

Shyness and Introversion as Neuroqueering

by shy* play

Who decides what and who gets to be included in the spectrum of neurodiversity? Why are certain tendencies like shyness and introversion considered personality traits, something one has, and others as biological facts, something one is? Even within the realm of neurodiversity, which affirmatively embraces neurodiversity as the diversity of human brains and the variations in neurocognitive functioning within the human species, a selection has been demarcated as to what tendencies get to be included in the spectrum. But what is this ubiquitous obsession with the head?

“Our house is a very, very, very fine house
With two cats in the yard
Life used to be so hard
Now everything is easy cause of you” (Stephen Stills)

The very, very, very fine house for our brain holds a tremendous privilege: the possibility for the head of the family—the brain—to sit comfortably in an armchair in front of the fireplace, caressing the two cats and relishing its sovereignty. Why are cats always represented as evil’s best accomplice? “How can we prevent the body’s inspired materiality (the brain) leaving the flesh behind?” (Moten 2015, 283)

The philosopher Henri Bergson (1932) distinguishes between two kinds of emotion: an intellectual emotion and a creative emotion. The intellectual emotion has an object as its cause, an object that is easily apprehensible, such as, the family, the city, friends, the state, and can yield feelings of intense love in us. This emotion that has an object, as love for my family, Bergson claims, is a restricted emotion, an exclusionary and biased emotion situated in a choice for something, an exclusionary choice, since it always includes a choice against someone or something else: another choice. In opposition, Bergson writes about an emotion that is superior or beyond the intellectual emotion, one that is all love marked by a love independent from an object. The creative emotion is itself tremendously innovative; we do not create it, it creates us and through us pushes civilisation forward into an open society.

The brain and its worshippers are unaware of the creative emotion, as they always start from themselves; they centre themselves as the creators of emotions, meaning, value, movement and knowledge. The very, very, very fine house is constrained in its limited bliss for its own house, family, community and nation, continuously setting aside what is not itself. However, autistic writer Adam Wolfond continuously teaches us by asking, “can a good body feel without another body?” (Wolfond as quoted by Klar-Wolfond 2020, 19). He opens the framework from a focus on the brain to relation. The brain and its wiring performances—as we don’t deny the different wirings of neurodivergent/neurodiverse people—are just part of the dance of relation but never reducible to it as the humanist

project tries to convince us with its discursive hegemony that puts the subjective always within the self. The dance of relation is the subjective, the way of relation with the non/human and im/material. It is the creative emotion, the independent love of the non-yet, as Adam would suggest, I think.

A transition from a discourse on the neurodiversity spectrum with selected tendencies towards a discourse on neurodiversity as “neuroqueering” is what we are after. Especially since neuroqueering, as defined by autistic writer Nick Walker, Remi Yergeau, and Athena Lynn Michaels-Dillon, should be understood as a verb—a process of becoming, of relation. Neuroqueering, as a verb, not only enables us to go beyond identity politics and its fixation on intellectual emotion for its determined brain stories, but it also allows us to view neurodivergence as a form of neuroqueering—a process of actively constructing worlds outside the realm of neurotypicality. In the world of neuroqueering, neurodiversity is not exclusive; anyone can potentially neuroqueer, and, as Walker (2021) writes, there are infinite possible ways to neuroqueer.

Viewing it from the neuroqueering perspective, shyness and introversion are unloaded from their status as second-hand personality traits and introduced in an affirmative neurodiversity as relation in which relation is always at the base for all neuroqueer acts. Find out how relations neuroqueer, continuously creating anew. Among other things, *shy* play* desires to start from shy and introverted tendencies as much as what is usually considered neurodivergent tendencies. We recognise the potentiality of all these tendencies for the creation of future neurodiverse/neurodivergent socialities.

Verse:

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