Kultiveringens politik
Martha Nussbaum,
antiken och filosofins praktik

Synne Myrebøe

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förvar i Humanisthuset, hörsal E, fredagen den 24 maj, kl. 10:00.
Avhandlingen kommer att förvaras på svenska.

Fakultetsopponent: Docent Victoria Fareld.
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Idé- och samhällstudier
Abstract

"The Politics of Cultivation" is a study on how the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum actualizes Ancient political philosophy to re-negotiate core assumptions in her own contemporary ethical-political discussions. The aim is to explore the potentiality Nussbaum discerns in Ancient philosophy and how this potentiality is actualized in her thoughts on cultivation as a critique of what she sees as reductive cultures of knowledge. Also, I highlight what Nussbaum’s philosophical practice can contribute to a Swedish discourse on bildning as resistance. Following Nussbaum’s philosophy of cultivation from her first articles on Heraclitus in 1972 to her recent work, I focus on how she emphasizes the role of sensibility, sexuality and emotions for reason. The thesis is divided in six chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of cultivation as a recurrent theme throughout Nussbaum’s authorship. In the second chapter I explore her reading of Heraclitus and how this reading highlight her philosophy of cultivation. The third and fourth chapters study how Nussbaum mobilizes Plato and Aristotle to point at some of the problems she finds at the core of her contemporary political philosophy. The fifth chapter investigates how Nussbaum renegotiates Stoic and Epicurean philosophy in her defence of a therapeutic philosophical approach. The last chapter exposes how aesthetical, ethical and political dimensions are weaved into Nussbaum’s thoughts on cultivation. Here, I study her reading of two tragedies and one comedy, showing how Nussbaum’s philosophical practice can be understood as an art of memory.

Set in a contemporary, Swedish discussion on bildning [Bildung], and the role of education for liberal democracy, I argue that Nussbaum lay bare the constructed division between education and self-formation where she calls for the urgency to scrutinize educational politics and educational practice. Hence, what Nussbaum emphasizes, is that everywhere people meet, we are already embedded in a process of cultivation of thoughts, emotions and perceptions. The central question on how we can live together in a pluralistic world will thus have different answers depending on what can be seen and heard within the epistemological and political regulation of the sensible. Nussbaum’s politics of cultivation insists not only on being a gadfly on the back of power, but also to change the political structures from a reductive masculinity to the dialectics of love.

Keywords

Key words: Martha Nussbaum, Cultivation, Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Tragedy, Political Philosophy, Educational Philosophy, Democratic Education, History of Philosophy, Bildung.