

ABSTRACT

Erika Alm: "A Container for Intestines and Emotions". *Conceptions of the Body in Swedish Government Official Reports from the 1960s and 1970s* ["ett emballage för inälvor och emotioner". Föreställningar om kroppen i statliga utredningar från 1960- och 1970-talen.] Ph. D. Dissertation, Department of History of Science and Ideas and Theory of Science, Göteborgs University, 2006. ISBN-10 91-628-7034-3. ISBN-13 978-91-628-7034-8.

This dissertation focuses on the polyphonic body politics of modern society, as activated in three Swedish Government Official Reports from the 1960s and 1970s. The analysis takes as its point of departure the assumptions about embodiment and identity uncovered in these reports. I argue that the reports – which concern the establishment of juridical sex, the right to abortion, and sterilization – all deal with the question of the individual's right to decide on issues relating to his or her own body. The commissioners themselves claim that their proposals are formulated in the name of individual rights; and that they are progressive and modern. Although the importance to uphold the individual's right to autonomy is thus emphasized, there are other values that need to be accounted for. The individual's sovereignty in these matters is per definition a question open for discussion, and it actualizes a conflict of interest between the individual on one hand and the state or the public interest on the other, or between the individual and professional experts. Who is to decide in matters of the body? What assumptions are made in relation to sex, gender and desire? In addition to the historical approach – the attempt to reconstruct the discourses on sex, gender, and desire, individual autonomy and public interest, generated in the mentioned reports – I initiate a theoretical line of inquiry that draws from the conviction that we need to seek new ways to approach the body; ways that challenge dichotomies that are taken for granted, such as the distinction between body and mind, inner and outer, biological and social, nature and nurture etc. Focusing on Judith Butler's reformulation of Aristotle's concepts *form* and *matter* into the dynamic concept of *materialization*, I argue that the concept *form* has analytic qualities that make it especially useful when analyzing discourses of the body.

KEY WORDS: Swedish Government Official Reports, 1960, 1970, body, sex, gender, abortion, sterilization, ratification of sex, individual rights, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, form, matter, materialization.