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## Difference, Disagreement and the Thinking of Queerness

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*This article uses the work of Jacques Rancière and Gilles Deleuze as resources for reorienting the theoretical underpinnings of queerness as a political idea. Specifically, I use Deleuze's understanding of difference and Rancière's description of disagreement to describe queerness as contingent, creative, and averse to certain modes of identity politics. I begin by looking at Rancière's notion of disagreement as stemming from the (mis)counting of 'parts' in a political order. A group that is not counted (and therefore does not exist as a political entity) 'comes to be' through the declaration of a wrong. As this group emerges or actualizes, it fundamentally changes the overall constitution of the police order. Deleuze's conception of pure difference coming from the creative realm of the 'virtual' helps provide a genetic principle for the unanticipated inception of these groups. By placing it under this Rancière-Deleuzian lens, I distinguish queerness from competing neoliberal attempts to deal with sexuality.*

Despite the prevalence of the term 'queer' in academic and activist circles, its meaning remains unclear. At one point, it was thought to stand in for the lengthier phrase 'lesbian and gay.' This phrase was later expanded to include both bisexuals and transgenders, resulting in the acronym LGBT. As additional identities become more solidified and recognized, they are added to the end of the growing acronym. Sometimes a 'Q' is tacked on the end to refer to any other identities that the term may have neglected under the umbrella 'queer.' From this perspective, the term queer vaguely refers to any individuals whose identities fall outside the heterosexual norm, broadly construed. If this is the full extent to which queer will refer in the future, then there is no need to theorize queer – its meaning is and will continue to be readily available. It is simply shorthand for a general category of identities that stand apart from the sexual norm. If, however, there is something politically salient to queerness as a concept that deserves theorizing, it must stand apart from this mode

of LGBT politics. It must be something more than, and most likely opposed to, the way mainstream gay and lesbian movements have defined non-normative sexualities via their own usage of the term queer. If queer does signify something more substantive, just what its meaning is remains a question that has not been answered with any specificity. This ambiguity has been detrimental to locating what it is that is politically salient about the concept of queerness. The fuzziness associated with the term is a problem – it has left the term susceptible to broad interpretation, including a regression back to queer as a substitute for LGBT.

I contend that there is something more to queerness that warrants theorizing, and that more work needs to be done to understand queerness in specific terms. Here I describe a more nuanced understanding of normativity and I offer a more complex and mobile approach to the way that lived experiences are positioned with relation to norms. This analysis will not only delineate queerness from LGBT, but also show why queerness is important to us politically. Queerness both exceeds and challenges the limits of LGBT politics, and more generally, neoliberal identity politics. Thus, I turn to the work of Jacques Rancière and Gilles Deleuze in order to theorize queerness as *difference* and *disagreement*, an articulation that views queerness as distinct from neo-liberal or interest group approaches. This paper does not treat queerness as if it is an already existent concept that needs modification, and it does not take Rancière or Deleuze to be queer thinkers per se. Rather, I argue that Rancière and Deleuze provide valuable resources for conceptualizing queerness anew (See O'Rourke, 2005; Nigianni/Storr, 2009). This conceptualization understands queerness as something uniquely political, a mode of politics that is otherwise unavailable. It is also important to admit and preserve the substantial differences between Rancière and Deleuze's work before attempting to work across these differences. In many cases, they approach different questions from different metaphysical standpoints. There is, however, substantial overlap in several areas that I find productive for thinking about queerness as a political idea. Their differences – however significant – do not preclude using these two thinkers in tandem for this project.

Queerness emerges from their work with a turbulent creativity, and it does so in part because it does not yield to the cries for tolerance, recognition, and inclusion coming from the neo-liberal camp. (See Brown, 1995; Duggan, 2003) By combining Deleuze's analysis of actualization stemming from pure difference with Rancière's description of an infra-group's declaration of wrong (and the ensuing reconstitution of the societal order), we can begin to think about queerness as being distinct from a traditional conferral of rights or privileges to those who fall outside a sexual norm. Deleuze's work helps fill in the gaps before a group comes to be in Rancière's work, and Rancière's work articulates the way an order is ruptured and reconstituted in a rare moment of politics. In both cases, identity politics appears insufficient, because both thinkers believe that groups emerge as the recognizable result of a process which started with that

which we could not recognize. When read through the lens of Rancière's miscount and Deleuze's conception of virtuality, queerness retains a creative and contingent characteristic that is critical to its political operation. After working through their works more specifically, I want to show how a queer politics looks and feels different from the LGBT politics that we often see today.

### **Disagreement**

Politics occurs 'very little or rarely' (Rancière, 1999: 17) because, contrary to many schools of thought, 'politics' does not denote that realm in which subjects pursue interests, negotiate over resources, and engage with the system of distribution in order to obtain more of that in which they are interested (see Gibson, 2006). This realm is what Rancière calls the 'order,' the 'count,' or the 'police.' Politics is used instead to indicate the radical disruption of this order by those who have no place in it, something that may not happen often. A political moment is witnessed only when a discrepancy arises between, on the one hand, the counting of different parts in the order and, on the other hand, the existence of those parts. This discrepancy results in a confrontation between a party or order that *exists*, and one that does *not exist*. The discrepancy built into the order escapes the ordinary measurement of things and comes to a head at a particular moment, exposing this miscalculation of parts equaling a whole. This is the rare political moment for Rancière. 'Political order' is thus a contradiction in terms, because order is antithetical to politics. Order, like those who are part of the order, relies on one fundamental claim that is the 'negation of politics: there is no part of those who have no part' (Rancière, 1999:14). Order is the background from which politics emerges, reconstituting the ruptured arrangement of parts.

The moment of disruption is what interests Rancière. The 'part of those who have no part that is nothing and everything' (Rancière, 1999: 15) is the political paradox around which *Disagreement* turns. Politics (and, as I will argue, queerness) is misunderstood if it is confined or relegated to the recognized order of a given polity, rather than rooted specifically in the incommensurable conflict over the count. Policing is the attempt to eliminate this conflict.

This is both the mode that politics takes and the way in which something new becomes included in the count – where before it simply did not exist. The miscount is the 'major wrong' that points out the existence of a non-existent part, whereas a 'minor' wrong may be the inequality that is inevitably reflected within the count. Only the former can cause a true breach of the order – a political moment. The minor wrong occurs upon a common stage, while the major wrong occurs when an unfounded claim that there is a common stage is made by a party that does not exist on that stage until after this claim is made. 'It must first be established that the stage exists for the use of an interlocutor who can't see it and ... for good reason *because* it doesn't exist' (Rancière, 1999: 27). It is on this suddenly-shared stage

that the miscount is revealed as a major wrong, reconstituting the order in which the parts are counted on a common stage. Each subsequent count is inevitably another miscount, though it may include additional parts that previously had no part. Those that are included as a result of the disagreement may then begin to negotiate for common goods within that order (a negotiation that may be successful or unsuccessful).

Rancière is very clear that this is not a situation in which the order realizes that it had inadvertently overlooked a subject or group, and then rectifies this situation. Such a correction, however beneficial for those it would include in the order, is not a political moment. Nor is it a political moment when subjects 'place their interests in common' (Rancière, 1999: 27) in order to correct a miscount. Rather,

Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single world. (Rancière, 1999: 27)

Paradoxically, the burden rests on those who do not exist: those with no part must declare the wrong that is the miscount and, in so doing, bring themselves into existence by making themselves of some account in the emerging order. The uncounted do not *ask* to be counted, because the ability to ask would indicate that they are somehow already part of the count, however minimally. Making such a request would require not only mutual acknowledgement of the existence of parts without a part, but also a shared language between those non-parts and the dominant order.

Rancière is also not discussing situations where the powers that be (the police order) are intentionally excluding certain groups or subjects. This type of intentionality would indicate that the excluded are to some degree *within* the order from which they are being excluded; if they truly had no part, then the order would have no way of knowing who to exclude. For Rancière, the count is everyone who *exists*, not everyone who is *included*. That is to say, there can be radical inequality in the system of distribution between the have's and the have-not's (and this may be unjust), but this does not equate to those that are of some account and those that are of no account. Both the have's and have-not's are within the count; the type of disagreement between them is of a different nature. Rancière explains that the inequality that exists in a given community is a result of the mutual acknowledgement that all parties have for each other as part of their participation in the community. In fact, inequality within the count is a result of a more fundamental equality: everyone who is in the order is equally existent. Certain distributions are certainly more favorable than others, but this is again irrelevant to politics as such.

For Rancière, there can be nothing 'between' those with a part and those without a part, and so those without must forcibly make a

declaration even though they have no business doing so. As they make this declaration, they surge into existence. This new emergence forces a recomposition of the order that had failed to acknowledge the existence of those without a part. Subjectification is the term that Rancière chooses for this process of coming to be on the political stage.

Rancière describes politics as a 'determined activity' that appears in utter conflict with the police order. Therefore, politics names:

whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration – that of the part of those who have no part. (Rancière, 1999: 29-30)

Two important points are made here: first, the configuration (the order) is tangible. It can be sensed as part of the 'distribution of the perceptible', a phrase Rancière uses to describe that which can be sensed and that which falls beneath the realm of the perceptible (Rancière, 2004). This distribution 'reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community' (Rancière, 2004: 12). Second, the political moment requires the part that has no part to make a presupposition that they are not supposed to be capable of making: they must posit that they have a place in the order in spite of the fact that they do not. In a political moment, this presupposition is self-fulfilling.

### **Difference**

Gilles Deleuze, in his 1968 work *Difference and Repetition*, offers a philosophical analysis of pure difference and complex repetition that problematizes the notion of identity. His understanding of difference lends itself to this project because it moves beyond a politics of recognition and diversity, and thus away from the elements upon which a politics of identity relies. For Deleuze, difference does not emerge *amongst* different parties (e.g. the way gays are often described as *different from* 'straights'); rather, it appears immanently from the actualizing party itself. 'Difference is not diversity,' (Deleuze, 1994: 222) because diversity describes only the already-existing; diversity describes difference *from*, rather than difference in itself. *Difference from* is reducible to a model of recognition, in which the number of 'sexualities,' for instance, are contained within definable range of (diverse) distinct identities. *Difference in itself* views sexuality in terms of a pure continuity, in which newness can emerge unexpectedly from unanticipated places in unforeseen ways (Deleuze, 1994: 250).[1] This emergence is exemplified by Deleuze's description of the way in which the virtual – that realm of Ideas and pure differences – becomes actualized into realizable and manifest beings. This political operation is valuable for understanding the way in which new political groups emerge, particularly because it does so without appealing to the universal and without fitting into a traditional description of the liberal distribution of groups.

Deleuze's work on difference is important because I believe that a queer encounter is one that is, to use his term of art, purely *differentiated*, in which something novel unexpectedly emerges as queer. In order to better specify what Deleuze means by difference, he makes a delineation between the two different types of difference described above. *Differentiated* is difference that is pure – difference that comes from the realm of the virtual. It is this difference in which he is most interested. The term *differenciaded* is used to describe those differences that show up in the realm of extensity – they are the qualities and quantities that 'cover over' pure differences, (Deleuze, 2000: 207-12). These differenciaded objects are what we are most accustomed to encountering. By extending Deleuze's logic to this discussion of queerness and LGBT politics (something he does not do), a differenciaded encounter is one in which agents and groups remain relegated to a politics of recognition; such an encounter cannot accommodate the emergence of the new. And, while Deleuze does not refer to this process as 'queer' (a term that would be coined many years after *Difference and Repetition* is published), this is indeed the meaning of queer that I am conceptualizing.

Toward this end, I turn again to Deleuze's understanding of the way in which ideas become manifested in the world. He refers to this as a process of actualization: the realm of the virtual moving into the realm of actuality. Actualization is not a process of becoming in which something that has yet to be, comes to be. Rather, it is a creative process stemming from pure difference that can often yield unexpected results. Pure difference is not immediately accessible in the sensible world; it is that which *precedes* the realm of the sensible (Deleuze, 2000: 140). 'It is not the given but that by which the given is given' (Deleuze, 2000: 140). Difference in its pure form yields what will become sensible once it is actualized. The sensible is the result of a relation of different *intensities* that have at some point joined the realm of the actual. Intensities are the elements or forces that bridge the gap between the virtual and the actual (that which can potentially become actual, and that which is incarnated and can be perceived and experienced), though they exist on neither side. Deleuze is looking for a *genetic* principle for that which exists – a principle that moves beyond already-existing objects and their perceptible qualities or quantities, but not as far as a Kantian transcendentalism.

On this point, Rancière's work is not so distant. They both work toward the emergence of something perceptible – Deleuze through a philosophy of actualization and Rancière through political irruption. Deleuze argues that we experience intensities indirectly through that which they yield as extension. Intensities come from the differential elements on the side of the virtual, and render something perceptible on the side of the actual. '...we know intensity only as already developed within an extensity, and as covered over by qualities' (Deleuze, 2000: 223). Intensities are catalysts of sorts – they are the lit fuses that impel something from the virtual to burst into the actual – but they remain unidentifiable, or sub-identifiable. We identify and sense the qualities that we perceive in extension, but we do not sense

the genetic nature of those objects. Deleuze argues that underneath each actualization lie the intensities from which it was actualized.

Deleuze divides this process of actualization into four overlapping categories, moving from differentiation – the realm of Ideas and the virtual – toward differentiation – the realm of actualized extension. Each of the four stages is critical to Deleuze's understanding of how something is actualized in the world. In the first, the realm of differentiation, virtual relations of differential elements swirl around each other. They have what Deleuze (following Leibniz) calls *distinct* relations, because they are completely and utterly differentiated from each other. But, they are 'obscure' because they have yet to incarnate in the realm of the actual (Deleuze, 2000: 165, 213). The realm of the virtual is rich terrain (far richer than the realm of the actual) because there exists an ever-present potential for something to actualize in creative and unexpected ways. This virtual realm of ideas has to be the place from which queerness comes to be. Queer politics as I am describing it here is related to this creative emergence of newness from the rich terrain of the virtual. Queerness is not synonymous with actualization, but creative actualization is a productive tool for thinking queerness.

The second stage of the process of actualization is what Deleuze calls Individuation. Here, intensities play their most integral role, as objects move closer to the threshold of being actualized. (Deleuze, 2000: 246). Individuation is the process in which differential elements from the virtual begin to produce singular beings or singular objects. It is important for Deleuze that this process precede any general notions or concepts – e.g. that of species, categories, or universals (Deleuze, 2000: 247). Applied to the realm of thinking queerness, individuation occurs prior to the categorization that is devised for identity politics. If queerness is to reflect the new and growing forms of relations between people, it has to think prior to these stale, strict, and artificial categories (Foucault, 1978; Chambers and Carver, 2008). Individuation exposes the rights-based liberal model of LGBT politics as insufficient for the form of queer politics that I am advocating here, because it remains confined to the space of the count – in the already-actualized realm of differentiation. One cannot think queerness through the world of the recognizable and categorizable identities because these identities are precisely what queerness is upending.

Deleuze describes the process of individuation as the drawing together of a certain number of points that make up a series. The points are derived from the realm of the virtual; they are the differential elements that are clearly defined, but not yet actualized into existence. The constellation of these different points, as they constitute a complex curve or structure, emerges with a totally unique perspective. The individual points may not be unique when isolated, but the specific combination of these elements provides a perspective unlike any other. This is much like a finite number of letters coming

together in combination to form words, sentences, paragraphs, and eventually new and unique ideas – complexity arising from simplicity. Something begins to come together without us being able to recognize or identify it – this is intensive emergence. Deleuze reiterates that the sensible qualities or individual characteristics of those beings that have already been incarnated are not primary. Rather, they are ‘imprisoned in individuals as though in a crystal’ (Deleuze, 1994: 247); or, put differently, ‘...it is always a question of pre-individual singularities distributed within the Idea. It is unaware of the individual’ (Deleuze, 1994: 246).

The third stage bridges the gap between the virtual and the actual. It is the process of dramatization, or what Deleuze sometimes calls Spatial Temporal Dynamism. Dramatization is the trigger stage for the individuated virtual structure (Deleuze, 1994: 245-6). Some *thing* becomes incarnated as a result of a certain trigger; an extensive element or being comes to be in a moment of crystallization. The constellation that was purely virtual begins to actualize. This process is again unpredictable and creative – that which is produced is more than or different from the sum of its elemental points. ‘Actual terms never resemble the singularities they incarnate’ (Deleuze, 1994: 212) The timing is also unpredictable. Because dramatization begins in the realm of the virtual, it cannot be sensed or recognized. Even if it could, dramatization would remain impossible to predict or control, because it is not merely the unfolding of the yet-to-be. Sub-sensual intensities begin to bubble to the surface, until they finally condense into an actualized, extensive object at a particular moment. This is a moment of crystallization or coagulation (Deleuze, 1994: 189), in which a certain combination of disparities comes to be and form the conditions of possibilities for something actual to emerge.

The fourth stage is one of actualization or Differentiation, in which the actual can be sensed as such. Elements in this stage have now become incarnated and can be *differenciated* from one other (‘different from’) rather than *differentiated* (‘pure difference’). These manifested objects are the *result* of pure difference and intensity, but they are no longer in a realm that involves pure difference in any direct way. Deleuze (again borrowing from and then revising Leibniz’s formulation) explains that their differences have moved from the distinct and obscure – distinct because their relations had been totally determinable in the virtual, but obscure because they had yet to be incarnated – to clear and confused. They are ‘clear’ because they are now sensed in actuality, yet they remain ‘confused’ because their relations are no longer defined, determined, and purely differentiated. Deleuze uses the example (also from Leibniz) of a wave crashing on a beach. The noise made by the crashing wave is constituted by a myriad of individual and particular particles, each with their own singular principles. But, we do not recognize clearly each particle; what we hear is the overall sense of their sound in concert. And, we would not be able to hear the wave at all if it were not for the individual particles making their imperceptible noise. The wave is clear and confused: we can clearly hear the wave, but the relations

that constitute the wave are confused. The individuated elements that exist prior to the actualized wave exist in pure difference: their relations are differential until they emerge in combination as the actualized wave. Pure difference cannot be identified and determined in actualized elements, but the actualization cannot occur without the realm of virtual ideas that are purely differentiated (Deleuze, 1994: 252, 253). This is why Deleuze sometimes says that pure difference is 'cancelled' once it is actualized, or drawn outside of itself into extensity (Deleuze, 1994: 228, 233, 238, 266).

### **Difference-Disagreement**

As mentioned above, there are substantial differences between Rancière and Deleuze's metaphysics, politics, and thinking. But the gap is not insurmountable. With some work, one can make their separate vocabularies and approaches fit tenuously together long enough to serve as a resource for thinking queerness as a contingent, creative, and unstable process. For instance, when the process of Deleuzian actualization is applied to the way a group comes to be, it looks much like Rancière's description of subjectification. Rancière writes:

By *subjectification* I mean the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation *not previously identifiable within a given field of experience*, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience. (Rancière, 1999: 35, emphasis added)

And Deleuze claims:

The object of the encounter is... the imperceptible...from the point of view of recognition. (Deleuze, 1994: 140)

For it is not figures already mediated and related to representation that are capable of carrying the faculties to their respective limits but, on the contrary, free or untamed states of difference in itself; not qualitative opposition within the sensible, but an element which is in itself difference...This element is intensity, understood as pure difference in itself... (Deleuze, 1994: 144)

Both thinkers are critical of approaches to philosophy and politics that focus solely on the *already-constituted*, and this is why their work can be used to rebut neoliberal identity politics. Both Rancière and Deleuze formulate productive critiques of neo-liberal strategies in their separate ways. They expose how traditional models are incapable of doing the innovative and creative work that is required for a vibrant and pluralizing form of democratic politics (Chambers and Carver, 2008; Connolly, 2004, 2006).

In order to adequately specify queerness as a unique and important political operation, both Rancière and Deleuze are needed. It is unclear as to whether Rancière believes there is something prior to

the sensible emergence of a group; it is clear that he does not write about it at any length. However, this might just conform to Rancière's approach: nothing *sensible* exists prior to the declaration of the wrong from the perspective of the police. But, the irruption would not be political if it did not originate from a sub-perceptible level. I argue that the rupture that reconfigures the entirety of the order would not exist if it were not for something like the Deleuzian virtual.[2] With a little coaxing, we can view Deleuzian virtuality as simply the world that pre-exists the recognizable count that Rancière describes (Deleuze, 1994: 236-7). It is prior even to the stage in which groups are struggling to 'come to be.' Understood accordingly, virtuality is the realm that is responsible for all that becomes actualized and recognizable without itself being recognizable or sensed (Deleuze, 1994: 228, 229). Deleuze believes that everything that is required for a group to exist is already present in the immanent field from which it emerges. For Deleuze, it is necessary to explore the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the new, but these conditions do not arise from something external or transcendental. They grow from the object itself – from the group in itself (Deleuze, 1994: 169). The virtual is the resource upon which actuality draws in order for an infra-group to emerge as a group *from* this virtuality. If this is the case, then a discussion of group inequality, while important and interesting, is literally *apolitical* for Rancière. Adjusting the distribution of rights, privileges, or resources, as many neoliberals advocate, is antithetical to this understanding of politics and to this understanding of queerness.

Next, in Deleuze's stage of individuation, each series of points begin to consolidate into infra-groups with unique perspectives derived from the realm of the virtual. 'Individuation is essentially intensive,' and '...intensive quantities are individuating factors' (Deleuze, 1994: 246). Borrowing from Simondon, Deleuze explains that individuation arises from 'metastable' systems, in which there is no secure unity or static environment. It is a realm in flux, with a fluid distribution of elements of different degrees of disparity on different orders providing a heterogeneous climate from which intensive potentialities will actualize (Deleuze, 1994: 246). From this tumultuous and fluctuating environment, certain resonances may develop involving one or more of the disparities between certain elements. If the disparities are of a certain degree, and if the right combinations of elements are involved, 'the actualization of a potential and the establishing of communication between disparates' (Deleuze, 1994: 246) may occur. Deleuze explains that

Individuation is the act by which intensity determines differential relations to become actualized, along the lines of differentiation and within the qualities and extensities it creates. (Deleuze, 1994: 246)

Rancière notes that individuation occurs before the individual is actualized – prior to subjectification. '[Individuation] is unaware of the individual' (Deleuze, 1994: 246), just as the declaration of a wrong

occurs without a subject to declare it. Individuation develops from the array of ordinary and distinctive points, when a certain unique combination will resonate together to form a particular perspective involving the necessary degree of internal difference (Deleuze, 1994: 246). When this happens, the potential for actualization grows more likely. Intensity is that which determines which relations of the many involved will be actualized and differentiated.

While subjectification and individuation cannot simply be reduced to emergent queerness, this latter concept can be valuable for thinking about queer politics. Queerness is anti-identitarian because it occurs prior to the development of the individual. Queerness is the process of reconstituting the order around the emergence of a being or group of beings that actualize from unique perspectives – perspectives that stem from the realm of the virtual. Queerness is founded around *relationality* rather than *beings*; the categories and generalities that are constructed to organize subjects emerge after subjectification. What will actualize from the world of virtual elements, as determined by intensity, is never known in advance. This is why identity politics is insufficient for theorizing the new. We cannot see or understand what groups will come to be, or around what issues they will organize; if we could, they would already be in the realm of the recognizable and therefore existent in the order (Chambers and Carver, 2008). Deleuze's discussion of how a process of actualization is unlike one of realization bolsters Rancière's position. Realization is the process in which that which does not *yet* exist, comes into existence. As Deleuze notes, the only difference between the possible and the real is their status as existent – which is not enough for Deleuze (or, I contend, for Rancière, or for queerness). The world of the *possible* arises from a world of linear causality and known quantities; the more we know about this causality, the more able we are to predict reductively what will exist in the future. A process of actualization, on the other hand, is one in which strict causality is insufficient for predicting what will emerge. The virtual conditions from which each actualized object arises are not only insufficient for predicting what will be incarnated, but also sub-perceptible until after their pure difference is cancelled and they are actualized. This is again why the virtual is so much richer than the actual (not to mention the possible or the real); it holds the potential for a myriad of different manifestations to appear in unexpected and creative ways. In a world of the real and the possible, only the possible can emerge from the real, and only the real can emerge from the possible. The only difference between the two is whether it exists *yet*. By drawing upon both Rancière and Deleuze's work, emerging subjectivities must be described after they emerge from the creative and rich potentiality that is contained in the process of actualization. When groups are actualized in unanticipated ways, they join a count that had previously not recognized them as existing. As this happens, the existing order is radically disrupted and then reconfigured (Rancière, 1999: 11-12, 35, 18, 33). This disruption and reconstitution would never occur if groups are merely realized from their already-recognized possibility. The latter is the logic of the police,

while the former is the logic that disrupts that police order, i.e. politics (Rancière, 1999: 33).

Dramatization is the Deleuzian stage that is most relevant to Rancière's work. Rancière's declaration of a wrong is the trigger that moves an infra-group from the realm of the virtual to the realm of the actual. The declaration might be incited from one or more of the following shifts stemming from intensive differences: the environmental conditions surrounding a group, several groups, or the count shifts suddenly or over time; the addition or subtraction of certain elements within the infra-group or within the count that the infra-group joins; changes made within the count make the potential for an infra-group to incarnate more likely. In addition, the shift may develop from a set of circumstances that appear to be inexplicable. The differential elements that constitute what will become a group after the declaration *crystallize* in such a way that they make themselves of some account in the order. This crystallization is the bridge from the unrecognizable to the recognizable – the same one that Deleuze describes as a crisis point (Deleuze, 1994: 189). Both Rancière and Deleuze understand this moment as one of radical theatre or drama, and not one of simple representation. Deleuze explains that it is theatre that does not leave the identity of the thing, the spectator, the author, or the character intact (Deleuze, 1994: 192).

Finally in the fourth stage, Rancière's groups become actualized immediately after the declaration of the wrong. This group can now be differentiated from other groups based on its now-actualized constitution. Its pure difference is cancelled, but its actualization would have been impossible without the pure differential relations found in the realm of the virtual. The now-actual group joins the count, and its interests are in some way reflected in the way that the order distributes common resources to identifiable parts. The revised count that now includes the newly recognized group is inevitably a miscount of another set of parts that have no part, and the creative process of actualization occurs again and again. As soon as groups are differentiated in the count, Rancière's moment of politics is over.

Difference for Deleuze, like disagreement for Rancière, is a mode of bringing something new into being (becoming). The two in tandem can be used to (re-)orient the theoretical underpinnings of queerness, because (despite their differences) they resist recognition-based identity politics as the source of political natality and offer a vision of subjectivity that preserves the creativity latent in queerness. Deleuze draws on Nietzsche's image of the eternal return to recast this understanding of newness. Rather than understanding the eternal return as a cycle of repetition, or the repetition of the same, Deleuze understands Nietzsche to mean the eternal return of difference – pure difference. The eternal return is the ever-present chance that something innovative will be creatively actualized. The political moment, though rare, may occur at any time. In order for this to be the

case, becoming must be emphasized over identity and a politics of recognition.

Eternal return cannot mean the return of the identical because it presupposes a world ... in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved. ...The eternal return does not bring back 'the same' but returning constitutes the only same of that which becomes. (Deleuze, 1994: 41)

Identity presupposes a world of relations that is already being in a stable mode of the count (instability in the world would prevent these identities from coagulating). The return of these identities is thus the return of the identical, and, if understood through this ethos, politics would become mired in the return of the same (something Rancière believes is anti-political). If the eternal return is the return of difference, then all that returns is the pluri-potentiality for *becoming*. Deleuze pushes Nietzsche in this direction because he believes that pure intensities make up the will to power, and it is these 'mobile individuating factors' that are 'unwilling to allow themselves to be contained within the factitious limits of this or that *individual*' (Deleuze, 1994: 41, emphasis added). Because they are not confined to the individual, the potential remains for something new to emerge from an encounter with the unrecognizable. The encounter is a moment in which intensities jostle certain individuating factors to contract into something unique and new; a new complex curve of different relations of points forming a unique perspective. Newness emerges immanently – that is, from elements that already exist but are joined anew under different conditions or in different combination. But, these points are not exhausted by this new becoming because they are not limited to a single deployment. They will, in another moment of drama, be pulled apart and rearranged in a different curve with the addition and subtraction of any given number of individuating factors. This ever-present potentiality is how Deleuze reads Nietzsche's eternal return.

It is critical to locate a way of thinking about queerness (of *thinking queerness*) that not only avoids the artificial stability and stale intransigence of that which already exists, but one that destabilizes the foundations upon which identity and sexuality are constructed (Halperin, 1995). Such an analysis provides the difference between on the one hand including same sex couples (who abide by heteronormative terms of relationships) in the rights/privileges of marriage, and on the other, interrogating the very nature and composition of sexuality itself (Jagose, 1996). When it is exposed as a powerfully organized recognition-based matrix of categorized identities framed in relation to reproduction-based relationships and structures, then this norm (and many others) can be creatively rejected by acknowledging those lived experiences that do not fit cleanly within this matrix (as well as those that are yet to creatively develop). Such a rejection destabilizes norms based on sexual-identity and allows for the creation of new cultural forms and new ways of becoming. Destabilization at this level is not a purely negative

development *reacting against* the norm – it is ‘positive and dynamic and creative’ (Halperin, 1995: 66). Warner refers to this creative potentiality as the possibility for ‘world-making’ (Warner, 1999). It is for this reason that Warner is critical of the ‘official gay movement,’ which ‘has chosen to articulate the politics of identity rather than to become a broader movement targeting the politics of sexual shame’ (Warner, 1999: 31). One alternative to this politics of identity is found in the Deleuzian-Rancièrian analysis above: queer politics as a moment of creative rupture in which something new comes to be (*becomes*). We might be able to develop new and important strategies for this type of world-making if we draw from Rancièrè and Deleuze’s framework.

When sexuality is investigated under the Deleuzian-Rancièrian matrix, it appears very different than when it is viewed as a natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal practice of reproductive coupling. This is why Rancièrè and Deleuze’s work can lend itself to queer thinking. In response to the argument that reproduction is a natural evolutionary norm that is in place to ensure the survival of the human species, Warner argues that even if this was the case for early humans, ‘it remains the case that health lies not in repetition of those functions for all persons or for all time, but in the ability to create new functions, new adaptations, new conditions’ (Warner, 1999: 59). Nietzsche’s eternal return as read by Deleuze is a productive approach to dealing with sexual practices as they emerge in lived experience. Practices are and have always been invigorated by difference and by becoming in fluctuating contexts.

The problem of comparison between animal and human sexuality consists of finding out how sexuality ceases to be a function and breaks its attachments to reproduction. (Deleuze, 1994: 250)

The excesses of sexual practice overwhelm the categories that seek to compartmentalize their varieties into identity-based claims located in proximity to the norm. Only the eternal return of pure difference can sufficiently deal with sexuality as a multiplicity. Queerness, drafted from the mobility of differentiation, cannot simply be a substitute term for ‘gay and lesbian’ because it undermines the type of sexual identity those words describe (Jagose, 1996: 74). Thinking sexuality requires remaining within the politics of recognition and identity; thinking queerness requires leaving them behind in favor of a politics of difference-disagreement.

Queerness understood as difference-disagreement propels us toward new and creative pluri-potentialities (in our thinking and our becoming), rather than confining ourselves to the pre-determined limits of the already-recognizable (and therefore, un-queer). This is also how queerness serves a broader set of objectives that are important for political theory. Understanding the manner by which newness unexpectedly comes to be in a political arena can help us develop new political strategies that are more suitable to a less stable world. It will be difficult to identify these strategies in advance. But, by exposing categories via identity politics as constructed (though

powerful) groupings, we can trace the genesis of these groups back to the creative singularities that propelled them toward recognition in the first place. Deleuze explains that we tend to treat other groups *as if* they are able to integrate the 'individuating factors and pre-individual singularities' into the limits of their group as it is perceived in a field of representation (Deleuze, 1994: 281). But this is only the end of a long series of events, a series that can be followed in reverse. By moving beyond the recognizable group and its counterpart subjects, beyond the Other as a definable entity, we reach 'those regions where the Other-structure no longer functions,' a place where 'singularities are free to be deployed or distributed within pure Ideas, and individuating factors to be distributed in pure intensity' (Deleuze, 1994: 281-2). At the end of this retracing of crumbs, there is only difference – the space in which tiny elements combine in unique structures to provide creative new perspectives, as they congeal into subjectivities. Rancière would describe this realm as prior to the declaration of the wrong – the moments prior to a group making itself of account in the recognizable arena of the order. Without these imperceptible areas of difference-disagreement, nothing new – nor anything political – would ever occur.

It may seem difficult to include in our thinking groups, ideas, and things that do not yet reveal themselves within our perceptible range. It can feel uncomfortable and risky to try to attend to intensities that are still beneath the level of being; this sort of challenge can impinge on some of our most basic existential commitments (Connolly, 2005). But this is exactly what I read Rancière to be insisting upon: we must respond to the call that these rare *political* moments issue, the call to see a relationship between two worlds that cannot relate to each other (Rancière, 1999: 42). Queerness becomes important for thinking about politics, identity, and being/becoming when it draws its theoretical substance from Rancière and Deleuze's work. Difference and disagreement impel us to realign our thinking toward the level of the virtual – the moment just before the rupture in the count – and to be sensitive to its arrival. It encourages us to theorize from a position of contingency rather than from the security that comes from apodictic claims about stable identities or a monolithic and univocal norm. When we invest in this queer ethos as theorists, our thinking is invigorated and vitalized.

Theoretical analyses that do not attend to these elusive spaces are not merely incomplete: they sometimes smother the creative life of becoming out of the political world. For Rancière, these analyses neglect *politics* entirely. And, while it is difficult to outline concrete tactics that might stem from difference-disagreement, it is possible to suggest some experimental approaches that might foster this sort of thinking. By using difference-disagreement as a provisional space for theorizing, thinkers might find themselves more sensitive to emerging forms of political subjectivities. By acknowledging that subjectification can and does occur in places that we cannot see, we might encourage *fragility* within Rancière's order, making the count more susceptible to the creative emergence of a new group. An order that

operates on the presupposition that its count is mistaken could increase the likelihood of a group surging into being from just below the perceptible surface, shattering the order, and reconstituting it again in contingent, fragile terms. This could be a good or bad thing – and it will not necessarily be queer. But queerness cannot persist without this level of contingent creativity. Difference-disagreement means we must include the realm of the virtual in our understanding of the way groups come to be; we have to plan on the unexpected, and affirm the incomprehensible path that ideas take on their way toward actualization. It will undoubtedly mean that emphasis must be placed on those creative processes that emerge in a world of volatile becoming.

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### Notes

1. Actualization is not, by definition a good thing; fascism can creatively and unexpectedly actualize as easily as queerness. But, I argue the movement from the virtual to the actual is important for this understanding of queerness, and ought not to be neglected simply because not every actualization is a queer actualization.

2. It is also possible that Rancière does not believe that there is anything we can know about a group before it comes to be. Even if this is the case, Deleuze's work can provide a useful and resonating addendum to Rancière's description of politics – I do not find the two to be incompatible.

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