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Title: ***Judith Butler's Postmodern Existentialism: A Critical Analysis***

Abstract

Judith Butler's theory of "performativity" develops from an existential phenomenology with its roots in postwar French interpretations of Hegel. While strongly influenced by poststructuralist philosophy in general, and Foucault in particular, Butler's theory retains definite links to postwar existentialism. Despite recasting the existential vocabulary of Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty in the terminology of the "linguistic turn," the theory of performativity suffers from many of the same problems that beset these thinkers. In particular, the article detects an unresolved contradiction between Butler's claims to have developed a subjectless conception of agency, and the phenomenological requirement that intentionality constitutes the object of action. It is argued that the phenomenological assumption of a free-floating intentionality, which somehow stands "behind" the embodied social agent and "selects" from a menu of subject-positions, cannot be fully eradicated from Butler's theory. Describing this as a "postmodern existentialism," the article criticises the resulting impasse in Butler's theory.

Keywords: Butler, postmarxism, ideology, gender, literary criticism

Judith Butler's Postmodern Existentialism: A Critical Analysis

During the last 30 years, a shift in the political grammar of social claims has happened, from political demands for redistributive justice to identity-based struggles for cultural recognition.[1] According to Nancy Fraser, "the 'struggle for recognition' is fast becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict," where "group identity supplants class interest as the chief medium of political mobilisation".[2] The conjuncture is shaped not only by identity-based struggles, however, but also by the intellectual prominence of "postmodern" anti-foundationalism and theories of the multiplicity and fragmentation of social identities.[3] In this context, postmarxism, as the leftwing of postmodern politics, has been tremendously influential, with its theory that the incompleteness of identity is the root of social antagonism. The recent joint declaration of a common trajectory, launched by Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, makes explicit this link between postmodern anti-foundationalism and the postmarxian emphasis on the politics of identity.[4] It also confirms Butler's location as one of the leading theorists within this postmodern and postmarxian tendency.

There is a significant difference, however, between affirming the *conjunctural centrality* of struggles for cultural recognition, and making them into the *generative principle* of all social conflict. Postmarxism, in short, conflates recognition of the importance of cultural struggle with its generative role in social structuration. It is Butler's theory of identity as a cultural performance that most clearly develops the implications of making struggles for cultural recognition into the motor force of social conflict. The original formulation of the theory of performativity – in *Gender Trouble* (1999) [1990] – produced an interpretation of Foucault's discourse analytics and Derrida's deconstruction that was profoundly inflected by existential Hegelianism. Interpreting the process of

subject-formation through the Hegelian lens of the "struggle for recognition," Butler proposed that material institutions are the consequence, not the cause, of social subjectivity. The notion that identity formation is the basis for institutional structuration overturns Butler's sources (Althusser and Foucault), to produce a generalised category of performativity, modeled on individual dramatic performances, whose leading characteristic is its ability to transcend its contextual determinants. Even more problematically, Butler concentrates her investigation of identity-formation at the level of the individual who resists their subjectification. Consequently, the concept of agency that underlies Butler's notion of a politics of the performative continues to inhabit the conceptual space of abstract individualism. Her theory tends to introduce social specificity primarily through description and ends up continually wresting with the pseudo-problem of authorial intentionality.

Butler's approach conceptualises individual identity conflict as the motor force of major structural change. Butler's politics of identity depends upon the fundamental assumption that instead of institutional rituals forming social subjectivity through interpellation, the individual somehow selects from a range of socially scripted alternatives, in an auto-production of self-identity. The norms of heterosexuality, Butler claimed initially, are sustained through acts that "are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means".[5] The possibility for the demystification of gender identities through parodic performances led to Butler's advocacy of a "stylistics of existence," modeled on Sartre and Foucault. In a highly revealing early formulation, Butler claimed that gender needs to be considered "as *a corporeal style*, an 'act,' as it were, which is both *intentional* and *performative*, where 'performative' suggests a *dramatic* and contingent construction of meaning".[6] This revealing notion of social identity as an intentional, dramatic performance betrays a conviction that individual praxis is the genetic origin of social structures. It rests upon the fundamental assumption that a free-floating intentionality stands aside from the subject-positions available to the individual, and selects the social identity that, under the circumstances, conforms to the values or interests of the agent. In this way, the sovereign

intentionality of the rational agent characteristic of liberal political philosophy made its explicit reappearance within Butler's discourse.

I shall show that Butler's stated intention to develop a subjectless conception of agency, and her declarations against the sovereignty of the classical individual, run in the opposite direction to the implications of her work. Butler has made several efforts to rectify her "new existentialism"[7] and constrain individual praxis. By confining the individual agent within discursive conventions and introducing the unconscious as a limit on conscious intentionality, Butler tried to demonstrate that "agency conditioned by … regimes of discourse/power cannot be conflated with voluntarism or individualism, … and in no way presupposes a choosing subject".[8] Such strong declarations are, as I shall demonstrate, continually undermined by the structure of theoretical claims in Butler's work. Certainly, Butler's description of the temporalised process of structuration, which seeks to avoid recourse to political voluntarism, or the sovereign intentionality of the autonomous individual, yields powerful insights into social identity. Her description of the dominant heterosexual culture in terms of "melancholia," and her insights into the structures of repetition and difference that make up the social conventions that produce cultural norms, represent important resources in thinking about contemporary cultural conflicts. Notwithstanding the promising aspects of conceptualising discursive practices as performative speech acts, however, Butler's theorisation remains abstract and individualistic.[9] Butler's assertion that "agency begins where sovereignty wanes"[10] needs to be understood, in this light, less as a claim to a post-Nietzschean, non-subjective form of agency, but as a theoretical limitation on the otherwise unconstrained power of the individual to manipulate structures. This result is diametrically opposed to the project of developing a subjectless conception of agency. Thus, despite numerous corrections to the theory of performativity, Butler never completely breaks from a central assumption of the original formulation, namely, that it is legitimate to transpose the forms of individual praxis onto social processes of institutional structuration. Consequently, Butler's theory oscillates between voluntarism and determinism,

swinging between strategic calculations based in transparent intentionality and the assertion that effective performances defy calculation entirely.

Beyond "Identity Politics"?

Butler's intervention into struggles for cultural recognition adapts an existential Hegelianism to postmodern theory. She does this by recasting the master-slave dialectic as the relation between dominant, heterosexual identity, generated within the "heterosexual matrix," and marginalised, homosexual identities. The result is that, despite her characteristically postmodern invocations of multiple subject-positions and decentred forms of power, Butler's theory has an identifiably Hegelian structure. She recasts the "identitarian" categories of identity politics as relational complexes in a dialectical process and then interprets this through the lens of a Foucauldian understanding of power as multiple and productive. According to Butler, the heterosexual matrix generates a power deployed through multiple sites, and the normalisation of heterosexuality requires the prohibition and exclusion of homosexuality. Indeed, Butler suggests that all socio-political identity is dialogically structured because it includes a hidden reference to its "constitutive outside," in an abjected identity.[11] For instance, normative heterosexual gender identities are supported/subverted by a melancholic disidentification from their marginalised "exterior," in homosexuality.

The concept of a quest for self-identity, as the driving force in social conflict, rehearses the Hegelian theory of the struggle for recognition on the postmodern terrain of so-called "identity politics". Butler, of course, is no stranger to analysing the tenacity of a conceptual constellation – even, or perhaps especially, one consisting of a structure of misrecognition – for this was the thesis of her dissertation on the French reception of Hegel. The "labour of the negative" of the Hegelian "subject of desire," she proposes, is preserved in negation, despite successive criticisms of the teleological narrative of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[12] Butler, in *Subjects of Desire*, explains this

structure of "negation without transcendence," or "preservation despite negation," operative in the "general economy" of post-Hegelian theories of the subject. Despite the retreat of the self-reflexive self-identity of Hegel's subject, from a regulative concept (Hyppolite, Kojève),[13] to an imaginary yet necessary ideal (Sartre),[14] and its termination as a meretricious fiction to be endlessly denounced by poststructuralism (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze),[15] Butler contends that Hegelian self-reflexive identity nonetheless lives a return of the repressed in the poststructuralist prolongation of the subject of desire. Thus, she defends the relevance of the phenomenological project even while accepting the fragmentation of subjectivity and the end of the master narrative of increasing self-identity.[16]

I suggest that the project of a phenomenology of subject-formation – leading to a subject-centred description of a subjectless process of agency – is inherently contradictory. What this contradiction suggests is an indifference to the distinction between subject-centred phenomenological description and the "process without a subject" of theoretical knowledge. I shall argue that the theory of performativity is a postmodern extension of Hegelian-inspired existentialism, which remains in profound continuity with the main premises of identity politics. That Butler's brilliant analysis of existentialism and poststructuralism can nevertheless anticipate the trajectory of her own work, *vis a vis* identity-based politics, can be explained through her supposition that the subject of desire, as the centre of knowledge, is preserved, not exposed, by its division and decentring.[17] Her postmodern allegiance to multiple subject-positions and decentred structures notwithstanding, Butler proposes that the quest of the Hegelian subject for its identity is not dispersed or destroyed by poststructuralism, but continued in a new form. One consequence of this strategy is that the underlying assumption of the world-constituting power of the subject – which in identity politics takes a blatantly Cartesian form – is not challenged by Butler, but merely displaced.

It is the primacy of subjectivity represents the continuity between Butler's Hegelian theory and "identity politics". According to advocates of identity-based politics, the autonomy of subject-

positions from structural determinations is the defining characteristic of the politics of the New Social Movements.[18] These positions assert that the fluidity of identity is a necessary condition for democracy and that progressive multicultural politics depends upon a conceptual shift from essential identities to multiple subject-positions.[19] However, many theories of identity-based social conflict concentrate on the supposed ability of the individual to select from a "menu" of subject-positions. This constellation of positions defines "identity politics" as that particular strategy, within the broad field of cultural politics, which privileges the conscious intentionality of the autonomous individual and their ability to rationally select from a subjective menu of options.[20] Such identity-political discourses therefore converge upon contemporary liberal political philosophy, which theorises procedural guarantees (the neutrality of the state and citizen rights) for individuals, whose conception of the sovereign good is held to be contextually selected from a personal hierarchy of values.[21]

Indeed, Butler's original idea of identity as an intentional dramatic performance suggests a voluntarist conception of individual agency. When this is combined with Butler's functionalist grasp of social theory, performativity becomes reminiscent of structural-functionalism's notion of the individual's ability to obtain critical distance from their social roles. Despite Butler's subsequent disavowal of voluntarism,[22] her early work has frequently been invoked as a theoretical support for the notion that gender is a voluntary dramatic performance initiated by a conscious subject, a subject which "wears its identity as drag"[23] and whose intentions govern the subversive or recuperative political meanings of its acts. Many of Butler's supporters – such as, for instance, David Bell and cothinkers – apply the theory of performativity developed in *Gender Trouble* to reinstate the sovereign intentionality of the autonomous individual. Taking gay skinheads as exemplary of a "progressive identity,"[24] they claim that this is the result of "consciously inhabiting" an otherwise hostile cultural milieu.[25] This consciousness converts a subcultural uniform into subversive parody because, although the gay skinhead "passes" as straight amongst heterosexuals,

their street presence surreptitiously enables "mutually constituting exchanges of glances," whereby "gay skinheads create a queer space in a heterosexual world, which is in itself empowering".[26]

In an important critical analysis of identity politics, Moya Lloyd traces the reliance of Butler's supporters on authorial intention to persistent ambiguities in Butler's own position.[27] Butler at once asserts the constructed character of social identities and appears to tacitly assume that an unreconstructed calculation of interests remains the basis for political interventions. In the hands of Butler's supporters, this led to a voluntarist theory of the radical mutability of gender performances, which neglects the regional distinctions between parody and politics, performance and performative, intentionality and agency.[28] The individual's performance of social identities necessarily invokes the conceptual apparatus of liberal individualism, here made explicit by Butler's supporters, because the notion of an intentional dramatisation of self makes no sense aside from the assumption of a seat of intentionality apart from the multiplie identity roles available to the "performer".

Gender Performances

To understand why Butler might have commenced theory construction with the notion of the individual's intentional, dramatic performance, we have to examine her critique of essentialist theories of gender. This will also allow us to grasp what resources she might have for rectifying the individualist voluntarism of her initial conception. Butler's theory of identity rejects the essentialist conception of gender as a substantial difference expressing an underlying natural sexual division. She conceptualises gender as constructed through social rituals supported by institutional power. In line with social constructivism, Butler proposes that gender identities are cultural performances that retroactively construct the "originary materiality" of sexuality.[29] For Butler, the implication is that gender is not the expression of an "abiding substance," but a naturalised social ritual of heterosexuality,[30] and that there is a connection between the "metaphysics of substance" and the

"identitarian categories of sex".[31] There is a conflation at work here, between "sexuality" in the sense of sexual preference towards a particular gender, and "sexuality" in the biological sense of the structure of the reproductive organs. Extending this analysis, Butler claims that the body is not a natural, material entity, but a discursively regulated, cultural construction, while gender is a performative that *produces* constative sex.[32]

Butler is resolutely hostile to the conception of an underlying substantial agent ("person") or natural entity ("body"). "[G]ender is always a doing," she asserts on the authority of Nietzsche, "though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed".[33] According to Butler, then, there is no natural body before cultural inscription:

> Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies … will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate … those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender.[34]

Likewise, for Butler, there is no underlying psyche "beneath" the various gender roles performed by the individual. Despite drawing on Freudian theory, Butler argues that the psychoanalytic concept of the incest prohibition is a product of the heterosexual matrix that has to be deconstructed. Instead of a permanent structure to the human psyche, which would act as a substrate to gender identities, Butler claims to demonstrate the plurality and dispersion of social norms, and the historicity of sexual taboos. She performs a historicist reading of Lévi-Straussian anthropology and Lacanian psychoanalysis, inspired by Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis, to propose a conception of gender identity that is supposed to be historically specific and socially mutable.[35] According to her account of the Foucauldian critique of the repressive hypothesis:

desire and its repression are an occasion for the consolidation of juridical structures; desire is manufactured and forbidden as a ritual symbolic gesture whereby the juridical model exercises and consolidates its own power.[36]

If repressed desire is "manufactured" through contingent discourses, then instead of the universality of the incest prohibition, we face a multitude of particular taboos that vary with cultural forms. Far from a taboo repressing a pre-existing psychic substrate of incestuous desire, Butler claims, the "repression of desire" actually creates a field of anticipated transgressions, because any norm is constituted through a citation of its exceptions. Rejecting psychic interiority as the correlate of the repression of desire, Butler shifts "from interiority to gender performatives," following Foucault in the proposition that normalisation involves the body as the site of a compulsion to signify.[37]

The figure of the interior soul understood as "within" the body is signified through its inscription *on* the body, even though its primary mode of signification is through its very absence, its potent invisibility. … The soul is precisely what the body lacks; hence, the body presents itself as a signifying lack.[38]

The physical style of the subject is the very modality of its subjection, because this inscription of individuation, taking the form of writing on the surfaces of the body, designates the "soul" as the "prison of the body". These reflections allow Butler to bring together the idea that resistance is internal to power with the notion of performative styles inscribed on the body. She proposes that homosexuality and bisexuality operate as the "constitutive outside" of heterosexual norms, so that "the 'unthinkable' is thus fully within culture, but fully excluded from the *dominant* culture".[39] Yet, the signification of heterosexual identity on the body, as a necessarily divided and recited statement of the norm and its constitutive exclusions, "effects a false stabilisation of gender".[40] Inspired by deconstruction, Butler claims the "citational," or repetitive and decontextualisable character of performative utterances, opens the possibility for marginal subversion of the reigning gender norms

through "resignification," or the repetition of a signification in a new context. Drawing upon an analysis of drag as an instance of resignification, she concludes, "gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without origin".[41] Therefore, the destabilisations effected by parodic recitation and marginal gender practices "disrupt the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence".[42] Drag performances, for instance, reveal that genders are simulacra (copies without originals).[43] Gender, then, is not constative but performative, and "drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity".[44] The regulatory ideal of bipolar gender identity, she argues, is exposed as a fiction "and a norm that disguises itself as a developmental law regulating the sexual field that it purports to describe".[45] The subversive repetition of gender norms in unprecedented contexts, in other words, displaces and denaturalises the hegemonic universality of heterosexuality, constituting a practical deconstruction of the politics of gender normalisation.

Imaginary Subjects

The political ambitions of Butler's theory commit her to the claim that psyches and bodies are *produced* by discursive means. It must be noted that this is not the standard epistemological claim of transcendental idealism, that the subject constitutes the form of the object in knowledge. It is a much stronger claim, aimed precisely against the constitutive subject, that the materiality of the object and the psyche of the subject are produced discursively. As we shall see, she equates the notion of the constitutive subject with the notion of a pre-discursive realm, which she appears to regard as an essential substrate that would be immune to political interventions.[46] There is a short-circuit at work here, however, which bears upon the question of Butler's theoretical resources for rectifying the individualism of her initial formulation of performativity. Butler is addressing a political question by resorting to an argument regarding metaphysics. This effort to solve political

problems with metaphysical propositions allows Butler to resolve the issue of political agency. I take her formula that "agency begins where sovereignty wanes" to mean that the sovereign subject is an illusion masking the reality of degrees of agency within partially open social relations. The difficulty is that the question of the nature of the social actor – is it the individual or a collective? – is never explicitly posed. One consequence is that Butler's deconstruction of the constitutive subject leaves the liberal individual intact. A basic reason is that the ultimate source for her politico-metaphysical argument is Althusser's theory of "ideological interpellation".[47] In every rectification of the theory of performativity, Butler returned to Althusser's "ISA's essay," each time adding new layers of poststructural theory to her interpretation of ideological interpellation.[48] Indeed, the relevance of the liberal individual as the fundamental unit for political analysis is implied by *any* theory that departs uncritically from Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation. In *that* theory, "individuals are interpellated into subjects" by ideological discourses. While it has been Butler's stated intention all along to develop what might be described as a subjectless conception of agency,[49] she never confronted the fundamental assumption of Althusser's essay. Actually, she tends to actively exacerbate the problems of this essay by concentrating not on social subjectivity in general, but on individual identity in particular. Althusser's attack on the constitutive subject suggested that by generating the illusion of transcendental subjectivity, ideology inserts individuals into functional social roles, while mystifying the structural origins of this process. But Althusser makes the subject an effect of discursive operations on the pre-discursive individual – scarcely a promising basis for rectifying a tendency towards individualism.[50] Butler's effort to square the circle of a Foucauldian theory that rejects every pre-discursive foundation with the idea of ideology as operating upon individuals generates incoherence in her position.

The implication of my criticism of Butler is that an unexamined individualism in her position leads to strains of voluntarism in her work. This will strike many readers of Butler as counter-intuitive, because she makes so many declarations disavowing such a reading. Her supporters claim that a subjectless conception of agency is the main resource for contesting the voluntarist

interpretation of performativity.[51] According to Butler, "all signification takes place within the orbit of a compulsion to repeat". The structural constraints surrounding the agent, condemning the individual to strategies of recuperative or subversive repetition of speech acts, supposedly prevent any voluntaristic interpretation of a subject who willfully "decides," on a day-by-day basis, to adopt this or that subject-position.[52] The task for a subversive identity politics "is not *whether* to repeat, but *how* to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very norms that enable repetition itself".[53] Indeed, Butler even claims the agency in question is not that of the *subject* (as in individualist-voluntarist accounts), but of language itself, so that we can locate "'agency within the possibility of a variation on … repetition".[54]

Likewise, the Foucauldian dimensions of Butler's theory supposedly prevent any facile slippage from "performative speech acts" to "dramatic performances".[55] Certainly, by depriving the subject of its power as genetic origin of structures and instead analysing the process of subjectification as a variable and complex function of power, Foucault *appears* to eliminate the autonomous individual. For Foucault, ritualised institutional practices take the form of disciplinary norms that literally conform subjects, by subjecting them to regimes of bodily signification, such as drills, routines and conventions. These inscribe the illusory psychic interiority of the soul on the socialised exterior of the body, so that "the soul is the prison of the body".[56] Power depends upon an illusory interiority, which leads to frustrated struggles with authority, for its elaboration, extension and penetration into the depth of the individual. In this context, the resistance of the subject (now taking into account the conflation of the psychoanalytic and political meanings) is merely a ruse of power. The problem is that this results in a form of objectivist determinism that prevents the emergence of effective resistance, while mechanically reducing the subject to a mere reflection of the social field (an effect of institutional socialisation, that is, a cultural dupe). Foucault's subsequent work on the "aesthetics of existence," instead of solving this problem, merely inverted it, asserting that although the subject is formed through constraints, nonetheless, the

possibility remained open for "practices of liberation" of a voluntarist kind.[57] It might be said, then, that Foucault exposes the constitutive subject – the better to save the political individual.

Despite making significant advances concerning the openness of structure as a condition for agency, Butler rehearses Foucault's trajectory in reverse, shifting from individualist voluntarism to mechanical objectivism.[58] In this context, the new edition of *Gender Trouble* (1999), with its collocation of a (later) introduction repudiating the autonomous subject, and an (earlier) exposition of performativity in terms of an "intentional, dramatic performance" of identity, makes for interesting reading. Drawing on the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish*, Butler claims that genealogical investigation of gender categories discloses "the political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses, with multiple and diffused points of origin".[59] Certainly, the sovereign subject of classical, liberal political philosophy and social theory is finished. In its place, however, stands the post-classical political individual, who only intervenes within an intersubjective network of constraints. Dethroned from the position of generative origin and constitutive subject, the individual in the theory of performativity nonetheless remains the primary force in institutional transformations.

Butler's supporters are insufficiently critical of her defense, then, for what is in question is not the *omnipotence* of the subject, or their ability to determine the field of subject-positions in a postmodern form of intellectual intuition. In question is the phenomenological assumption that a free-floating intentionality, standing aside from all processes of subjectivation, might become the launching point for the decision of "*how* to repeat". When Butler begins by accepting Althusser's assumption that the (pre-discursive) individual is the site for ideological interpellation, but combines this with a poststructuralist opposition to any pre-discursive materiality, she is left holding a disembodied – yet pre-social – individual intentionality. This is the basis for the voluntarist aspects of her position. Who (or what) decides "*how* to repeat"? On what basis is the decision to resist power made? Assuming that it is ultimately conceded that the individual decides

based on strategic calculations of material interests, or alternatively on the basis of unconscious desires, where are these interests formed and what is the efficacy of such resistance? Does the formation of social subjectivity actually *determine* objective structures? Can it really be claimed, without lapsing into voluntarist forms of idealism, that the adoption of identities somehow "precipitates" the materiality of institutions? Butler's silence on these questions, I suggest, is indicative of a deep impasse in her position. To see why, we need to examine the thesis that the subject is formed through Imaginary, or specular, processes of reflection and the formation of mirror-image relations.

Foucault's imaginary "soul" corresponds exactly to Althusser's ideological "subject". Indeed, Althusser's reduction of the subject to exclusively Imaginary relations (that is, to the ego) prepared the multitude of post-Althusserian, postmodern conceptions, which, beginning with Foucault's work, *Discipline and Punish*, regarded the subject as reducible to a dispersed multiplicity of subject-positions. Althusser's position is revisited in Butler's important article, "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All,"[60] where Butler expands upon the thesis that the Imaginary is solely responsible for subject-formation, by taking advantage of the paradoxes of the philosophy of reflection. The paradox consists in the claim that, in self-reflexivity, the constitutive subject is simultaneously the object of its own knowledge. In Althusser's theory, this takes the form of the impossible loop whereby the subject "hailed" by ideology recognises itself as the person addressed, before it has (through ideology) acquired the minimal subjectivity necessary for self-identity. Butler grasps the anticipation of identity effected in ideological interpellation as an ambivalent relation to authority that precedes identity-formation, based on a combination of guilt and love. A passionate attachment to the image of the law that precedes subjectification is the basis for this ambivalent pre-identification, which makes it possible for subjects to recognise themselves in the call of conscience. The "subject" is "driven by a love of the law that can only be satisfied by ritual punishment".[61] Her central claim is that "for Althusser, the efficacy of ideology consists in part in the formation of *conscience*,"[62] so that "to become a 'subject' is, thus, to have been presumed

guilty, then tried and declared innocent".[63] Indeed, because this effect of "hailing" is not a singular act, but a continuous repetition of ideological interpellations, the subject-citizen is constantly demonstrating their innocence through conformist practices. This does not solve the problem, of course, but instead merely displaces it from categories of knowledge (the problem of how I can *know* myself before the mirror image) to the register of affect (the problem of how I can *love* my existence sufficiently to want to be called into being by a guilty conscience).

Butler therefore *accepts the postulate of a pre-discursive auto-affection*, so that the subject originally desires identity. Indeed, she claims that the "I" comes "into social being … because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence".[64] The notion of an "inevitable" auto-affection as the explanation for how subjectivity is produced indicates the point at which Butler is forced to reintroduce a pre-discursive given into her constructivist theory. Glib references to Nietzsche notwithstanding, the postulate of a pre-discursive, narcissistic auto-affection as the mainspring of the subject originates with Fichte, who was the first to propose that the subject is initially the *deed* of self-positing.[65]

Perhaps seeking to address the difficulties that such a position raises for constructivism, Butler tries to disperse the notion of an originary identity, which she associates with the constitutive subject. She denies the pertinence of the Cartesian pre-discursive identity of conscious intentionality and substantial entity ("I think therefore I am"), citing Nietzsche's claim that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything".[66] What Butler is rejecting is the notion of psychic interiority and substantive entity as constituting a pre-discursive self-identity. As she comments:

> One might be tempted to say that identity categories are insufficient because every subject-position is the site of converging relations of power that are not univocal. But such a formulation underestimates the radical challenge to the subject that such converging relations imply. For there is no self-identical subject who houses or bears these relations, no site at which these relations converge. This converging and

interarticulation is the contemporary fate of the subject. In other words, the subject as a

self-identical identity is no more.[67]

The potential incoherence of claiming that while individuals are interpellated as subjects,

there is no "site at which these relations converge," indicates the strain of simultaneously asserting

the dispersion of the ego and the determination of the body by psychic structures. The problem is

that in swinging from subjective voluntarism to mechanical objectivism, Butler has not, in actuality,

dispensed with the assumption of a pre-discursive intentionality. She has only translated the register

of its existence, from self-knowledge, to auto-affection.

Melancholy Identity: The Unhappy Consciousness

The supposition of an originary narcissism is the basis for Butler's resurrection of psychic

interiority, including a spectacular repudiation of Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis.[68]

She suggests that something (the "psyche") exists beyond, and sometimes interrupts, the

Althusserian "subject" or Foucauldian "soul". In the light of the problems that I claim to detect in

the conceptual structure of her theory, Butler's theoretical reversal and sudden avowal of the

"psyche" tends to corroborate exactly what I have been saying about a disembodied intentionality

that somehow exists "before" subjectivation. Nonetheless, Butler's limited rehabilitation of

psychoanalysis insists that Freud remains an indispensable resource for thinking subjection and

subjectivation, because without the psyche there is no possibility of resistance. I would certainly

endorse this aspect of Butler's position. As Butler suggests, the psyche resists and exceeds the

normalisation process:[69]

Does the reduction of the psychoanalytically rich notion of the psyche to that of the

imprisoning soul not eliminate the possibility of resistance to normalisation and to

subject formation, a resistance that emerges precisely from the incommensurability between psyche and subject?[70]

The opposition between "psyche" and "soul" could be read in two ways. Along Lacanian lines, this could be interpreted as the opposition between the imaginary ego (the "soul" as the conscious interiority resulting from subject formation) and the symbolic processes of the unconscious.[71] Such a reading would avoid resorting to a pre-discursive intentionality, because the unconscious, famously "structured like a language," is a *post*-discursive repository of symbolic materials repressed during socialisation, an accumulation of libidinally-invested signifiers from the dialectics of maturation.[72] The other, "Sartrean" reading would seek to oppose a non-positional intentionality or a floating, auto-affective seat of selfhood to the socialised ego, the "I" to the "me," and use this opposition between an elemental self and the empirical identities adopted by the agent as a lever for understanding social conflict.[73] So what exactly is the status of Butler's "psyche"? Is it a restatement of the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious? Is the notion of primordial auto-affection the same as the Freudian concept of primary narcissism, or the Lacanian mirror stage?[74] Butler's rhetoric, I suggest, resonates with psychoanalytic terminology, but without any theoretical correspondence. She constantly conflates the elementary psychoanalytic distinction between the repression of unconscious desire and the resistance conducted by the ego, generating a generalised politico-psychological "resistance". This should warn us that her relation to Freudian theory is one of syncretic appropriations through selective citation, rather than a theoretical synthesis.

Butler argues that the "sublimation" of body into soul leaves a "bodily remainder" which exceeds the processes of normalisation, and this remainder survives as a "constitutive loss" that marks the body as a signifying lack.[75] Hence, according to Butler, "desire is *never* renounced, but becomes preserved and reasserted in the very structure of renunciation".[76] Her contention is that heterosexuality emerges from a simultaneous repudiation and preservation of primary homosexuality, because "renunciation requires the very homosexuality that it condemns".[77]

Therefore, she claims, both heterosexuals and homosexuals exist in a culture of gender melancholy, unable to mourn a lost homosexual cathexis.[78]

The central category for Butler's concept of identity is melancholia, which is distinguished psychoanalytically from mourning by the inability to acknowledge the loss of a libidinal object-cathexis.[79] Specifically, Butler claims that the primordial object-cathexis is homosexual, and melancholic heterosexuality is generated through the prohibition of this libidinal investment.[80] Interpreting melancholia through the Freudian notion of the ego as a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes (of identifications), Butler combines this with the Freudian observation that the ego is a bodily ego.[81] However, she literalises what for Freud is a body-*image* and makes the physical surface of the body coextensive with the ego.[82] Butler also asserts – rather than demonstrates – that the taboo on incest is *preceded* by the prohibition of homosexuality.[83] For Butler, this implies that hyperbolic gender identifications (rigid identities, or identitarianism) are instigated through the melancholic inability to mourn a lost primordial homosexuality, and so heterosexuality is characterised by the structure of self-loathing typical of melancholia. Butler's speculations regarding the melancholic formation of subjectivity are indeed interesting and have been productively applied within psychoanalysis to think the lost maternal object beyond the exclusive concentration on the paternal figure characteristic of Lacanian theory.[84] The claim, however, that before any gendering of the subject, the subject desires the parent of the same gender (this is the structural requirement of the claim to an originary homosexuality) seems an impossible loop, and Butler does not bother to support it with any Freudian references.

Most importantly, though, Butler's explanation of the processes of repression and identification does not sufficiently differentiate between the Freudian concept of "introjection" and the Hegelian notion of "intro-reflection".[85] Where the Freudian process involves *metaphorisation*, the Hegelian category invokes the figure of *metonymy*. Initially, Freud supposes in "The Ego and the Id," the mother is the object of a libidinal cathexis.[86] This cathexis is prohibited and the object becomes "lost" for the ego through the process of repression. In this process the image of the father

as authority figure (as agent of prohibition) is taken into the unconscious substrate of the ego ("introjected"), where it is set up as an ideal identification. Thus, the Freudian process involves a substitution of an idealised figure for a libidinal object. By contrast, the Hegelian process of intro-reflection happens when the essential structure of an external process is reflected into an internal process, becoming its dynamic. The difference is immense: in Freudian identification, the psyche cannot be a microcosm of the society, whereas in Hegelian intro-reflection, this is precisely what it is.

The Hegelian "Unhappy Consciousness" is the result of the slave's internalisation of the authority of the former master, resulting in a psyche split between the universality of abstract laws and the particularity of sensuous existence.[87] Taking itself as an object of scorn, the Unhappy Consciousness oscillates between spiritual universality and material singularity,[88] becoming an "incessant performer of renunciation"[89] and a fascinated spectator to its own abjection.[90] Initially, as we have seen, Butler combines the Hegelian dialectics of master and slave (recast as heterosexuality and homosexuality) with the Foucauldian theory of power as multiple and productive, to theorise the conflict between the heterosexual matrix and a marginalised homosexuality. The next step is to return to *Discipline and Punish* and re-read it through the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[91] Just as in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, then, where the conflict between master and slave is intro-reflected in the "Unhappy Consciousness," the melancholy subjectivity diagnosed in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) is the intro-reflection of the struggle for identity analysed in *Gender Trouble*. The Butlerian "psychic life of power" springs from the intro-reflection of the conflict between heterosexual matrix and homosexual margin, to form a melancholic subjectivity divided between an affirmed heterosexual identity ("the subject") and a denied homosexual identity ("the psyche").

As with the Hegelian work, the main focus of Butler's reconceptualisation of the "Unhappy Consciousness" is the emergence of intersubjective rationality (the "world of culture") from within the dialectics of self-consciousness. Butler proposes that the destructive rage of heterosexual

melancholia is cultivated by the state and internalised by citizens-subjects, but that an aggressive melancholia can be productively deployed to destroy the superego agency and turn the ego's hatred outwards against the "culture of death".[92] Butler's tendency is to directly equate the positive legal framework of the society with the psychic structure of prohibitions that institutes subjectivity, reflected in the (otherwise strange) call to resist interpellation and "expose the law [of culture] as less powerful than it seems".[93] Thus, the "psychic life of power" turns out to be a figure for the reflection of power structures into a divided subjectivity, whereby a state-sponsored structure of marginalisation and a "culture of death" become intro-reflected into the psyche as a melancholic heterosexuality.

Furthermore, "in *Psychic* Butler seems to conflate performativity, performance and psychotherapy as she argues that what is 'acted out' in 'gender performances' is the unresolved grief of a repudiated homosexuality".[94] These conflations are evidence for a systematic return to the ego-dominated politics of identity, where Butler's initial blurring of performative speech acts and intentional dramatic performances is now compounded by an identification of the resistance of the ego with political subversion. In line with this preference for the mirror relations of the Imaginary over the differential structures of the Symbolic, Butler's progressive politics display openly the dialectics of imaginary rivalry characteristic of the structure of the ego. Endorsing narcissistic rage, Butler stages a triumphant resurrection of the individual psyche even while denouncing the supposed unity of the ego. She proposes that the renunciation of any claim to unitary self-identity holds open the prospect of constructive mourning instead of destructive melancholia. Recognition of melancholia involves accepting self-division and otherness, Butler claims, so that the other is installed as an identification in the ego.[95] The Butlerian programme, it should be becoming clear, represents a sort of "Ego Psychology in reverse": where Ego Psychology sought to fortify the ego in the name of social adjustment,[96] Butler seeks to disperse the ego in the interests of permanent marginal subversion. Far from effecting a Freudian analysis of the subject, Butler's individual,

driven forward by the incompleteness of an impossible desire for self-identity, rehearses the existential-Hegelian conception of the "Unhappy Consciousness," after postmodernism.

Butler's Postmodern Existentialism

Butler's denials that she has produced a new existentialism are therefore not very convincing. The affinities between performativity and existentialism are genetic, as Butler's theory of gender develops directly from existentialism,[97] and structural, as the fundamental reliance of existential phenomenology on transcendental intentionality remains a latent assumption of Butler's work. According to her, of course, performativity is "not a return to an existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts, for the existential theory maintains a pre-discursive structure for both the self and its acts".[98] This is a misrecognition, for there remains "a great deal of existentialist thinking still at work in Butler's philosophy," and French existentialism can be said to enjoy a "return of the repressed" in performativity.[99]

The leading contention of Sartrean existentialism is that the self is constituted through its acts in a continuous movement of transcendence, so that self-identity is only an imaginary (albeit necessary) ideal, "futilely" pursued by human agents. In actuality, far from relying on a pre-discursive agent and act, Sartre defines consciousness as a "transcendental field without a subject".[100] Butler's criticism of the subject as a substantive agency is therefore in line with Sartre's critique of the phenomenological assumption that conscious intentionality can self-reflexively know itself as a unified ego. Sartre divides the "non-positional" transcendental intentionality of consciousness from the social identity (the ego) of the individual. As Butler herself recognises:

> Every intentional movement of consciousness towards a specific transcendental object presupposes consciousness' non-positional awareness of itself as the agent of consciousness; and yet this agency only becomes explicit through its actual deeds.[101]

For Sartre, the retroactive construction of the subject of the action (the "me") is distinct from the agency that acts (the "I"), an opposition Sartre translates into the existential opposition between objectified identity "in-itself"and transcendental subjectivity "for-itself". Thus, Butler's claim that in existentialism the self and its acts are pre-discursive is false, as regards the social identity of the agent that is retroactively known through their actions.

Butler's target, however, is probably the Sartrean revival of the Fichtean concept of a "pre-reflexive *cogito*". According to this conception, "non-positional consciousness," as a recasting of the transcendental "unity of apperception," and the externality of the world, as the existential recasting of the transcendental "object in general," enjoy the pre-reflexive unity of the *cogito*. This *is* a pre-discursive identity, but it is quite distinct from the "self and its acts," for where the "pre-reflexive *cogito*" is transcendental, the social identity of the agent, known through its actions, is empirical.

My contention is that Butler herself cannot avoid something along the lines of a non-positional consciousness, or transcendental intentionality, "behind" the multiple subject-positions adopted by the empirical agent. Indeed, as we have seen, Butler's solution to the problems of reflection is exactly the same as the neo-Fichtean and post-Sartrean position of Dieter Henrich, suggesting that she is, in reality, very far indeed from any postmodern "subjectless conception of agency". Butler's supporters might object that the subject-in-process described by Butler is not only constructed in discourse through the acts it performs, but functions merely as a retroactive grammatical fiction masking a performative construct.[102] Even when Butler claims that gender is a choice,[103] this does not mean that an agent stands back from gender and voluntarily selects, for "choosing" refers to reinterpretation of gender norms.[104] This is the basis for the distance that Butler claims to detect between performativity and existentialism. She rejects the terminology of "existential project" for "political strategy," and "linguistic expression" for "discursive performance," on the basis that the existential project, externalised in social action or linguistic expression, relies upon an underlying substantive agent.[105]

Butler's conception of the agent, always-already interpellated into a gender identity and located in an overdetermined field consisting of a multiplicity of subject-positions, confronting the problem of "*how* to repeat," develops through an adaptation of the existential phenomenology of Beauvoir[106] and Merleau-Ponty.[107] The resources for "*how* to repeat" arrive from the polysemic excess of subject-positions in the cultural field, which acts to decomplete every identity while ensuring that the individual is always located at the intersection of multiple, overlapping discourses.[108] Once again, this (high postmodern) position does not solve the problem, but merely displaces it, while at the same time raising the additional problem of moral relativism. Once we conceptualise the agent as a field of dispersed, multiple subject-positions, then who, or what, decides which position to adopt in a context? How and why are some forms of interpretation politically progressive – a practice of liberation (Foucault) – while others are deemed to be oppressive? Butler, of course, sometimes appears to think that every form of subjection involves exclusions, which would mean that any hegemonic subjectivity is intrinsically oppressive. In this case, her position is that of the Beautiful Soul, whose permanent stance of marginal subversion is in actuality a cover for a thoroughgoing complicity.[109] However, to the extent that Butler, in recent texts, appears to revive the perspective of liberation through an increasingly inclusive universality,[110] the problem of the interests of the subject, and therefore, for Butler, of intentionality, returns.

Any *phenomenology* of the adoption, by the agent, of a multiplicity of subject-positions, must necessarily situate its description of the contents of subjective experience as a non-positional consciousness. When Butler calls for a "critical desubjectivation" as an act of resistance to the law,[111] how else are we to understand this, except than as an appeal to a disembodied intentionality somehow "behind" the dispersed multiplicity of subject-positions adopted by the individual? What else can the celebration of the dispersion, even the non-identity, of the subject entail, if we are to consider this as a *political* act (as opposed to a suicidal abnegation)? Thus, Butler rehearses the existentialist conception of a permanent split between temporalised existence and spatialised

essence, subjective transcendence and reified identity, in the theory of performativity. Her core proposition, that every postulation of identity is "a sign of exhaustion, as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself,"[112] while couched in the terminology of the "linguistic turn," effectively means that the identity of the agent is continuously deposited in the wake of a movement of subjective transcendence, which is effected by a disembodied intentionality. That "discourse" replaces the "transcendental field" does not fundamentally alter the existentialist affinities of Butler's conception of subjectivity – something celebrated by at least one of her adherents.[113]

The problems in Butler's theory spring from the combination of the historicist assumption that individual praxis can be transposed onto social structuration, and the existential-Hegelian roots of her phenomenology of subjectivation. For Butler, the incompleteness of identity is the result of the dialectics of the self and other in the social field, so that – in classic Fichtean-Sartrean style – the shock of the encounter with the other sets permanent limits to my self-identity. Butler claims that:

> The "incompleteness" of each and every identity is a direct result of its differential emergence: no particular identity can emerge without presuming and enacting the exclusion of others, and this constitutive exclusion or antagonism is the shared and equal condition of all identity-constitution.[114]

The permanent stance of marginal subversion follows from this conception of the *necessity* for the self to exclude the other, so that while Butler formally advocates the development of an inclusive universality, no new social order can be imagined that would not, in fact, be based upon domination. Sartre's impasse – that ethics is both necessary and impossible – is here repeated on the terrain of discourse theory, so that the moral norms that make sociality possible can only be conceptualised as a constraint upon the spontaneity of the self. The problem with this theory is that it reduces the social field to the sum of dyadic interpersonal collisions, flattening the complexity of social structuration and institutional contexts onto a pseudo-dialectic of narcissistic identification

and sibling rivalry. No wonder, then, that the "collective dimension is missing from Butler's account of performative resignification, whose underpinnings in a theory of psychic dislocation confine its explanatory force to the private realm of individual action".[115]

As her supporters concede, Butler's "position … primarily addresses politics at the level of the individual agent enacting their gender while subjected to various cultural constraints".[116] Instead of lending substance to Laclau and Mouffe's excessively formal theory of discourse, performativity evacuates the social content of different practices, with a consequent inability to specify their institutional context. Indeed, in this sense, performativity is to be strictly opposed to performative speech acts, for the latter only operate in a social context, whereas performativity enjoys the veritably miraculous power to generate performative effects irrespective of conventions. The repercussion is that rather than clarifying the relation between discursive practice and institutional structures, performativity tends to disperse all structural constraints. The global result of these difficulties is that the trajectory of Butler's theory describes a series of unsuccessful efforts to evade the deadlock of what can only be called a postmodern existentialism, while the politics of performativity remain within the envelope of radicalised liberalism.

Endnotes

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[1] Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (Routledge, 1996), pp. 2-3, 11-39.

[2] Ibid., p. 11.

[3] For the link between anti-foundationalism (or anti-essentialism, as it is also sometimes called) and the fragmentation of identity, see for instance Judith Butler, "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory and Psychoanalytic Discourse," *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda Nicholson (Routledge, 1990), pp324-340.

[4] Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, "Introduction," *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Debates on the Left*, eds. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (Verso, 2000).. For an analysis of the postmodern aspects of discourse theory, and Butler's links with this theoretical constellation, consult Kate Nash, *Contemporary Political Sociology: Globalisation, Politics and Power* (Blackwell, 2000), pp. 32-43 and 172-73.

[5] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1999), p. 173.

[6] Ibid., p. 177 emphasis added.

[7] Alan Schrift, "Foucault's Reconfiguration of the Subject: From Nietzsche to Butler, Laclau/Mouffe and Beyond," *Philosophy Today* 41.1 (1997): pp. 153-59. Alan Schrift, "Judith Butler: Une Nouvelle Existentialiste?," *Philosophy Today* 45.1 (2001): pp. 12-23.

[8] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (Routledge, 1993), p. 15.

[9] Lois McNay, "Subject, Psyche and Agency: The Work of Judith Butler," *Theory, Culture & Society* 16.2 (1999): pp. 178, 89.

[10] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997), p. 16.

[11] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, pp. 15-16.

[12] Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France* (Columbia University Press, 1987).

[13] Ibid., pp. 63-92.

[14] Ibid., pp. 101-74.

[15] Ibid., pp. 175-238.

[16] Ibid., pp. 230-38.

[17] Ibid., p. 175.

[18] Stanley Aronowitz, *The Politics of Identity* (Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-9, Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (Routledge, 1998), pp. 54-86, Stanley Aronowitz, "The Situation of the Left in the United States," *Socialist Review* 93.3 (1994): pp. 5-79.

[19] Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain 1968-1990* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), Aletta Norval, *Deconstructing Apatheid Discourse* (Verso, 1996), David Howarth, Aletta Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis, ed., *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change* (Manchester University Press, 2000).

[20] See for instance the comments of both Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, repudiating the reduction of all recognition claims to "identity politics" Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation," *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, eds. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (Verso, 2003), 12, 120.

[21] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, 1993), John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political, Not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14.3 (1985).

[22] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 15.

[23] Elspeth Probyn, "Lesbians in Space: Gender, Sex and the Structure of Missing," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 2.1 (1995): p. 79.

[24] David Bell, Jon Binnie, Julia Cream and Gill Valentine, "All Hyped up and No Place to Go," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 1.1 (1994): p. 35.

[25] Ibid.: p. 36.

[26] Ibid.: p. 37.

[27] Moya Lloyd, "Performativity, Parody, Politics," *Theory, Culture & Society* 16.2 (1999): pp. 195-213.

[28] Ibid.: pp. 199-203.

[29] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 10.

[30] Ibid., p. 12. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 22.

[31] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 12. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp. 22-25.

[32] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 11. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 33.

[33] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 33.

[34] Ibid., pp. 43-44.

[35] Ibid., pp. 45-100.

[36] Ibid., p. 96.

[37] Ibid., p. 171.

[38] Ibid., p. 172.

[39] Ibid., p. 99.

[40] Ibid., p. 172.

[41] Ibid., p. 175.

[42] Ibid., p. 173.

[43] Ibid., p. 175.

[44] Ibid., p. 174.

[45] Ibid., p. 173.

[46] Judith Butler, "Competing Universalities," *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, eds. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (Verso, 2000), 146-49.

[47] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127-86.; Judith Butler, "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All," *Yale French Studies* 88 (1995).

[48] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, pp. 121-40. Butler, "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All." Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, pp. 71-102. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 106-31.

[49] Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (Routledge, 2002), pp. 44-51.

[50] Paul Hirst, *On Law and Ideology* (Macmillan, 1979), pp. 40-74.

[51] McNay, "Subject, Psyche and Agency: The Work of Judith Butler.", Schrift, "Foucault's Reconfiguration of the Subject: From Nietzsche to Butler, Laclau/Mouffe and Beyond."

[52] Salih, *Judith Butler*, pp. 43-71, Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (Schribner/Touchstone, 1996), pp. 183-84.

[53] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 148.

[54] Ibid., p. 145.

[55] Schrift, "Judith Butler: Une Nouvelle Existentialiste?," pp. 12-23.

[56] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Penguin, 1977), p. 30.

[57] Lois McNay, *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (Polity Press, 1994), pp. 88-124.

[58] McNay, "Subject, Psyche and Agency: The Work of Judith Butler," pp. 177-78.

[59] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp. viii-ix.

[60] Butler, "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All," pp. 6-26.

[61] Ibid.: p. 24.

[62] Ibid.: p. 13.

[63] Ibid.: p. 16.

[64] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, p. 104.

[65] Dieter Henrich, "Fichte's Original Insight," *Contemporary German Philosophy, Volume 1* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), pp. 15-53.

[66] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 25.

[67] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, pp. 229-30.

[68] Ibid., p. 22.

[69] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, pp. 14-15.

[70] Ibid., p. 87.

[71] Michèle Barrett, "Althusser's Marx, Althusser's Lacan," *The Althusserian Legacy*, eds. E. Ann Kaplan and Michael Sprinker (Verso, 1993). offers a persuasive re-interpretation of Althusser along these lines. Žižek's work, beginning from Chapter Three of *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, essays just such a reconstruction of the Althusserian theory of ideology. See: Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, 1989), pp. 87-129.

[72] Joël Dor, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language* (Jason Aronson, 1997).

[73] This, for instance, is Axel Honneth's line. See: Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Polity Press, 1995), pp. 71-91.

[74] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Norton, 1977), pp. 1-7.

[75] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, p. 92.

[76] Ibid., p. 56, Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, p. 117.

[77] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, p. 143.

[78] Ibid., p. 139.

[79] Sigmund Freud, *On Metapsychology*, Penguin Freud Library, vol. 11 (Penguin, 1984), pp. 251-68.

[80] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 63.

[81] Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 13.

[82] Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 41.

[83] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 63.

[84] Julia Lupton and Kenneth Reinhard, *After Oedipus: Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis* (Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 1-34.

[85] The classical location of this concept is the dialectics of appearance and essence in the division of the *Logic* devoted to the doctrine of Essence G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, trans. William Wallace (Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 162-222.

[86] Freud, *On Metapsychology*, pp. 19-39.

[87] G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 119-138.

[88] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, p. 46.

[89] Ibid., p. 49.

[90] Ibid., p. 50.

[91] Ibid., p. 33.

[92] Ibid., pp. 190-91.

[93] Ibid., p. 130.

[94] Salih, *Judith Butler*, pp. 132-33. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, p. 146.

[95] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, pp. 195-96.

[96] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Norton, 1988).

[97] Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex*," *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986), Sara Heinämaa, "What Is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of the Sexual Difference," *Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 12.1 (1997), Alex Hughes and Anne Witz, "Feminism and the Matter of Bodies: From De Beauvoir to Butler," *Body & Society* 3.1 (1997).

[98] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 181.

[99] Schrift, "Judith Butler: Une Nouvelle Existentialiste?," pp. 14-15.

[100] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (Routledge, 1969), p. 235.

[101] Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*, p. 128.

[102] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 25.

[103] Judith Butler, "Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig and Foucault," *Feminism as Critique: Essyas on the Politics of Gender in Late-Capitalist Societies*, eds. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Polity Press, 1987), 128-29.

[104] Ibid., 131.

[105] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 25.

[106] Butler, "Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig and Foucault.", Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex*."

[107] Judith Butler, "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*," *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy*, eds. Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young (Indiana University Press, 1989).

[108] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 6.

[109] Martha Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody," *The New Republic* 22 February 1999.

[110] Judith Butler, "Restaging the Universal," *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, eds. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (Verso, 2000), Butler, "Competing Universalities.", Judith Butler, "Dynamic Conclusions," *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, eds. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (Verso, 2000).

[111] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, p. 130.

[112] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 143.

[113] Schrift, "Foucault's Reconfiguration of the Subject: From Nietzsche to Butler, Laclau/Mouffe and Beyond.", Schrift, "Judith Butler: Une Nouvelle Existentialiste?."

[114] Butler, "Restaging the Universal," 31.

[115] McNay, "Subject, Psyche and Agency: The Work of Judith Butler," p. 189.

[116] Schrift, "Foucault's Reconfiguration of the Subject: From Nietzsche to Butler, Laclau/Mouffe and Beyond," p. 157.