Discussion Paper: Is trans\* natural?

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Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth (Stonewall 2019). Trans people always being marginalized from society because the mainstream of society is heteronormative. In addition, normative heterosexuality is seen as natural and therefore right because it is a form of sexuality that is reproductive (Sturgeon, 2010, p.106). People who are ostracized for their sexual orientation or gender identity may even be blamed or punished for causing the disaster (Alaimo, 2009, p.32). These evidences show that being a trans has to face a lot of problems.

There is a debate about whether trans is nature or nurture for a long time and both sides show some evidence to support their arguments. However, it is difficult to decide which argument is correct because of nature-culture entanglements. The intertwined relationship between nature and culture is claimed by Darwin. According to Grosz (2005, p.30-31), Darwin’s theory shows that culture is not the completion of nature, because evolution is not directed toward any particular goal, rather it can be seen as the ramifying product and effect of nature and whose scope is infinite and unexpected. Furthermore, Darwin saw a resemblance between species and languages, which can categorize as nature and culture, because both evolve around proliferation, competition, and natural selection.

One of the evidences that can prove trans is natural is that the existence of gay animal couples such as the penguin couple Roy and Silo mentioned in Sturgeon’s article. Animals do not have languages and even they have, human cannot understand it. Therefore, it is impossible to know whether Roy or Silo is a gay or not, maybe one of them is trans or even both. However, it proves that it is natural animals can be non-heterosexual because they have not influenced by media or education that many people claim these factors contribute to people “become” sexual minorities such as gay, lesbian or trans. In the animal’s world, animals just act on instinct.

Different to the animal’s world, it is difficult and almost impossible to act on instinct in the human’s world. One of the reasons is that culture is shaping the human world. Culture encompasses religion, food, language, what we believe is right or wrong, and a million other things (Zimmermann, 2017). Sex category is also based on the culture, and people who deviate from the category which only has men or women are considering as “abnormal”. None can live without culture because it is already there before a person born and regardless of people like it or do not like it, culture is always there. Thus, trans people have to live in a world full of regulations or rules based on culture.

There is always an interaction of nature with culture in the human’s world. The existence of gay animal couples could be an evidence that trans is natural. Although not many cultures admit people who deviate from the mainstream sex category, culture still can be changed. Hird (2006, p.39) states that recent transgender and queer studies employ trans as a key queer trope in challenging claims concerning the immutability of sex and gender. Trans is natural but has to live in a world full of regulation based on culture and has to struggle to change the biased world.

Reference

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