

QUEER

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IS QUEER A queer concept? To be able to answer the question if queer is a queer concept in the positive, the concept first has to go through a quite harsh acid test. It has to be combined with its initial abusive meaning (queer as in bent, odd, strange, atypical) and a fierce positioning against the futurist paradigm. On the way, almost all associations to the acronym-cluster LGBTI+ have to be rinsed away, and an opening up for other alliances and solidarities must be introduced. Marriage, monogamy, and children are never queer – no matter with whom you are married or how your children were conceived. Wanting to be recognized for “who you are” in the eyes of the state or the sciences is likewise not queer in that sense. It is human, but not queer.

From the 1990s and onwards, we have been taught that queer is not something you are because queer “is against identity.” For some reason, this has led to the idea that queer is rather something you *do*, an act. While liberal LGBT activists argued for endless inclusions and gladly appropriated the Q to their list of acronyms, many queer activists went along mixing up Judith Butler’s use of performativity and performance, creating an endless row of drag shows where something subversive was supposed to happen. The idea that a queer act created *dissonance* and that such discord were some sort of play (as in both playful and theatrical) was of course quite popular – who does not want to be part of something supposedly outrageous? But it made queer theory lose its track; it became ethnographic rather than critical, accessible rather than demanding, happy n’ gay rather than dead serious.

Yes, queer is elitist; but only if it remembers its history: or rather, embraces its *lack* of a comprehensive and known history and sees this lack as an ethical demand. Without the ethical demand, queer is nothing, or worse, something that can be used by everyone – including the white nationalist man who “just wants to be who he is” and “celebrate his culture” too. Queer is neither something you are or do; queer is a symbolic position. And to the dismay of some queer activists, it is not a position you can place yourself in; others do the positioning for you. And, worst of all, it is not necessarily a fun position to be in.

Yes, queer is universal; it is not interested in particularities or your specific identity. Desire always exceeds identity. Queer is about all of us and our inability to be complete. We are all born in the wrong body and there is nothing we can do about it. For example, Madhavi Menon (2015a, 136) considers the role of Muslims in relation both to the conflict between India and Pakistan, as well as in Auschwitz, and defines queerness as that which “does not set itself up in opposition to the norm; instead it refuses both norm and antinorm alike as being too restrictive and pandering to a universe of particularities.” What is needed, she says, is solidarity – not identity – and queer has an:

ability to recognize and sympathize with longings across borders: to refuse the logic of particularity in relation to desire; to keep the door universally open rather than shutting it behind our backs; to think of desire as that which moves across rather than being confined to sexual acts and identities. (Menon 2015b, 127)

Still, queer is limited; it cannot be used in any and all theoretical settings. It applies to humans only, because we have desires, identities, laws, traditions. Animals are not queer, objects are not queer, no matter how much some scholars try to appropriate it for such means. When Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani reclaimed the, by then, theoretically almost inert concept of queer in the early 2000s, they managed to do something quite remarkable (Bersani 1995; Edelman 2004). They widened the concept at the same time as they turned it into something more stringent

than ever before. The queer existence Edelman named *sinthomosexual* is only definable using Lacanian terminology, and at the same time it does not require any recognized same-sex desire, any reclaimed history, anything else but the recognition of a Symbolic order so preoccupied with reproducing itself that it cannot recognize death even when it stands right in front of us, no matter if its in the guise of capitalist overproduction, climate change, AIDS, drowning victims in the Mediterranean, war victims seeking asylum, or people refusing to invest in the future of this order by breeding.

Edelman's fictional *sinthomosexual*, Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol*, refused not only to invest in the future by helping a crippled child, he also refused to celebrate Christmas – this most holy and capitalized of all Western traditions (Edelman 2004). Meanwhile, in our own reality, Donald Trump promises to bring Christmas back (from somewhere), a Swedish right wing party leader demands every citizen to recognize Christmas, and Christmas itself demands of us to celebrate the birth of a Child. Of course, we do this by buying enormous amounts of things, while silently forgetting about the children who produced these things in shady factories. Capitalism, Christmas, Climate Change, they all require the Child to reproduce themselves and in more than one way: climate change, for example, is mainly caused by overpopulation and still we are called on to save the earth in the name of (more) future children (see, Edenheim 2019). The Futurist paradigm produces endless paradoxes of this kind, and those who refuses, by chance or force, to live with these paradoxes are deemed worthless, meaningless, dead. Symbolizing the dead, the *sinthomosexual* cannot be accredited a life worth living, nor grieving. It is an unwanted position, which can never be seen as voluntary. Only psychopaths and egoistic monsters, like Leonard in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* – Edelman's second example of a *sinthomosexual* – can be seen to choose to remain in such a position.

So, those who drown in the Mediterranean have themselves to blame, they should have known better and not risk the lives of their children! Those who do not breed are either poor bastards or narcissists – either missing out on the true meaning of life or being too egoistic to contrib-

ute to the future of society! Those who claim that there are other ways of organizing a society than the one promulgated by the market, by media, by law, by family, are either deranged or will come to their senses when they get older, we all know this because capitalist realism is our home now (Fisher 2009). Oh, and those prostitutes, drug addicts, and gay men who died from AIDS in the 1980s, had it coming – especially the prostituted female drug-addicts who transmitted the disease to “innocent” straight people! Surely, they deserved the (non-)treatment they got! (see, Thorsén 2015). Without an intelligible and compassionate history, you’re worth nothing in the eyes of the Futurist paradigm. Having no history, no story, equals death in a society that is only capable to see life in intelligible, temporal narratives with a beginning, a middle, and a “happily ever after.” It’s more selling.

Still, even though no one can choose to become a sinthomosexual, some who are positioned as such can choose to remain in that given position. Not all, of course. Those in too precarious situations cannot, and should not. But those who can, should. And queers of the West can. That is the ethical stance of the sinthomosexual; that which the rest of the world deems to be a grave, a dead-end, no-life, unintelligible, should *not* be proven livable, relatable, intelligible: that is liberalism’s desire, not queer desire. Queer ethics is quite simple: no one lives forever, life has no given meaning, and our identities are always in compliance with the hegemonic ideology. We must live in accordance with the ethical imperative all this implies, rather than escaping the death drive by creating phantasmatic versions of eternal life and letting them define our desires. Life becomes more valuable if there is only one and the world is in dire need of a *memento mori*.

So, let’s never forget that same-sex sex is deemed meaningless and worthless because it is not reproductive. Often that fact is held against us by conservatives; for some reason the LGBT-answer has been: “Let’s start a family to prove them wrong!,” rather than: “You think *your* desire is meaningful?! Seriously, how delusional are you?” Queers have sex for sex’s sake, not for the Futurist paradigm’s. This is why breeders hate queers; they remind them that no desire – not even heterosexuality – has

a true purpose. Any purpose is imaginary. If you have invested all you've got – emotionally, physically, culturally, and economically – in the phantasmatic idea of intelligible desire and eternal life, you will not tolerate even the slightest suggestion that it might be otherwise. All queers, all *memento mori*, have to be corrected and straightened out! This is why the Futurist paradigm does whatever it can to turn unrecognizable lives into new versions of the straight, white, productive life. And where and when that is not possible, the same order just kills them instead.

No, queer is no fun. It has no future. No meaning. That is why it is our only hope.

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