Notes on Normativity

Normativity, what results in tracing its etymological origins? Much like the initial analysis in *Genealogy of Morals*, good and bad, good and evil, language reveals cultural attitudes i.e. the moral-ethical ones towards concepts. Consider the Latin word, *norma*, referring to the constellation, also known as the carpenter's square. It is also interpreted to represent a rule, a level, and a set square. What attitudinal implications follow? There is the idea of a standard, which can split in two ways. The first, the accepted standard, where correctness (in a platonic sense) of the standard isn't the primary focus. The second, the platonic standard, the "objective" one - a ruler can be a bad ruler, but ruler-in-itself measures things correctly.

It is this two-fold meaning that we must focus on: Norm as the accepted standard, Norm as the true standard. Although the true standard is often an additional layer on the accepted one, an appeal to common sense for instance, that may not necessarily be the case. For instance, many leftists appeal to the true standard in a clear case where the accepted standard is something else. In India, such an appeal can be seen for LGBTQ rights, given that most of society is conservative of the heterosexual paradigm.

There remains the question of a "true" norm, the existence of true-ness. It is a platonic question, of a dualistic true one and the many striving for that one. Representation can only be saved as a conceptual paradigm by killing platonism, that is, the "true" becomes non-existent. Representation becomes self-aware of its generative lack, that there is no "true" norm, that there are no prescriptives.

How does this change the accepted-vs-true norm division? Here, the "true" norm becomes another conceptual apparatus falsely mistaken to be the "true one". Since it has been conceived of as a norm, it has its place in the symbolic. It doesn't have to be a popular accepted norm, for instance, early humanist movements in the caste-laden landscape of India started unpopular - one could make a case for an anti-caste attitude to be unpopular even today! Nonetheless, it wasn't unusual or atypical in a non-normative sense, given the Dalit support for it.

Even those against the anti-caste movement, similarly those anti-reservation in India now, nonetheless recognize them, the indirect (*jouissance*) acknowledgment, as something expected. Perhaps there are moral qualms against them, violence against them, and so on - nonetheless, it is a norm, it is expected. How can we situate the idea

of norms, the usual, typical, and expected, in our conceptual landscape, to use a loose term?

An interesting occurrence is when capitalist influencers conceit over their "rebellion" against the 9-5, their "choice" of a "non-normative" path. In certain countries, the surface premise doesn't hold true relative to the cultural landscape. In America, for instance, entrepreneurship is an accepted norm as a potential career choice. Now, coming to countries like India, Korea, and other Asian countries, where parents have stricter requirements on the choice of their children's career - a primary factor in that choice being stability - one mistakenly figures that the argument holds. But far from it.

Even the same Asian parents admire the Bill Gates', Jack Ma's, etc. of the world. It is merely that they don't want children to take the risk of pursuing that path, which by the relative economics of capitalism is a sound descriptive position i.e. high risk exists. However, the larger point being, the capitalist life is an accepted norm, the risky pursuit of it potentially failing, the acceptance of that pursuit isn't accepted. All those who claim to follow the "non-normative" routes, the "trailblazers" - a run-down track that has seen many drivers has a higher chance of combustive incidents - are descriptively wrong in claiming this position.

The mistake happens in considering normativity, in this case, the one associated with "what life to live", as a singular variate normal distribution. When in reality, it is a multivariate normal distribution. A k-dimensional space where there are conglomerated incidents of accepted lives. When does k become the maximal? I think in a liberal society, liberal in the maximal muted sense of the term. Note that "accepted" doesn't mean a universal inclusivity towards all conglomerated incidents. Rather even an acknowledgment of the other as a significant norm, even indirectly. Consider America. There is a significant portion of the country that is anti-LGBTQ, nonetheless, there are laws in favor of homosexuality, particularly the Marriage Act. And more importantly, for our context, even the recognition of the other by the anti-LGBTQ crowds is acceptance of their normativity. "They are making X behavior normal", thus they chant.

At this point, the accepted-vs-true division posited in the beginning seems more ambiguous. They are a relevant division nonetheless, as witnessed through the Imaginary. It seems as if the accepted and true take parts of each other to become a homogeneous entity. That the accepted norms, the popular "dominant" ones, are based on a certain "true" norm belief. And that the "true" norm, in conflict with the accepted ones, is still accepted (*jouissance* or not) by the Symbolic.

Now, do any of these conglomerated points on a graph escape the conceptual norm of representation? Not to scoff at representation, turn anti-representation, infact that enforces an unknown turn to representation, the indirect action mentioned above, *ressentiment*. Especially those leftists who parrot "fluidity" and "multiplicity", then succumbing to the moralistic trap. It is disappointing. No moralist can conceive of a non-representational system.

Queer over LGBTQ. Note that I separated the + - the '+' is what is queer, the singularity. I shall not give undue credit to the LGBTQ moment and proclaim them the owners of queerness. Even they succumb to the trap of essential identity, if not sexual-gender, then another way. Foucault's critique of the movement comes to mind. Why does Foucalt, and I, critique? We must often aim arrows at the ones nearby.

What does a queer, a singularity look like? As I discuss in detail, perhaps the immediate connection is unclear, in the *Distancing Act*, the queer distances from the multivariate distributions. Perhaps it creates a new dimension, perhaps a collapse of the multivariate itself.

> At the same time, the inward venture proceeds. Creation distances from what has existed hitherto, moves away and to at the same time in that nautical-aerial space
>
> ...
>
> And what is the moment of distancing? Can it be an explosion, a contraction of space itself – is it a black hole, more importantly, a black hole with what's after a black hole?[2]

In any sense, the queer to the norm, any perspective of the norm, appears an anomaly. An anomaly which it attempts to fix onto another norm, perhaps the other it depends on for its existence. This doesn't necessarily happen to the ontological creator, perhaps also to the proponents to the ethical act (in the Lacanian conception[1]) - the one who adopts their symptom, in the Lacanian sense, and goes to its end, even in the disapproving gaze of the symbolic. An analysis of the creating act and the ethical act is to be done, but that's another question.

A contemporary example is Zizek. It causes me great pain to see leftists calling Zizek homophobic, racist and so on. It makes sense - he has illuminating moments on identity, and since there is only identity in representation, he is correct on those fronts. But this stands against, for instance, the conception of identity on the basis of authenticity that the LBGTQ has taken from heterosexuals. And thus the ground is displaced, a shaking occurs, which the identities cannot stand.

Now a proper queer-singular always leaves something off, a leak somewhere. This disables the norms to pinpoint them, be it the left, right, or any term of a political spectrum hereafter. The right won't be able to pinpoint why the queer isn't moralistic at all. The left won't be able to pinpoint why the queer is anti-capital. And so on. As an inversal of Sloterdijk's description of Nietzschean individualism, an inverse part of it perhaps.

> Individualism constantly forges changing alliances with all that has made up the modern world: with progress and reaction, with left-wing and right-wing political programs, with national and transnational motives, with masculinist, feminist and infantilist projects, with technophile and technophobe sentiments, with ascetic and hedonist moralities, with avant-gardist and conservative conceptions of art, with analytical and cathartic therapies, with sporty and non-sporty lifestyles, with performance readiness and refusal of performance, with belief in success as well as unbelief in it, with still Christian as well as no-longer Christian forms of life, with ecumenical openings and local closings, with humanist and posthumanist ethics, with the ego necessarily able to accompany all my representations, as well as with the dissolved self, which exists only as the hall of mirrors of its masks. Individualism is capable of alliances with all sides, and Nietzsche is its designer, its prophet.[3]

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References

1. Zupančič, Alenka. (1995). *Ethics of the Real: Kant and Lacan*
2. Krishna, Niranjan (2024). *The Distancing Act.*
3. Sloterdijk, Peter (2013). *Nietzsche Apostle.* p. 66–67