

On the Ontology and Social-Epistemological Implications of Asexuality

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General Objective:

– Explore how the trend of “sex positivity” and its accompanying proliferation of ways to understand or identify one’s own or others’ sexuality (i.e., as “pansexual,” “demisexual,” “polyamorous,” etc.) affects the study of asexuality, as well as asexual people themselves

– Studying/creating a theory/theories of asexuality is of moral importance: constraints and enablements are placed on individuals who are, or who are taken to be, asexual.

The Need to Develop a Theory of Asexuality:

– The development of an institutionalized repertoire of concepts allows for critical theories. And, new labels and “isms” can challenge what seems inevitable or natural, if they catch on.

– The conceptualization of heterosexuality, for examples, as an institution allowed for analytical shifts – “others” would now be understood, however understood, relative to a social condition of (descriptive and evaluative) normative heterosexuality.

– Compulsory sexuality, coupled with the current trend of “sex positivity” and its accompanying proliferation of ways to understand or identify one’s own or others’ sexuality, while considered emancipatory by some, can serve to reinforce the notion that there is something wrong with asexual people.

Who Counts as Asexual?

– According to the website “The Asexual Visibility and Education Network | asexuality.org” (AVEN), an asexual is a “person who does not experience sexual attraction.” Other theorists and asexual individuals themselves operationalize asexuals as those who have never felt sexual attraction to anyone at all.

– Perhaps it is better to define someone who has no sex drive, but does not see herself as asexual, as “not asexual,” and someone who does experience a sex drive, but sees herself as asexual, as “asexual” (Cerankowski & Milks 2010, 658–9).

– This latter understanding echoes Simone de Beauvoir’s reading of “frigidity” from *The Second Sex* (1949). Perhaps “frigid” symptoms are not always intrinsically natural (i.e., not socially caused); perhaps these symptoms are the result of rejected, albeit internalized norms of a socially constructed world of compulsory sexuality.

Favoured/Marginalized Repetitions in Przybylo’s “Sexusociety”:

– Current favoured repetitions? Sex for pleasure (“the male norm” and one that is consistent with many feminisms). Sex for procreation. Heterosexual sex. What repetitions must be defended, championed (because marginalized)? Consensual non-monogamous hetero/homosexual sex. Homosexual sex. Lesbian sex. Sex that female-identifying people actually enjoy! BDSM?

– Marginalized repetitions? Those who experience a decrease in sex drive or lack of sexual desire and are distressed by this “lack,” those who experience a decrease or lack of sexual desire and are not distressed by this “lack” (Cerankowski and Milks (2010).

Why Asexuals are Between a Rock and a Hard Place in Light of Old “Liberatory” Repetitions?

– The difficulty with a landscape or social imaginary that connects a rhetoric of liberation (read: liberation through the “opening up” of sexuality) is that sex – this kind or that kind, but sex nonetheless – remains intertwined with liberation. A worry: “Does the asexual person threaten to remove sex from politics all over again, or does she or he challenge the ways we think about sex and desire even within queer communities” (Cerankowski & Milks 2010, 661)?

Asexual Identity and Absence: Who am I? What am I “For”?

– These questions are pressing in light of postmodernism’s (i) compulsory sexuality and (ii) emphasis on the need to present and understand one’s self by means of ever complicated and constantly multiplying “self-identifications”? What is an asexual for? If one presents as, is taken to be, or is asexual, there are no rules or language games familiar to most of us for how to engage with asexuals. If I am asexual and know others are or may be confused by “the rules” (or lack thereof) for social interaction, how do I situate myself relationally to most people?

Where to Go from Here?

With Sally Haslanger's work in *Resisting Reality* (2012) in mind, I think a useful project would involve, in the spirit and letter of her characterization of ameliorative social constructionists programs (programs that ask what do "we" want some concept to do), explore and ask, what do "we" want the concepts of "asexual" and "asexuality" to represent or do?

Reference list:

Cerankowski, K, J. and Milks, M., (2010). "New Orientations: Asexuality and Its Implications for Theory and Practice" *Feminist Studies*, 36:3, 650–664.

Pryzybyło, E., (2011). "Crisis and safety: The asexual in sexusociety" *Sexualities*, 14:4, 444–461.

Філософія на межі: як це бачить маргінал

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Упродовж історичного розвитку роль філософії варіювала-ся від «служниці Бога» в Середньовіччі до ідеалу людського світогляду. Як зазначає Сергій Дацюк, «[у] кінці ХХ століття відбувається занепад фундаментальної філософії», тому вона «опиняється на узбіччі ... мислительних ... практик». Він продовжує, що «духовна потуга філософії поза мейнстримом постмодернізму стала маргінальною» (Дацюк, 2015).

Визначення себе як особистості – це насамперед місія мислителя, а процес охоплення ним будь-якого соціального статусу так чи інакше залежатиме від особистісних та суспільних факторів. Суперечність між ними зумовлює швидкість його мобільності: що менший конфлікт, то скоріше він опиниться на магістралях дискурсу. Інше питання – чи філософського, адже лише в ідеальному варіанті бачення філософа повністю відобра-