On the Ontology of Love, Sexuality and Power
Towards a Feminist-Realist Depth Approach

av

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Akademisk avhandling

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i genusvetenskap,
som kommer att försvaras offentligt
fredagen den 31 maj 2013 kl. 13.15,
Hörsal Bion, Örebro universitet

Opponent: Professor Andrew Sayer
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Abstract


The thesis offers a theoretical account of how and why, in contemporary western societies characterized by formal-legal equality and women’s relative economic independence, women continue to be subordinated to men through sexuality and love. By means of an innovative application of Roy Bhaskar’s critical realism, dialectical critical realism and philosophy of metaReality, it investigates and elaborates Anna G. Jónasdóttir’s claim that men tend to exploit women of their ‘love power’. Also, the thesis advances a critique of the state of affairs of contemporary feminist theory, demonstrating that the meta-theoretical framework of critical realism offers tools that can counter the poststructuralist hegemony in feminist theory.

Part I engages in a comprehensive evaluation of Catharine MacKinnon’s, Judith Butler’s and Jónasdóttir’s theorizations of sexuality and gendered power. Insofar as the works of these theorists represent different philosophical paradigms, this critique opens up a discussion of more general meta-theoretical issues, which are elaborated in Part II, where poststructuralist feminist positions are challenged. Following Jónasdóttir’s broadening of the concept of sexuality so as to essentially include practices of love, in Part III the focus of the thesis is shifted from sexuality to love. Here a dialectical deepening and partial recasting of Jónasdóttir’s work is offered, by means of an application of dialectical critical realism and the philosophy of metaReality.

The thesis outlines a feminist dialectical-realist depth ontology of love, sexuality and power, which constitutes an alternative to dominant discursive approaches to sexuality and attributes to love its proper place in our existence as sexual human creatures. Although the thesis makes a case for the tenacity of female subordination in and through sexuality and love, it ends on a more optimistic note, by offering a model of how women can break the shackles of love.

Keywords: Roy Bhaskar, critical realism, dialectical critical realism, feminist theory, gender, Anna G. Jónasdóttir, love power, new materialism, ontology, philosophy of metaReality, sexuality.

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