

The Question of Neurodivergence

by shy* play

What does diverging presuppose? What is one diverging from? Does diverging always owe something to what came before it? Does diverging always follow an existing path? Is difference always in relation to a norm? Either...or..., either...or..., either...or...Ugh, such a negative and human-centric approach! This conception of difference is too socially-oriented and grants all the power to active human agents. Often, in humanist theories of the subject, we see a subject at the centre of volition and desire; the subject presupposes a repetition of the recognised and of the social kind - the category. At the same time, the subject is also the potentiality for destabilisation - the deviation of the norm. In either instance, the subject is always responsible for ordering an otherwise chaotic and unruly world - matter and the non-human.

Neurodivergence, or the state of being neurodivergent, usually means having a (body)mind that functions in ways which diverge from the dominant societal standards of "normal" (Nick Walker). Neurodivergence may not instantly foreground a subject, but it still operates in opposition to a norm, always departing from what categorically precedes it. In my opinion, it is important to avoid being trapped in a dialectical relationship with the norm in order to think about and with the many selves/souls that make up a single body, which is unique in its own way and always reinstituting itself anew-in-difference. Neurodiversity does not exist in opposition to the norm; rather, it exists in relation, in the middle, in a trans-temporal space of no distinction. There is no relation between what and what, no norm or opposition, no before or after, and no subject or object. Instead, there is "a creation with our differences", as "man of autism" Adam Wolfond would say. This creation takes place in the encounter, when subjects and objects are not yet awake, when bodies feel with other bodies, and when difference plays out in the relation. There is no agency, only agencement.

"Neurodiversity as relation" (Estée Klar and Adam Wolfond) teaches us that difference is in itself, positively expressed in relation. There is no difference between kinds, nor difference from social kinds, because difference does not require bodies, selves, or subjects perceiving as neurotypicality tries to convince us, for the self is composed of microperceptions, each of which is its imaging of other perceiving little selves/souls. As Claire Colebrook argues following Deleuze, "the body is at once a perception of all those barely perceived durations within, and the affections that it encounters without". Thus, bodies can be entirely reconfigured in relation; one never knows how relations will unfold.

Chorus:

Colebrook, Claire. 2014. *Sex After Life: Essays on Extinction, Vol. 2*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press.

Klar, Estée & Wolfond, Adam. "Neurodiversity as Relation - what started as a way of life, a dissertation and a collaborative named *dis assembly*." Estée Klar & Adam Wolfond. February, 28, 2023, <https://www.esteerelation.com/>

Walker, Nick. 2021. *Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilities*. Fort Worth, Autonomous Press.