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The Queerness in Phenomenology: Life As It Is

When reflecting on our orientation to the world and how we geographically establish a grounding for ourselves from which we “gather our barrings”. We can see how we situate our life’s based of class, gender, sexuality..etc. with such position in the world. But as how many of us have wondered how do we fit when it comes to things such as queerness? Sometimes words and concepts act as an umbrella encompassing many facets of what it means to be, such as queerness. To actually get a definition of queerness would be pretty hard since it evolves with the passing of time and acceptance with in a society. First we have to face the fact that it started as slur, but before we start talking about what this means in the metaphysical sense. From digging around for the etymological transition from non-derogatory to slur [Link₁] started when queer started being used as an adjective and noun, at first it simply was used for something strange but the more queer became “bad” it found a target that was sinced applied to homosexuals. Within the same time, queer covers both sexuality and gender outside of heterosexuality.

This begins our metaphysical approach to what queerness means in the time that we live through today. In the late 2010's, queerness has become something of a blob that has anything outside of the cis heteronormative being. Since phenomenology deals with the how consciousness is directed in the terms of how we interact with objects in the world. This makes the approach of phenomenology much easier to understand in terms of how we will go about dissecting the lived experience in what it means to be queer. intentionality of consciousness and lived experience make up for the most part what how we orientate ourselves to the world. One might be able to understand life of queer people from what they tell us about their lives and how they perform them. From this we can negate what is different from the lives of cis hetero people compared to the queer people. To further understand this we can see how certain actions and performances are seen as "strange and far from the norm". There are narratives within the two groups of queer vs. normal, this distinction can be made by simply adhering to the reset notions and concepts of what it means to be normal. Once you step out of the narrative of normalcy in terms of sexuality and gender you are within the framework of queerness. Deviation such as leaving the normality of society does have its dangers such as physical, emotional, and mental harm day in and day out. What can I establish as a groundwork for what accounts as a difference is the metaphysical level with a phenomenological expiation that helps further the visibility of the unseen

nature that one group see the other's group has in not just lived experiences but also concepts that are able to be understood by the other group in question.

The objects that queerness orientates itself to help define it. This can be seen in many cases such as how queer people experience a sense of community with people who understand them even if the basis of queerness is different. The shared object of queerness allows for the separation that I have been arguing about from the normal cis heteronormative performance that is expected in a society that carries those norms. [Link2] In the article you read about Bryan Hughes coming to term with his queerness late in life and how it have changed not just semantically but also phenomenological perspective of the understanding of the world through experience and consciousness. He gives examples of how his coming out to the world from this he establishes the terms for himself as he orientates himself into the unveiling of the new existence in the world of the cisheteronormative in which we occupy.

Going as far along this path of where we can see a distinct division but what does this mean for people who are experiencing this objective sense of queerness becoming subject and vice versa? It is called Reification, it happens to many things in modern society and it so happens that queerness is one of them. It would be easy to gatekeep in a manner that would stop people from using it as a fad. But we have to see it as a permeable

exchange between the cis heterosexual reality into the queer reality. This reality is different not just in the underlying nature but also experience, we can now see a clear picture of how we are not just comparing but we are separating in the typical philosophical fashion by saying (x, y, z) have these qualities and (a, b, c.) also have these qualities so if they don't they are placed in different categories. This also happens in a phenomenological perspective our interactions with each other start off on what qualities and traits we have. Sometimes these are different so the interaction might be odd and awkward. We all have human qualities but the ones we establish as our own interact with the qualities that make someone queer. Giving rise to the need to orientate ourselves to the familiar. As this orientation tells us our position in reality we begin to see subjects and objects that not only have (x, z, y) qualities and traits. From this we can negate the factual qualities that most queer people go through when navigating through the world.

There is something to be said about the manner in which people separate themselves into groups. In the phenomenological model that I set up we can see that person A is able to identify with group B because of the attributes such as queerness that has qualities (x, z, y). In that moment of consciousness the person not only express that there is a similarity with what qualities they have. This starts to become a focus for the person to become a part of the world. Much like how Merleau-Ponty explored in

Phenomenology of Perception "The body is our general medium for having a world" (pg. 123). The body becomes the intermediate space for queerness much like a vehicle that drives consciousness and body towards the world and reality. The real perception of orientation and movement start to show how someone is truly expressing their qualities (x, y, z) beings when consciousness is able to make sense of what the world is coming into being.

Not so long ago queerness was a slur, something to be ashamed of, just as a point of otherness. No longer is the person with in the crowd of "regular" or "normal" people with in a society. They become the other, much like other segments of society. But through the decades of acceptance by showing the general cis heterosexual population that queer people are normal. But queer still carry the label of otherness since they have to inhabit a world outside of their own. Much like how I wrote about this beforehand shows that grouping comes at a metaphysical level since it is much more than incompatibility. The actual problem is the inhabiting a space that has inherent contradictions and the tension that rises from each stance from each function, mannerism, movement, orientation and performance. This is a different reality in the cis hetero reality and this becomes part of their own phenomenology. Much like Edmund Husserl made clear by explain to us that orientations as unfolding in the world. This unfolding happens to queer people in a manner that is outside of cis hetero life that has been captured in

popular media. From Will & Grace [Link3], The Simpsons [Link4], and South Park. These slowly brought queerness to the masses in a way that is palatable. This was when the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was at its highest with enough popular support to keep it into law. As time progressed the question of the legality of same sex marriage started to gain support and the question of overturning it or legalizing it by popular vote started to happen. Then in 2004 Massachusetts became the first state in America to recognize same sex marriage. This is a change in orientation a beginning as Husserl puts it in the second volumes of *Ideas*, the starting point for those who emerge into queerness. But also queerness adaptable to change and people have used this to not only conceal their queerness out of fear or retribution but also to merge with new and existing definitions, the orientation changes from the one they started with at the a psychological plane of space and time then it is over "there" and "there".

Expectations for how long queerness and everything outside of side would become permeable for one another. The transparency of cis hetero life and culture is what shines through most times when it comes to what constitutes as "normal" life. So sometimes queerness becomes dependent on that model. As pointed out by Simone De Beauvoir "One is not born but becomes one" (pg. 267) we can see as the sex-gender distinction that is critical to the relation that queerness has on the world but also that queerness emerges and becomes a person in a way that makes them other.

This Otherness is a wall that is set up by the cis heteronormative society to be make sure the distinction is made between what is normal and queer.

Pointing to the very nature of how the relation of queerness has with the outsider point of view and how it is now at the forefront of the mainstream culture. This brings up the question how some people within the queer community feel that some people such as cis gay men are quick to embrace the cis hetero community and culture since it is the easiest path to follow and gain full acceptance while leaving the others behind. We can see this as a phenomenological problem also since the perspective is not only shifted but the orientation and performance are split off from the rest of the queer community. This concern has been focal in the discourse and the future evolution and future of queerness and what it means to be queer.

To bring this all around I went through several ways explaining how queerness interacts and what it means in the cis heteronormative society. Some of which are in my opinion are so ever changing that not only is it hard to pin point but also map out a course that could be predictable. There is much more to this discourse that can actually be archived in several medium essays. But that does not mean we should move on from actually admitting to what we can see in the faults of acceptance in society. Much like how the medium writer inspired this essay, no one is too earlier or too late to experience queerness in such a way that it is actually intricately tied

to reality. Phenomenology helps understand the lived experiences and the conscious intention of our perspectives and the perspectives of others.

Links

1: https://keywords.pitt.edu/keywords_defined/queer.html

2: <https://medium.com/@nebrius/stuck-in-the-in-between-of-queerness-506cbb8dde4c>

3: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-myers/will-grace-the-tv-series-that-changed-america_b_5543315.html

4: <https://hornet.com/stories/gay-simpsons-episode/>

Works Cited

Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Vol. 2, Routledge, 2015.

"Phenomenology of Perception." *Phenomenology of Perception*, by Merleau-Ponty, Maurice and Smith, Colin, 3rd ed., vol. 1, Forgotten Books, 2015, pp. 123–123.

"The Second Sex." *The Second Sex*, by de Beauvoir, Simone, 4th ed., vol. 1, Vintage Classic, 2015, pp. 267–267.