Press, 2010), which documents the ways secular environmentally engaged actors draw on evolutionary and ecological understandings for proenvironmental values. My own book and articles referenced here also show the strength of such naturalistic understandings and the ways they promote kinship feelings for nonhuman organisms and reverence for environmental systems. Future research into the human dimensions of environmental behavior should expand its foci from the world's predominant religions to the ways secular individuals and groups understand the biosphere, their place in it, and responsibilities toward it.

Best Laid Plans: Cultural Entropy and the Unraveling of AIDS Media Campaigns. By Terence E. McDonnell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. Pp. ix+257. \$105.00 (cloth); \$35.00 (paper).

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The importation of concepts from the natural sciences into sociology has a long and somewhat checkered history. A few examples: Herbert Spencer's "organic analogy" from biology (via anatomy), Max Weber's "elective affinities" from chemistry (via Goethe), Talcott Parsons's "systems" theory from physiology (via social insects). The partial or total mapping of a process whose natural home is, in fact, *naturalistic* into the decidedly less naturalistic domain of sociology is often high on ambition and just as often fraught with error. This particular trading zone is the site of cautionary tales. Yet the present book, and its analogizing application of the second(ish) law of thermodynamics (e.g., entropy), seems to be, with some reservations, a notable exception. Terence McDonnell's book, *Best Laid Plans: Cultural Entropy and the Unraveling of AIDS Media Campaigns*, not only offers us an in-depth look at a cultural production process and media campaign where the stakes could not be higher, but also explains why the construction of meaning and its potential (and desired) effects on action in this very complicated domain defeat the expectations of even the most seasoned of media campaigners. McDonnell does this through an effective and creative impor-

tation of the thermodynamic process of entropy as an assist to the core concerns of cultural, organizational, and media sociology.

McDonnell sticks to his guns in making this claim. "Cultural entropy" is not entropy lite or a catchy neologism crafted from an overused five-dollar word. It is the genuine article at work in a new field, some restrictions applied. Just as disorder in any complex system results from the dissipation of its internal energy, "cultural entropy is also about the dissipation of energy" (p. 30). For McDonnell to make this claim, he needs to make materiality *matter* more than cultural sociologists are usually wont to do. His object becomes "cultural objects [indeed] *as objects*" by synthesizing cultural sociology effectively with nonmodernist insights accrued from Bruno Latour and affordance psychology. For McDonnell, "Cultural objects are . . . difficult to stabilize and protect from entropy" (p. 41). Unexpected uses put the meaning and purpose endowed to an object (by its creator) into a maelstrom once it leaves the design cocoon. Examples from the case include condoms used as bracelets and AIDS posters repurposed as fashionable bedroom wallpaper. While routine and ritual stabilize the meaning of ("iconic") cultural objects (p. 40), for most objects, entropic unraveling is their likely fate (at least until the "heat death" of the cultural universe). McDonnell's insightful discussion, found in chapter 1, is sure to bear fruit for culture scholars, particularly those with an interest in materiality, not to mention material scholars with an interest in culture.

McDonnell applies these insights to a case study involving AIDS media campaigns in Ghana. Media campaign designers face the dilemma of designing cultural objects that possess "behavior change communication" sufficient enough to encourage contraceptive use among the public and stem the tide of the AIDS epidemic in the country. Drawing from interviews and ethnographic observations over a multiyear period, McDonnell tells a fascinating story (chap. 3) of how the influx of resources to fight the epidemic, combined with the entropic tendency of all cultural objects (e.g., contraceptives, posters, billboards, promotional media of various sorts), has led to a hegemony of best practices in the design process, not because certain practices are, in fact, the best, but for reasons of accountability to outside stakeholders (like the Gates Foundation) and for that small rush of ontological security that comes with believing one has control over an uncontrollable process. As McDonnell shows, campaign designers are also plagued by seemingly unshakeable presuppositions about their target audience, most of which revolve around "instrumentalist" assumptions about "[using] culture and media to shape behavior" (p. 194).

McDonnell offers some corrective tips: media built around narratives instead of categories are more effective, cultural ombudsmen provide local sensitivity but introduce entropy, and formative research helps but not if best practices restrict creativity and innovation. These are practical lessons that media designers can learn from. And as McDonnell concludes, increasingly lessons like these will matter *more* (p. 199). Campaigns like this one, already pervasive, should only become more pervasive in the future, given the extent

and breadth of media across the globe, the need for organizations to communicate distally to global publics through it and, in a Baudrillardian twist, the implosion of public spheres (global and domestic) into the media.

Despite McDonnell's important discussion of cultural entropy early in the book, some of the more crucial insights seem lost in (applied) translation once we reach the nuanced detail of the case study. For instance, the "dissipation of energy," as characteristic of cultural and thermodynamic entropy alike, was hard to recognize in the many instances of cultural entropy that McDonnell documents in AIDS media campaigns. How, for instance, is the refashioning, as bedroom wallpaper, of posters nominally intended to encourage contraceptive use (p. 138) an example of dissipating energy in a cultural object through the conversion of a different energy (presumably) from unintended use? Why not understand this less in Ludwig Boltzmannian terms and more in Ann Swidlerian terms, that is, new meanings acquired by organizing new action? Or even the paleo pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce (still useful as ever) and his holy triumvirate of "interpretants"? McDonnell's important point about energy and its connection to meaning via materiality is understood in principle (chap. 1) but somewhat dissipated (pun intended) in practice (chaps. 4, 5, and 6). This also applies to the fascinating instance of *nonentropy* between design process and public use that McDonnell finds in this case: Ghanaians' understanding of HIV avoidance is strongly shaped by the image of "AIDS as killer" (p. 155). As McDonnell argues, this campaign-constructed meaning has entered practical consciousness and become automatic (p. 188). But is energy dissipation (or the lack of it) really involved here? Is cultural entropy necessary to explain it? Based on McDonnell's analysis, which itself neglects to give his own innovative terms center stage, perhaps not.

McDonnell's introduction of cultural entropy will be pathbreaking. I'm sure of it. Ultimately, however, his analysis still relies on abstractions (e.g., something called "everyday life" being, in the last analysis, somehow holistically responsible for cultural entropy [p. 6]) that he so clearly wants to avoid given his focus on materiality and energy *cum* cultural meaning. Nevertheless, McDonnell opens an important and necessary door in this book. It is one that culture scholars (even the most ardent nonmaterialists among them) should consider following him through.

Re-Imagining Economic Sociology. Edited by Patrik Aspers and Nigel Dodd. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xiii+324. \$110.00.

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Here's a basic criterion for evaluating a social scientific theory: *Does the theory make progress addressing an important, difficult "research question" that other social scientists can appreciate?* This criterion seems so obvious