THE NOTION OF GENDER AS A NORM IN JUDITH BUTLER'S THOUGHT

Pro gradu – tutkielma

Tampereen yliopisto

Historiatieteen ja filosofian laitos

Joulukuu 2009

Piia Korpi

Pro gradu – tutkielmassa tarkastellaan yhdysvaltalaisen nykyfilosofi Judith Butlerin käsitystä sukupuolesta (*gender*) normina. Tätä käsitystä lähestytään kolmen toisiinsa liittyvän kysymyksen puitteissa. Ensinnäkin selvitetään, mitä sukupuolen käsitteellistäminen normiksi tarkoittaa ja, tähän liittyen, miten sukupuoli normina toimii samanaikaisesti sekä rajoittaen subjektia että mahdollistaen tämän. Toiseksi pohditaan, mihin normin auktoriteetti, sen velvoittavuus, Butlerin mukaan perustuu ja kuinka tätä auktoriteettia uusinnetaan. Kolmas kysymys koskee mahdollisuutta haastaa normi, toisin sanoen siis sukupuolipolitiikan mahdollisuutta Butlerin teoretisoinnin perustalta.

Ajatuksessaan sukupuolesta normina Butler korostaa ennen muuta normin sosiaalista ja temporaalista luonnetta. Kuvattaessa normin toimintaa erityisesti performatiivisuuden ja interpellaation käsitteet nousevat keskiöön. Tutkielmassa kuvataan kuinka Butlerin ajattelussa sukupuoli nähdään performatiivisen toiston myötä sosiaalisesti rakentuvana, siteerattavana normina, jolla ei ole perustaa missään diskurssin ulkopuolisessa materiaalisuudessa. Butlerin performatiivisuuden ajatuksessa, joka pohjautuu J.L. Austinin ja Jacques Derridan kirjoituksiin, juuri siteerattavuus muodostaakin perustan paitsi normin uusintamiselle, myös sen haastamiselle.

Huolimatta tästä muutoksen mahdollisuudesta, sukupuoli normina näyttäytyy Butlerin ajattelussa myös erityisellä tapaa subjektia velvoittavana. Tutkielmassa todetaan tämän velvoittavuuden perustuvan ennen muuta subjektiuden ja sukupuolen normina kytkökseen. Sen sijaan, että normi olisi jotakin subjektille täysin ulkoista, se toimii Butlerin mukaan subjektiuden ehtona, mahdollistaessaan sosiaalisen tunnistamisen/tunnustamisen (*recognition*) ja interpellaation, joiden myötä subjekti tulee olemaan. Näin ollen subjekti käsitteellistyy Butlerin ajattelussa normista riippuvaiseksi ja erityisellä tapaa haavoittuvaiseksi sen suhteen, mikä hankaloittaa subjektiuden ottamista kriittisen sukupuolipolitiikan lähtökohdaksi.

Tutkielmassa osoitetaan muutoksen mahdollisuuden silti säilyvän Butlerin ajattelussa. Tutkielman tarkastelujen pohjalta käy kuitenkin ilmi, että Butlerin ajattelussa muodostuva käsitys politiikasta on hyvin erityinen. Tässä käsityksessä normin haastaminen näyttäytyy aina epävarmana ja ristiriitaisena toimintana, kritiikkinä ja resignifikaationa, joiden lopullisia päämääriä ei voi eikä tule tarkasti ennalta määrittää. Muutoksen epävarmuus perustuu pitkälti siihen, ettei normin performatiivinen voima Butlerin mukaan ole yksittäisen subjektin hallittavissa. Subjektin ja normin yhteen kietoutumisesta puolestaan seuraa, että pyrkimyksissään kritisoida normia subjekti välttämättä riskeeraa myös oman käsitettävyytensä, mahdollisesti jopa elämänsä.

Asiasanat: sukupuoli, sosiaalinen normi, performatiivisuus, subjekti

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AC   *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*

BTM   *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*

"CF"   "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism""

CHU   *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*

ES   *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*

GAO   *Giving an Account of Oneself*

GT   *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*

PLP   *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*

SD   *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*

UG   *Undoing Gender*

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. PRESENTATION OF THE SUBJECT

Gender has become increasingly the issue of our time. Discussion on gender-related inequalities and oppression in society has spread from the field of feminist research to mainstream public discussions on politics, and everyday life. One can easily note that gender talk is no more solely talk on and by women, even as women still continue to suffer more than men from the prevailing gender order. Despite the varying emphasises of it, one defining character of discussion on gender seems to be its commitment on the binary schema of man - woman: our very concept of human is apparently divided in two mutually exclusive gender categories. Moreover, the very social reality we inhabit is organized according to the assumption that everybody is either a woman or man. This gender then is presumed to accord with the sex, female or male, assigned at birth. Thus everybody assigned to be female must approximate the standards of the gender category "woman" and everybody assigned to be male must approximate those of the category "man".

At most obvious level the gendered character of social reality manifests itself in our having the sex/gender specific public toilets and changing rooms that recognize only two mutually exclusive types of sexed/gendered beings. This is how the notion of binary gender contributes to the organization of our very spatial surroundings[1]. In a slightly more abstract level it manifests itself for instance in the more or less official documents and forms that typically entails one to "be" of one sex/gender or the other. The binary schema of sex/gender is inscribed even in our social security system, which highlights the way this dichotomy is institutionally enforced and hard to resist without severe risks on one's life conditions.

What makes the organization of social reality according to the notion of binary gender complicated though is that there is, and has always been, humans who do not fit to either of the recognized categories. There are for instance humans who were born intersexed, that is, bearing the anatomical features of more than one sex. This makes them hardly legible in terms of sex and gender, the way these terms are currently being articulated. These people gain access to social reality, become "real" male men and female women, only after numerous surgical operations that cause unnecessary pain[2] and leave lifelong scars on their bodies.

Another example of humans who do not fit to the conventional gender order are the variously transgendered humans, who, one way or another, resist assimilation into the binary frame of gender.

---

[1] For more about the gendered dimension of constructed space, see Saarikangas 2002
[2] I write "unnecessary pain" as there usually are no health-related reasons for theses operations

One may for instance be legally and anatomically female but feel more comfortable in practising as a man in terms of gender. Or one may conceive oneself as being either in-between the gender categories or even not belonging to either of them. What makes the lives of these people particularly difficult is the fact that they are nowhere recognized as part of social reality, one that is so strictly organised around the binary (and sex-related) notion of gender that it hardly can accommodate any exceptions. Added to the many practical difficulties, such as deciding in a public building which toilet to choose and every now and then having to defend that decision in the face of somebody who comes to question it, constant threat of violence accompanies the one ambiguously gendered.

For the kind of reasons given above, it seems reasonable to suggest that our notion of gender needs to be seriously revised. Even as it does remain important to defend women's rights, and in some respects also those of men, it is equally important to note that much more profound rethinking of gender is required than can be conducted on the basis of the conventional binary order. In other words, the topic of gender should be posed as a question rather than a point of departure for gender political discussion. In this paper I will contribute to this questioning in introducing and discussing the notion of gender as a norm by a contemporary scholar Judith Butler.

Judith Butler (1956 −) can be mentioned as one of the most important contemporary feminist philosophers. Her writings, ever since the publication of her first book on gender, *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Butler 1990)[3], have had remarkable influences on feminist theorizing, as well as on different political movements motivated by the questions of sex, gender, and/or sexuality. In *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) Butler introduces her theory of gender performativity, which she carries on reconsidering throughout her later publications. In her notion of gender performativity Butler draws on J.L. Austin's speech act theory, wherefrom the basic concept of a performative act is derived, but uses a wide range of other theoretical sources, from Hegel to psychoanalysis, too. The core idea in this theoretical view on gender is that gender, rather than referring to who or what one is, refers to the kind of social practising one is involved in. In other words gender is a matter of doing, not being.

As it calls the sex/gender –division as well as the political possibilities of women-centred identity politics implied in much contemporary feminist theory into question, Butler's thought has posed many important challenges to contemporary feminist studies and continues to do so. However,

---

[3] In the year 2006, *Gender Trouble* was published in Finnish under the title *Hankala sukupuoli, Feminismi ja identiteetin kumous* (Gaudeamus, 2006). The book is translated by Tuija Pulkkinen and Leena-Maija Rossi.

compared to *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990), it seems that Butler's later publications have provoked less discussion in the field of at least Finnish feminist theory. Considerable share of the references to her work are even today to *Gender Trouble* given that already in *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993), the book that followed *Gender Trouble*, Butler set out to revise some of her earlier views. When it comes to philosophy then Butler's thought seems to be mostly unknown. Also the overall interest in the issue of gender remains marginal. It is partly on these grounds that I have chosen the topic of this paper and decided to concentrate instead of *Gender Trouble* on Butler's more recent and less discussed books.

What could it mean then to conceive gender as a norm? As one of my fellow student suggested at a recent seminar meeting, the notion of gender as a norm can make one think gender is something unalterable, a rule that lies beyond the field of action. As I will argue this is not Butler's view, though, for according to her the norm of gender is precisely social and temporal in character. I suggest, moreover, that this emphasis on the possibility of social transformation in Butler's thought is best understood in the context of her general critique of certain structuralist views that actually construe gender as unalterable by action.

One theoretical frame in which this kind of notion is, according to Butler, evident is Lacanian psychoanalysis. Butler criticizes (see, e.g. UG, 43ff.) the Lacanian theory for postulating gender as ahistorical and fundamental in a way that makes it hardly conceptually separable from our understanding of "human" and subject. This is because according to Lacanian view the structural laws of language and kinship establish an unchangeable sexual difference[4] that conditions the emergence of a subject. Thus sexual difference (gender) appears as a pre-established principle governing subject formation from beyond time and place. As Butler states there is practically no way to challenge the authority of the prevailing gender order if one conceives it to be based on a structural rule that, by definition, lies beyond the reach of our actions.

I suggest Butler stresses the social character of gender as a norm in order not to end up in this kind of a politically invalid theory. Different views can be held, however, on social norms too, as well as on the relationship between a subject and them. What appears intuitively taken characteristic of

---

[4] Now, as the reader may note the terminology used is a bit confusing. In Lacanian psychoanalysis the notion of gender does not have that significant role. In the context of that branch of theory "sexual difference" can be taken to refer roughly to what Butler conceives as gender (and sex). Because in her theorizing on gender Butler constantly comments on and critically refers to the Lacanian notion of sexual difference I also use these notions here as somewhat comparable with one another.

There may well be, however, some critical remarks to be made concerning the exact relations between the terminology Butler uses and that of Lacanian psychoanalysis. I will not, however, interrogate these relations in detail in the present paper. For more about this criticism, see Hekanaho 2009.

these norms and differentiates them from for instance rules and laws is their typically implicit disposition. This means that social norms may work efficiently in governing some set of actions without appearing in written or spoken form. One need not necessarily know the norms according to which one acts, in the mode of being able to state them in language. Rather, one rarely reflects on these norms as far as they do not run into a crisis[5]. Indeed, the regulating function of norms seems to base mainly on something else than explicitly articulated outside coercion or force, even though these may time to time function to secure the obedience to the norm. When one acts in accordance with the norm of gender, this may feel the most natural and unproblematic thing to do. But whenever one's conduct, one way or another, challenges the norm one will almost certainly face some kind of a social punishment. The norm is, thus, supported by explicit sanctions time to time. What this apparent need of support suggests, then, is that the norm is not fully capable of determining its field of application, but rather faces constant challenges of disobedience and failure.

Usually norms are seen as something we come to learn through participating in the surrounding society and growing up as adult citizens. Some social constructivist theories on gender (see Liljeström 1996, 119 – 120), especially theories of socialization (see Lloyd, M. 2007, 48) seek to give account of the processes of taking on certain norms as the guiding line of one's action. Gender for instance may be seen as a role, as learned acting according to a given model, in the context of socialization theories. The same goes for other theories too that presume a core subject, a human beyond its gender, who would precede the moulding constraints of social surroundings. As the reader will shortly note, according to Butler no such thing exists, though. Rather, the subject is from the inception intertwined with gender as a norm, even as it is not determined by it.

What becomes clear already through these yet intuitive considerations is that the notion of gender as a norm is strongly associated with questions concerning subjectivity and politics. Accordingly, I will interrogate in this paper the following questions that are interrelated. On the most general level I will ask how gender as a norm operates both to construct and deconstruct subjects; how does it function at the same time to restrict and enable the subject, and the agency it is taken to manifest in its actions? My second big question concerns the binding status of this norm. I will ask where does gender, as a norm, derive its authority from and how is this authority reproduced over time? Finally I will analyze the political conclusions to be drawn on the basis of conceiving gender as a social norm. This is to ask how, on what conditions and where, might this apparently authoritative norm

---

[5] For instance the usually implicit social norms that govern face-to-face communication in a particular culture may suddenly become more visible when they cede to function properly in communicating with a person from another culture.

be challenged? On a more general level I will consider what kind of future for gender politics does this understanding suggest?

In order to delimit my discussion here to cover especially Butler's recent and most relevant writings I am concentrating mainly on her books *Excitable Speech – A Politics of the Performative* (1997), *The Psychic Life of Power – Theories in Subjection* (1997), *Undoing Gender* (2004), and *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005)[6]. These are also the books where social norms and their operations are considered most extensively, even while none of these books concentrates exclusively and explicitly on the question of norms. It must be added also that Butler does not provide any general theory concerning the operation of social norms, but rather discusses them, here and there, in relation to various political concerns and in considering for instance theories of subject formation and ethics. Neither is the topic of this paper, gender as a norm, exhaustively covered by any single writing of hers. This motivates my inquiry but poses, of course, challenges too, as I will have to shuttle between her rather diverse texts.

1.2. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This paper is divided into seven parts. After this introductory section of the paper I move on to present the theoretical backgrounds of Butler's though. As the reader will note Butler bases her philosophical accounts on quite a variety of writings by other theorists. Because of this diversity, I have decided to provide rather a general view on her theoretical backgrounds than go in detail into any particular theory she draws on. In part II I also briefly contextualize Butler's thought with respect to social sciences and discuss her notion of gender in the context of gender politics and feminist theory.

In the third part of the paper I will, having first clarified the concept of the norm on a general level, present the general outlining of the topic and suggest a preliminary reading of Butler's notion of gender as a norm. After this I will discuss the idea of gender as a norm especially in the level of its operation. In this respect, I introduce the concepts of performativity and interpellation and consider their role in the context of Butler's understanding of gender.

In part IV I will consider the issue of desire for recognition. I will argue that the supposition of this desire is central to Butler's conception of the authority of the norm. In this part I provide also a closer look into the ways the subject and gender, as a norm, intertwine. With regard to these

---

[6] Also the introduction to *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993) is used in the paper, especially in discussing the relations between language and reality, and the materialization of "sex".

relations, I will consider self-reflection as mediated by the norm of gender and discuss also the vulnerability the need of the norm implies for the subject.

Part V consists of chapters in which I discuss the political possibilities of Butler's theorizing on gender. As I will argue, it is basically the temporal character of the norm that accounts for the possibility of challenging it. I suggest, however, that in Butler's thought the very concept of politics should be conceived in a specific way. In order, thus, to provide an accurate view on the way Butler conceives the aims and means of gender politics, I introduce the notion of "radical democracy" in the fifth part of the paper and discuss the processes of resignification and critique the way they appear in Butler's writings.

Before summarizing in the conclusive part VII the main points of the discussion, I will consider in part VI what has been written about gender as a norm in relation to the philosophical problem of determinism and freedom. I will argue against some criticisms that Butler's view does manage to secure the prospect for social transformation without assuming subjects to be fully free and autonomous to choose the course of their gendered future. Added to this, I will consider the role of language with regard to the production of reality and discuss what sort of limits does Butler's constructivist position set with respect to the possibility of political action.

PART II: BUTLER'S THOUGHT IN THE CONTEXTS OF PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

2.1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS OF BUTLER'S PHILOSOPHY[7]

In her introduction to *The Judith Butler Reader* (Salih 2004), Sara Salih, the editor of the book, identifies Marxism, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, and feminism as the main theoretical backgrounds of Butler's philosophy. Added to these, as Salih also acknowledges, the importance of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's thought to Butler's theorizing is arguably central.[8] (Salih 2004, 3 – 5.)

From the field of Marxist tradition, I take Louis Althusser can be picked to exemplify the influences Salih mentions. In her general theorizing on subject formation, especially in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997), Butler discusses at great length Althusser's notion of interpellation. She uses the concept of interpellation in characterizing our state of being "hailed" to enact the social norms, such as gender. In the well-known exemplary scene of interpellation[9], which Althusser introduces in the essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (Althusser 1971) a policeman hails a passer-by on the street. Subsequently the passer-by turns toward the voice recognizing itself as the one being hailed. The way Butler deploys the notion of interpellation in the context of discussing gender it designates the series of gendering addresses that take place since one's birth. As Butler writes, the doctor announcing "It is a girl" at the hospital after a child is born initializes a chain of interpellations that aim at addressing the child as gendered, in this case, a girl. (BTM, 7 – 8.) The appeal of interpellation is, according to Butler, hard to resist because it is the primary way we are addressed by others (BTM, 121). Moreover, as I will argue in the course of this paper, Butler conceives our very subjecthood as dependent on our responding to these calls and subscribing, thus, to the norm of gender.

---

[7] As the reader will shortly note Butler develops her philosophical views in close and sometimes ambivalent relationships with different philosophers', psychoanalysts', as well as feminist theorists' accounts, many of which I do not know but superficially. It is also more often than not that other scholars who work on the same branches of thought have subjected Butler's interpretations to severe criticism. As the aim of this paper is not, however, to speculate on the correctness or incorrectness of Butler's readings, I will refer to these thinkers and their theories following Butler's interpretations on them. That is to say in writing about, for example, Hegel's thought I will handle it the way it is presented by Butler. This method of reading/writing goes throughout the paper, if not asserted otherwise.

[8] Salih also suggests that Butler's philosophy draws on the theorizing of consciousness in Husserl's phenomenology (Salih 2004, 4). In the period before *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) Butler, indeed, handles especially Jean Paul Sartre's, and Simone de Beauvoir's writings that take Husserl's phenomenology as one point of departure. This phenomenological background is something also Moya Lloyd, the author of the book *Judith Butler – From Norms to Politics* (Lloyd, M., 2007), emphasises. According to her, Beauvoir's philosophy can be seen as thoroughly influential to Butler's thinking and, particularly, to her original theory of gender performativity as it was introduced in *Gender Trouble*. (Lloyd, M., 2007, 36 – 42.) I think this is an interesting, even surprising, view, because one would intuitively name J.L. Austin and Jacques Derrida in that respect, for their central roles in development of speech act theory where the notion of performativity derives from. See, footnote 19.
I will not, however, discuss phenomenology much further in introducing the backgrounds of Butler's thought. This is because phenomenology does not seem have that crucial, or at least explicit, role in Butler's more recent theorizing. I will, however, discuss the influence of Beauvoir on Butler, in chapter 2.1.2..

[9] as it is described by Butler

When it comes to psychoanalysis then, Butler discusses Sigmund Freud's, and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical views, as well as subsequent theorizing inspired by them, throughout her published works[10]. She criticizes especially Lacan -influenced theorizing on the incest taboo, which relies on structuralistic presumptions concerning language and kinship relations. In *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004), for instance, she relates the topic closely to the issue of gender as a norm. According to Butler, in Lacan's theory there is a symbolic law that is seen to govern the sexual/gender identification of a subject[11]. Subscribing of the subject to this law is, according to the view, related by definition to the assumption of language, which is seen as a necessary condition for the emergence of a (sane) subject. As the symbolic law is postulated thus beyond time and place, it is according to Butler practically impossible for a subject to both resist the law and make sense as a socially legible subject.

According to Butler's criticism the symbolic law, assumed in Lacanian psychoanalytical theorizing, is, thus, problematically configured as pre-discursive in character. She maintains that in terms of this kind of a theory, sexual difference (i.e. binary gender order) cannot ever be put under a question, for the capability of criticizing always already entails subscribing to the very law that institutes the difference. (UG, 44 – 45.) This implies, according to her, insurmountable difficulties in trying to challenge the normative gender system the law (re)produces. As Butler writes, the symbolic law becomes, in this way, a totalizing judge for reality, one that exists somehow beyond space and time and cannot be changed by action of any kind. Autonomously governing the possibilities of sexual/gendered reality, the law is finally indifferent to the subjects it constitutes as well as to their actions. It becomes a purely formal principle with god-like power to organize the reality. (UG, 46.)

On these grounds, Butler argues, the Lacanian view on the constraints of social reality cannot account for the possibility of political change (UG, 44). This makes Lacan-influenced theories apparently lousy tools for a feminist who is engaged in pursuing for social transformation (even though some feminists still make use of it[12]). One could even suggest that Butler's stressing on the social character of the norm of gender is, at least partially, inspired by the wish to avoid some of the problems faced by Lacanian notions of the symbolic law. As I will argue in this paper, when it comes to Butler's idea of gender as a norm it is possible for a subject to be at the same time

---

[10] This emphasis is, however, often neglected or criticized. For the criticism on Butler's reading of Lacan, see Hekanaho & Tuhkanen 2005; Hekanaho 2009.

[11] See footnote 4 of the present paper

[12] For instance Julia Kristeva, whose writings Butler critically discusses in many of her books, bases on Lacanian psychoanalytical theory.

constituted by the norm and, to an extent, challenge it.

As suggested, also Freud appears often in Butler's writings. Central to the topic here, one could mention especially Freud's notion of melancholic incorporation that Butler uses in explaining how gender as a norm becomes internalized. Just to introduce the idea on a quite general level, in the process of melancholic incorporation something (an object of love, for instance) is lost before any possibility of grieving it[13]. Because the ego cannot let this object lost go through grief[14], the object becomes incorporated as a constitutive feature of the one that lost it. (PLP, 132 – 133.) As the term "incorporation" suggests, this process is understood in terms of the body, on the surface of which the incorporated losses appear in the mode of identifications. What this means in the context of gender is that in a society where there is an implicit taboo against homosexuality, one which according to Butler pre-exists and grounds the incest taboo (PLP, 135)[15], gender (and sexual) identification can be seen as an effect of a socially ungrievable loss and subsequent incorporation of the forbidden love object that is a "same- sex" parent.[16] (PLP, 136.)

Third theoretical background that Salih mentions is post-structuralism[17], which is acknowledged also by Moya Lloyd as defining of Butler's thinking. According to Lloyd post-structuralism is a critical philosophical position that pursues to challenge the prevailing ideas and norms that are usually taken as given. In other words, in post-structuralist thinking the emphasis is more on a critical attitude towards conventional truths than on traditional problem solving. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 11 – 12.) This kind of an attitude is indeed evident in Butler's writings, as she typically poses more questions than provides answers. One characteristic feature of Butler's philosophy is thus certain open-endedness and continuous questioning of any given premises[18].

Added to what has been stated above, post-structuralist thinking, according to Lloyd, is typically

---

[13] This loss is later in the text designated by the concept "foreclosure."

[14] Grieving is in this theoretical context seen as a precondition for letting the lost object go

[15] According to Hekanaho's criticism there is certain paradox rooted in this psychoanalytical account. Butler maintains that desire for the same-sex parent is foreclosed prior to the assumption of sex/gender. Thus, she has to presume some meaningful notion of homosexuality before the possibility of differentiating between sexes/genders. (Hekanaho 2009, 9.) This difficulty in Butler's psychoanalytical theorizing was also one of the reasons for my decision to delineate the discussion in this paper to exclude much of Butler's psychoanalytical accounts of gender as a norm. These, often criticized, psychoanalytical considerations have a central role especially in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997).

[16] This exemplifies also the way the norm of heterosexuality institutes and requires stable gender (and sexual) identities and becomes so threatened in the face of non-normative gender performances.

[17] This theoretical emphasis is not to be equated here with any obscure notions of "postmodern thinking", even though the latter is also a label often addressed to Butler's theorizing. Tuija Pulkkinen (Pulkkinen 2003), for example, uses the term "postmodern" in describing Butler's theory. Unlike many, Pulkkinen clearly defines, however, what she means by the term. See Pulkkinen 2003, 9 – 10.

[18] This proceeding via questions is of course a matter of rhetorics too. For more about rhetorics of Butler see Pearce 2004.

anti-essential and frequently suspicious towards the notions of stability and continuity of meaning and subject. Lloyd writes that this kind of thinking should be understood primarily in relation to structuralism based on Ferdinand de Saussure's philosophical account of language as a system of structural differentiation. In structuralism the main interest is in general laws and universal systems of meaning. As an example of this kind of structuralism Lloyd mentions Lacan's theory of subject formation. As already suggested, in Lacan's view the subject is postulated as an effect of the preceding general structures, such as the symbolic law. Compared to this kind of a view, Butler's theory proves indeed to be post-structural in the sense that it emphasises the profound contingency of the normative structures and postulates also the subject enabled by them as rather unstable. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 11 – 12.)

Rather than "post-modernism", Butler explicitly subscribes to the principles of post-structuralism, as far as it implies paying critical attention to the pervasiveness of power. In other words, according to her we must constantly bear in mind that the whole of our conceptual apparatus, as well as we ourselves trying to conceptualize it, is/are fundamentally penetrated by the power we might try to oppose. As she points out, assuming this intertwinedness of power and subjecthood does not, however, lead to "nihilistic relativism" as it is sometimes thought. Instead, for Butler the impossibility of getting beyond the power provides the very conditions for the possibility of political action and social transformation. ("CF", 6 – 7.) This supposition is based on the assumption that there are two temporal modalities of power. As Butler writes, "[a] significant and potentially enabling reversal occurs when power shifts from its status as a condition of agency to the subject's "own" agency." (PLP, 12.) Thus, the power that enables the subject does not stay unaltered once it becomes reproduced as the agency of the subject. In this way then, the subject enabled by power may become a site of contestation of that power.

2.1.1. FOUCAULT, HEGEL, AND NIETZSCHE

What has been written above brings me yet to another philosophically important background of Butler's thought, namely to the writings by Michel Foucault. Besides Hegel, Foucault is surely one of the most important individual philosophers Butler critically utilizes in developing her ideas. Other names that Salih (Salih 2004, 4 – 5) mentions include Friedrich Nietzsche, John L. Austin, and Jacques Derrida. Alongside Foucault, Nietzsche and Hegel will also be discussed below — the first mentioned mainly for his influence on Butler's view on constitution of subjectivity and the relations of this subjectivity to the prevailing norms, and the latter for his general significance to the whole of Butler's thought. Austin and Derrida will be introduced in discussing performativity and

in Part III[19].

Tuija Pulkkinen writes about Foucault's notion of power as follows. According to her Foucault never actually provided an account of power as such but, instead, took on the issue in his genealogical analyses on, for instance, the social history of sexuality. Pulkkinen writes that in Foucault's view, which originates in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche 1989), power is conceptualized as productive of reality. In other words, reality, in this view, is conceived as produced in and through the relations of power. For this reason then it makes more sense to ask how some phenomenon is produced in time and through certain relations of power than to pose questions concerning the origins or presumed "inner" essence of that particular phenomenon. (Pulkkinen 2003, 87.)

This kind of a genealogical analysis is of use for Butler too when she, from *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) on, discusses the social constitution of gendered identities. Pulkkinen writes that this method Butler undertakes emphasizes the contingency of identity formation. It approaches the object of inquiry as fully constructed in time instead of taking as a starting point a presumption concerning its original identity. In this way genealogical approach focuses, according to Pulkkinen, on the sedimentations of meanings. It pursues to show how these meanings become construed in and through the prevailing relations of power. (Pulkkinen 2000a, 194 -195.) As Pulkkinen notes, the approach of genealogical analysis effectively politicizes any topic that may not have been previously taken as political (Pulkkinen 2003, 87). Much due to this emphasis on the constructedness of the phenomena, genealogical analysis rejects the aspiration to recover the foundations of a given phenomenon. (Pulkkinen 2000a, 194 -195.)

Of all canonized philosophers, the role of Hegel is probably the most emphasized in the commentary literature on Butler's thought[20]. Especially in her understanding of subjectivity Butler

---

[19] It is interesting to note, as Lloyd (Lloyd, M. 2007, 36) does, that the speech act theory formulated by Austin does not actually have that central or explicit role in Butler's early theorizing of gender performativity. In *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) the notions of performativity derive principally from Derrida's reading of Kafka's novella "Before the Law" that was published under the title "Devant la loi" in 1984. It is, indeed, not before *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993) that Butler explicitly refers to Austin's writings.
In the more recent books that I concentrate on the notion of performativity is habitually contextualized in Austin's, and Derrida's writings.
[20] Butler's strong reliance on Hegel has been criticized too. For instance, Mikko Tuhkanen writes that because of Butler's drawing on Hegel, every possible rearticulation of gender is always already (at least implicitly) implicated in the current normative order in her theory. Thus Butler fails, according to Tuhkanen, to account for the emergence of any truly new gendered subjectivities. (Tuhkanen 2005, 4 – 5.) While this might be true the question remains whether Butler actually ever pursues in her theorizing to enable something truly new. Is not her point rather to make the lives of those already existing humans who do not currently count as legitimate and intelligible subjects more liveable?

relies strongly on Hegel's notions of recognition and desire introduced in the book *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977). Butler's ideas concerning the profound sociality and dependence of the subject derive also mainly from her reading of Hegel. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 15 – 17.) As Lloyd notes, Butler's reading may, however, be quite peculiar and even selective. According to Lloyd Butler seems to emphasise interpretations of Hegel that may construe his philosophy as a more open system than it appears in the interpretations of some others[21] (Lloyd, M. 2007, 15).

Also Salih discusses the influence of Hegel's writings on Butler. According to her the term "post-Hegelian" defines Butler's thinking more accurately than simply "Hegelian". This is mainly for the reasons already suggested: As Salih puts it, Butler seems to use Hegel in a way that supports her own ends, even when this implies neglecting some parts of the overall theory and rethinking others. (Salih 2004, 3 – 4.) For instance, when it comes to the paragraph "Independence and Dependence of Selfconsciousness: Lordship and Bondage" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977) Butler conceives the dialectics of lord and bondsman, which results in subject constituting struggle for recognition, in an originally ethical way (Salih 2004, 3).

In the struggle for recognition (as it is described by commentators), one consciousness seeks to be recognized by another consciousness it would not want to recognize. Recognition of the first consciousness by the other would provide it with self-certainty, awareness of itself in the world, it cannot itself initiate. As the scene further develops it becomes clear, however, that no one-way recognition is possible. In order to attain the recognition it desires, the first consciousness would have to recognize the other as a distinct self-consciousness able to authorize recognition of its other. In other words, it would first have to recognize the other and only on the basis of this recognition could it be itself recognized. (Lloyd, G. 2000, 121 – 122; Redding 1997)

According to Lloyd's interpretation Hegel concludes on the basis of this ambivalent situation that the otherness of the other must be overcome, which means that the other must negate itself in a way

---

[21] Lloyd writes:" In contrast to other readers, Butler declines to understand the *Phenomenology [of Spirit]* as an account of a subject who is progressing neatly from one 'ontological place to another'. This is not the tale of a subject on its way to journey's end, to the attainment of absolute knowledge, she claims. It is the story of a subject who must forever careen (SD:xv). … It might, of course, be objected, and perhaps fairly, that Butler is only able to present the Hegelian desiring subject as an incomplete ek-static subject because she does not engage with the whole logic of Hegel's system. She suspends the narrative, that is, before the journeying consciousness encounters reason or spirit." (Lloyd. M. 2007, 15 – 16.) When it comes to Hegel-influenced dialectical thinking, Lloyd argues that Butler applies it too in quite un-conventional manner that does not always stay truthful to the original writings of Hegel. " …she expressively argues that there is a need to reflect critically on 'the limitations of dialectical opposition' ('GP':35 ["Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler"]). … Part of this critical reflection also entails Butler rejecting the idea of full dialectical synthesis and, in this way, her work is much closer to that of Foucault and Derrida, as she describes them in *Subjects of Desire*, than to Hegel." she writes (Lloyd, M. 2007, 19).

that it continues to persists but persists as subordinate to the first consciousness, as a bondage to the lord (Lloyd, G. 2000, 121 – 122). Butler, on the other hand, emphasizes the undecidability[22] of this metaphorical scene that grounds our social relations. According to Salih respect for the alterity of the other and the related ethical demand not to overcome her/his profound otherness, even as that otherness constantly haunts one's own coherence and identity, become central in Butler's interpretation of the scene (Salih 2004, 3).[23] As Butler writes, our fundamental lack of knowledge about the other, the impossibility of ever fully conceiving her/him, ethically conditions the scene at which we must meet this other (un)like us (UG, 35).

Nietzsche was the third philosopher mentioned in the title of this chapter. Butler writes that she considers the Nietzschean criticism of the metaphysics of substance to be "instructive" to her purposes of deconstructing the notions of ontological gender identities (GT, 28). Metaphysics of substance, which guides the conventional understanding of gender, refers according to her to the kind of thinking that postulates the illusions of "Being" and "Substance", grounded in grammatical order, as ontological truths (GT, 27 - 28). When it comes to gender, in metaphysics of substance an idealized gender identity is presumed to explain or produce the perceivable acts and "expressions" of gender. In Butler's way of conceiving the case, on the other hand, these very acts and "expressions" are conceived as performative in their operation, which is to say it is in and through them that the notion of gender as an idealized (id)entity is produced in the first place (GT, 33).

But not only is the ideality of gender (as an identity) produced in performative manner, also the subject will emerge subsequent to what appears to be its conduct. The Nietzschean assumption of there being no doer behind, or prior to, the deed is of use for Butler when she writes, "gender is always doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (GT, 33). This is to say the doing exceeds and, in a sense, precedes the subject, who only in and through the doing comes to exist as a subject. This Nietzschean emphasis on rethinking the actual order of appearance of the subject and the deeds it appears to author seems to be present throughout Butler's works, even as her readings of Nietzsche might otherwise alter.[24]

---

[22] According to Marika Enwald this Derridean term "refers to a conflict without synthesis (Aufhebung). … to the chiasmatic relation between different othernesses" (Enwald 2004, 123). Even though Butler does not use the term in this respect I find it useful in characterizing her account of the struggle for recognition.

[23] For more about Butler's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, see PLP 31 – 62; GAO, 26 – 34.

[24] In *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997) Butler uses Nietzsche's theorizing on the constitution of morals and conscience mostly to account for the questions of motivation when it comes to the subject's obeying to the prevailing norms and to its own subjection. She reads Nietzsche, particularly his *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche 1989), productively together with the other theorists she discusses in the book (these theorists including Hegel, Freud, Foucault and Althusser). In this book Nietzsche's thinking seems to assist Butler primarily in overcoming some problematic

As the above writing suggests a kind of an "un-orthodox" and productive way of reading others is one characteristic feature of Butler's philosophy. As far as I see it, this original way of reading various texts together, mixing for instance Foucault's writings with psychoanalysis[25], irrespective of the institutional borders and canonized interpretations, has to do with a politics of resignification Butler generally advocates. Politics of resignification is based on an assumption of alterability of the relations between signified and signifier and in case of reading I suggest it could be understood with reference to something Butler writes in the conclusion chapter of *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990). Originally referring to gender performing she argues, "[t]here is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very "taking up" is enabled by the tool lying there." (GT, 185.) If one considers theoretical writings and concepts as a kind of tools too they become valued instrumentally, according to the possibilities of their usage in the context of the prevailing (political) needs. In this case there is no reason for one's reading of them to stay strictly constrained by any past interpretations.[26] This brings me to the next chapter of this section. It is about feminist theory, in the context of which the dimension of politics assumes on a central role.

2.1.2. FEMINIST THEORY AND THE CONTEXT OF GENDER POLITICS

Pulkkinen writes that a critical approach to analytical philosophy and interest in continental, especially contemporary French thinking defines, on a general level, Butler's relation to philosophy (Pulkkinen 2000b, 45). This emphasis is obvious also when it comes to feminism, the French writers Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig being discussed in many of Butler's texts. While the interest in psychoanalysis is, according to Pulkkinen, one key feature linking Butler to Kristeva and Irigaray, they disagree fundamentally when it comes to one of the basic assumptions in psychoanalytical theory, the idea of there being one essential sexual difference. Unlike Kristeva and Irigaray, Butler is being highly critical towards the structurally based notion of this difference.

---

features in Althusser's notion of interpellation. As Butler argues, Althusser's theory does not suffice to explain why exactly does the emerging subject turn when it is being hailed. In other words, why is it that it recognizes itself as the addressee of the call, as potentially guilty of something, and accept without questions the terms by which it is hailed" (PLP, 106)? In order to answer to these questions, to account for the apparent readiness that makes the "turn" intelligible, Butler continues, we need a theory on the constitution of conscience. This is exactly what Nietzsche provides her with in the pages of *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997). (PLP, 106 – 109.) However, later in *Giving Account of Oneself* (Butler 2005) Butler seems to have abandoned Nietzsche when it comes to the constitution of conscience. In this more recent book she admits to have accepted maybe too uncritically the Nietzschean, quite negative terms by which the conscience would emerge (GAO, 15). As the scene of punishment thus cedes to have that important role in Butler's theorizing on subject constitution, I will not discuss it further in the frame of this paper.

[25] For instance in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997) Butler maintains to be interested in "[t]he question of a suppressed psychoanalysis in Foucault" (PLP, 87), who himself did not write in psychoanalytical vocabulary.

[26] In the context of conventional philosophy and science this kind of an explicit emphasis on political dimensions of a theory may sound suspect. In feminist studies it is, however, argued that there are hidden political interests and more or less conscious agendas inscribed in also those conventional texts of philosophy and science that claim to be value-free and objective. See e.g. Lloyd, G. 2000; Keller 1988; Alanen & al. (eds.) 1986; Rolin 2005.

Pulkkinen writes that whereas the two first mentioned pursue to (positively) revalue the femininity in conventional psychoanalytical terms, they leave intact the problematic notions of homosexuality as deviant. This abnormal status of homosexuality reproduced, for example, in the psychoanalytical discourse on sexual difference is one of the things Butler pursues to challenge with her notion of performative gender. (Pulkkinen 2000b, 46.)

Thus, Butler seems to provide her notion of gender as a social norm in order to rethink some problematic features in psychoanalytical accounts of a gendered subject. As was written above the main problem with the symbolic law is, according to Butler, its status as pre-discursive. This makes a Lacanian psychoanalytical theory weak when it comes to politics. Another, related, point Butler highlights in this respect is that the law seems to presuppose heterosexual order as one of its very premises. This implies that subscribing to the premises of a Lacanian view it is not even possible to imagine non-heterosexuality as anything else than an exception. (UG, 43 – 48.) Butler criticises especially Kristeva for giving too totalizing a role for the symbolic law. From this follows, according to her, Kristeva conception of lesbianism as psychosis, as being outside of language[27], as there is no non-heterosexual position in the structure of language. (GT, 101 – 119.)

As far as I see the relations between Butler and the other feminist philosophers mentioned is somewhat revealing about the overall feminist accent of Butler's. She discusses often with the feminists involved in psychoanalytical discourse, particularly with the French feminists, who, usually basing on a reading of Lacan, emphasise some notion of sexual difference. The structuralist theory of Lacan draws, according to Butler, on Claude Levi-Strauss's theorizing on culture and its founding universal laws. In the context of Lacan-influenced theories the notion of sexual difference is, likewise, taken to base the culture and sociality in some fundamental level that cannot be reached by action of any kind (UG, 45 – 46). Levi-Strauss's assumption of heterosexuality as a hardly problematized premise for the constituting laws of culture (see UG, 44 – 48) has its effects, too, on Lacan and Lacanian feminist views: As suggested above, in Kristeva, for instance, assuming the Lacanian notion of the symbolic law, which presumes heterosexuality in its explaining of sexual difference that founds the culture, has lead to the impossibility of including lesbians in the sphere of "normal" sociality.

Besides criticizing psychoanalytical views held by others, Butler pursues, particularly in *The*

---

[27] According to Butler, being outside of language equals psychosis in Kristeva's Lacanian account. Molly Anne Rothenberg criticizes Butler, however, for herself conceptualizing the subject as psychotic (Rothenberg 2006, 86 – 87). Also Pia Livia Hekanaho argues that Butler, unconsciously and due to her incorrect reading of psychoanalysis, ends up assuming psychosis as a way of contesting the gendered structures of power (Hekanaho 2009, 9).

Psychic Life of Power (Butler 1997), to construct a psychoanalytically invested theory of subject constitution, one that would be able to account for gender (and sexual) identification without ending up into determinist conclusions. Along with determinism, another intellectual malady that would trouble a feminist account of gender is a voluntarist conceptualization of the oppressing gendered relations and identities as merely volitional, as something that could be changed simply by individual choice. This kind of assumption goes easily with postulating autonomous individuals who are capable of consciously defining themselves and controlling their lives rationally. Butler's resistance to this kind of conception is apparent especially when it comes to her reading of Simone de Beauvoir.

Along with Wittig and the other French feminists mentioned Beauvoir is surely one of the most influential feminist theorists especially when it comes to the early writings of Butler. Lloyd emphasises the significance of Beauvoir's thought to Butler's (early) theory of gender performativity and writes that before the publication of *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) Butler discussed comprehensively Beauvoir's "existential phenomenology" (Lloyd, M. 2007, 37). However, as Lloyd suggests, towards *Gender Trouble* Butler had revised her reading of Beauvoir quite profoundly. Whereas she earlier understood Beauvoir to avoid subscribing to the notion of "Cartesian subject" and succeeding in conceptualizing the dialectic of constrain and freedom without ending up into a voluntarist understanding of a subject, in *Gender Trouble* Butler actually takes it that Beauvoir's theorizing leads into the postulation of a voluntaristic subject. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 40.) In this way then, Butler ends up criticising Beauvoir's thought but develops, nevertheless, her own thinking in an intimate relation to it. In the more recent texts by Butler that I am focusing on in this paper, Beauvoir is practically absent.

Wittig, who refers intertextually to Beauvoir in the title of her essay "One Is Not Born a Woman" (Wittig 1993, originally published in 1981), is certainly of relevance too when discussing Butler's feminist backgrounds. In "One Is Not Born a Woman" Wittig argues that the binary sexual[28] (gender) difference acquires its meaning in so intimate an association with heterosexual social order that a lesbian who refuses the role provided by that order, cannot really conceived as a woman at all. (Wittig 1993, 105.) According to Lloyd Wittig aims at linking the institutions of heterosexuality and sexual difference in order to finally overcome "sex", now redefined as a thoroughly political instead of natural category. This venture can, according to Lloyd, be seen as an antecedent to Butler's project of denaturalizing and politicizing the categories of both "sex" and gender, despite

---

[28] Wittig uses the term "sex" to refer to the gendered categories of "men" and "women".

the fact that Butler takes on a somewhat critical stance towards Wittig's overall theory. As Lloyd notes, Butler rejects the kind of politics Wittig advocates, a politics based on the notion of an essentially subversive lesbian identity and criticizes her for taking the assumption of sexual identity as an unproblematized starting point for theory and politics. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 35.)

On a general level, Butler's philosophical interests that lie mainly in the field of continental philosophy are, as Pulkkinen has noted, a somewhat unpopular point of departure in the context of feminist thought. In feminist studies the notions of materiality, experience, and practical life are much emphasised, which has associated feminist thought more conveniently with Anglo-German philosophical traditions. According to Pulkkinen this explains, in part, the obvious watchfulness towards metaphysics and all types of idealism among feminists. (Pulkkinen 2000b, 46.)

Added to this, Butler's critique on the deployment of the notion of "woman" as a central and hardly questioned concept in feminism has given rise to passionate discussions within the feminist field, and some even view her critical arguments as a threat to the political project of feminism.[29] Thus, despite her being an arguably central figure in contemporary feminist theory, Butler's thought also challenges many of the conventional premises of it. For this reason some even label her views "post-feminist" (e.g. Brooks 1997) instead of feminist. I, however, find it rather interesting that Butler still continues to write as a feminist theorist (see "xtracts from Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler." <http://www.theory.org.uk./but-int1.htm>, cited 05.02.2008) and think that we should engage more in rethinking feminism than re-positioning Butler's theory beyond its conventional borders.

2.2. SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC APPLICATIONS OF BUTLER'S THOUGHT

As the above discussion on Butler's critical notions concerning some feminist accounts suggests, Butler's theorizing is more concerned with a general level critique of prevailing views on gender than any typical empirical issues of feminist movement, such as equality of payment, violence against women, or sexism in the media. This has, understandably, invoked the question of whether her theorizing has much practical value when it comes to the everyday political concerns of feminist movement.[30] It may be, for obvious reasons, correct that Butler's theorizing on gender has little to give to, for instance, some equality-related feminist issues. As Butler's conception of gender seeks to challenge the binary notion of gender, subscribing to its premises can make it difficult to take

---

[29] About the criticism of Butler's views on identity politics, see e.g. Lloyd, M. 2007, 46; Haaparanta 1997.
[30] About this kind of criticism, see e.g. Haaparanta 1997.

those every-day political issues that require the usage of identity categories "women" and "men" under scrutiny. It seems that as far as one takes Butler's theorizing seriously, one should avoid using these gendered categories as taken for granted. This is because referring to "women" and "men" is from Butler's point of view a way of (re)producing and establishing the truth effect of these normative categories of identity. In order to participate in gender political discourse especially beyond academy one must, however, be able to use also the conventional vocabulary of gender. For instance, discussing legal issues in a feminist tone entails, time to time, some reference to "women" and "men."[31]

The question remains, thus, whether it is possible to both use the binary notion and subject it to deconstruction. Butler herself claims that this kind of a two-way path in politics would be possible (UG, 37). According to her understanding this ambivalence of the conflicting requirements only suggests that gender politics is always incomplete and, in its complex positioning, impossible to plan with reference to some definite general principles. In other words, one might on occasion have to participate in the reproduction of precisely what one pursues to challenge in order to effect changes in the way gender structures the social reality.

Despite the alleged complexity of applying Butler's ideas to those practical concerns of feminism that entail (at least instrumental) use the binary notion of gender, her theorizing has been successfully utilized in a variety of empirical studies. For instance Leena-Maija Rossi, and Annamari Vänskä have applied Butler's thought to their studies in visual culture. In these studies Butler's performative account of gender (re)production is used as an analytical tool in interpreting art (Vänskä 2006) and advertising (Rossi 2003). The works of both Rossi and Vänskä have their political dimensions, as the analyses in these studies pursue to reveal not only the implicit reproduction of heterosexuality and the binary gender order that goes with it but also the points of breakage and ambivalence in the seeming coherence of the normative view.

On the first glance this type of inquiry concerning visual culture has to do merely with issues of representation. As, however, the discussion on performativity in the next part of the paper will demonstrate representation too is always performative. As such, it is a way of (re)producing and potentially challenging gender as a norm. In other words, also those phenomena that are habitually conceived as descriptive or expressive of some instances of reality will, in terms of performativity, be redefined as productive of that reality.

---

[31] even as this discussion would require recognition of also those who do not fit into either of these categories.

This productivity has some obvious implications when it comes to the general methodological underpinnings of feminist social science: Studies on gender-related issues not merely describe but, more importantly, participate in the production of the very phenomena they research on. Even as there has been much debate in feminist methodology on, for instance, positioning oneself with reference to "racial", sexual, and gender differences, which are presumed to affect one's capacity to critically view the subject matter at hand, little attention has been paid yet to the way the social scientific research itself (re)produces its objects. Also the ethical and political implications of this productivity are, for the most part, uninterrogated. I presume this productive dimension in academic writing is what Butler refers to when she claims in *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) that "theory is itself transformative" (UG, 204).

Both of the inquiries mentioned into visual culture take this transformative potential in theorizing seriously. They not only reveal but also actively resist the conventional strategies of reading/perceiving that take heterosexuality and the binary notion of gender as like self-evident and unquestioned. Added to these enterprises in research on visual culture, Butler's theorizing has been consulted in the field of, for instance, critical or feminist pedagogy in discussing the way pedagogical practice constructs the educated (gendered) subject (Kohli 1999, Naskali 2001). Studies by Marko Salonen (Salonen 2005) on the construction of heterosexuality in the context of the school and by Tuula Juvonen (Juvonen 2002) on the construction of homosexuality in post-war city of Tampere are also good examples of Butler-influenced social scientific research. In the study by Juvonen, the author discusses in detail the methodological premises her Butler- (and Foucault-) influenced theoretical assumptions imply for the study. Most importantly these theoretical grounds entail, according to Juvonen, that the object of the study concerns the conceptual processes of construction of a given phenomenon, instead of, for instance, the particular subjects who contribute to and emerge in these processes. This kind of approach was defined above as genealogical. In addition to her emphasizing the temporal constructedness of her subject matter, homosexuality, Juvonen acknowledges the responsibility of the writer for the interpretations s/he provides.

As many of the topics mentioned suggest the issues of gender and sexuality intertwine in Butler's thought in such a way that one can be only analytically discussed without discussing the other. The norm of gender is, in other words, not fully separable from the normative account of sexuality. As the dimension of sexuality, however, is not the only normative factor that intertwines with the norm of gender — of no less importance are the issues of at least "race", physical ability, and age — and as these different norms, that operate upon social reality, may well be specific, in the sense that they would need to be accounted for in terms of their own characteristic questions and social functions, I

have decided in this paper to delimit my interest in the norm of gender. In many social scientific studies that draw on Butler's writings the intersectional character of these (and other) norms has been acknowledged, though. Besides the profound bond between gender and sexuality, the issues of, for instance, "race" (Warren 2001) and physical ability (Väätäinen 2003) have been discussed basing on Butler's theorizing.

Despite her typically theoretical tone, also Butler herself has written about certain practical issues that have political relevance: Besides writing in *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) about the medicalized cases of intersexual and transgendered persons, Butler discusses in *Excitable Speech* (Butler 1997) for instance legal cases of racist violence and other instances of hate-crime. Even as the topics Butler writes about might not always be consistent with the customary feminist agenda they certainly are important in critically considering and trying to subvert the way the social reality is structured according to the coordinates of gender.

PART III: GENDER AS A NORM OF RECOGNITION

3.1. THE CONCEPT OF NORM

According to the definition in *The Oxford English Dictionary* the concept of "norm" is synonymous to the concepts of "standard, model, pattern, [and] type." "Norm" is used to describe, for instance, somebody being "characteristic" or "true to a type." According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* norms are also used in referring to "shared patterns of behaving, feeling and thinking", where in case of group members' deviation from these patterns "various kinds of persuasion, pressure and sanctions are exerted in order to make them conform." (The Oxford English Dictionary, 515.)

When it comes to philosophy, in particular, the notion of norm relates closely to moral philosophy and ethics. It is used also in the fields of at least logic, philosophy of language, and philosophy of law in discussing the various topics of these specific branches of philosophical thought. It seems that the exact meaning or referent of the concept varies to a degree in these different contexts. For instance, in philosophy of law norms are conceived as akin to laws, whereas in moral philosophy they are typically conceived in terms of moral judgements, judgements about the proper standards of behaviour. In *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy* also "norms of reason or rationality", to which moral norms are sometimes seen to reduce, are mentioned. (The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy, 8 – 9.)

The notion of norm, as it presented in Butler's writings on gender, can be defined, at the outset, as a specifically social norm that has to do with performing or acting in social reality. Unlike for instance legal norms, this kind of a social norm may well operate without ever, or at least typically, being alleged in written or spoken form. A norm like this may rather be volatile and hard to explicate in the form of proposition.

For contextualizing purposes, I will next provide one possible overview on social norms, basing on Seumas Miller's article "Social Norms and Practical Reason" (Miller 1999). Miller's article will be cited here because of the general level of its discussion on the one hand and its conception of the norm as related to social action on the other. Unlike in many philosophical articles on norms and normativity, the concept of norm is not situated by Miller into any specific context of life but is rather discussed using many kinds of examples. Added to this, the emphasis on social action seems initially to be in line with Butler's general assumptions.

According to Miller's conception social norms refer to "regularities in action, or inaction." Miller points out five characteristics of this kind of regularity: Firstly, a social norm, as a regularity in

action (or inaction), takes place within a social group and its existence is also acknowledged by the members of this group. Secondly, any failures (including one's own failure) to perform according to the norm will be disapproved by the members of the group. (Miller 1999, 317.)

As Miller puts it, both of the above features of the norm are matters of "common knowledge." As the third characteristic of a social norm Miller mentions the moral force of this disapproval. Added to its being moral the attitude of disapproval in question is collective in the sense that "the disapproving attitude of one member is dependent on the disapproving attitude of the others, and vice versa." This is the fourth aspect of the social norm as Miller conceives it. Fifthly, Miller takes it that conformity to the norm is at least partially sustained by the collective moral disapproval the failure to conform to the norm would entail. (Miller 1999, 317.)

In discussing the rationality of the conformity to social norms Miller writes that the norms contribute to "a framework of accepted 'rules'", against which one may act and interact within a social group. Thus a member of the group can never reject the whole framework, even though this framework may also become subject to revision. According to Miller many social norms are peculiarly binding also because they are internalized by the members of the group and are thus "constitutive of the self-hood of individual adherents." In this way conforming to a social norm becomes "a matter of integrity" for an individual. (Miller 1999, 147 – 138.) Despite them being binding, Miller thinks it is still possible, at least to some extent, to revise the norms by "socially directed action" that seeks to act differently, against the norm, and resist the moral pressure from oneself as well as from others. This possibility is based, according to Miller, on inconsistencies between different social norms and on a breakage between individual and collective interests on the one hand and social norms on the other. (Miller 1999, 138.)

On a general level Miller differentiates between conventions and social norms. Conventions are described as regularities in action where at least two agents co-operate to achieve a collective end. As such, conventions represent, according to Miller, "means/end reasoning." When it comes to social norms then, they are in this view taken to have specific normative force: Those who act in accordance with a social norm do so, because they *believe or feel* that the action prescribed by the norm ought to be performed (or ought to be avoided)." This "believing" or "feeling" is based, according to Miller, on practical reasoning form socially accepted moral principles. (Miller 1999, 314.)

Miller identifies two types of constraint on this practical reasoning with reference to social norms.

Firstly, this reasoning is reasoning in accordance with "a procedure." This is to say, as Miller writes, "One decision... — the decision to adopt the procedure — governs a whole set of future actions." (Miller 1999, 232.) Thus in practical reasoning with reference to social norms one need not always provide oneself with a reason for acting, one only needs to identify the state of affairs as being the kind of situation for which one has adopted the procedure in question, and follow this procedure (Miller 1999, 232). Another constraint has to do with Miller's assumption that one's conformity to social norms depends "by definition" on the moral attitudes of the others with whom one shares the procedure. This dependence on the social context of morality and the norms delimits, according to Miller, one's capacity to rationally justify the whole set of social norms one adheres to. There is, in Miller's words, "a presumption in favour of any given social norm", even as this presumption can be subjected to rational reconsiderations. (Miller 1999, 324.)

Despite the alledged limits of reasoning with reference to social norms, the norms described by Miller seem to presuppose a rational subject capable of consciously reflecting and deciding on its conduct. Social norms, in other words, are seen as matters of practical reasoning, even as this reasoning is occasioned by a social context that exceeds any particular subject. This kind of a conception is in no way unique. Also, for instance, in the article "The Nature of Law" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Marmor 2001) normative social practices are described giving reasons for action, where the idea of a rational subject is implicitly presumed. However, as for instance Leila Haaparanta (1997) has pointed out the notion of subject in Butler's thought departs from the kind of conception of a rational subject that is based on the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Consequently, and contrary to some earlier feminist understandings, the subject cedes in Butler's thought to have a central role in the politics that strives to challenge oppressive social norms. (Haaparanta 1997.) As the argumentation in this paper will prove, in Butler's notion of gender as a norm the relations between the subject and the norm, as well as the reflexive relation of the subject to itself, will be critically rethought. On the basis of this rethinking social norms, such as gender, cannot be conceived as matters of practical reasoning.

3.2. GENDER AS A NORM

Butler writes that the conditions of human intelligibility are composed of socially articulated norms of recognition (UG, 2, 57). According to Lloyd, the notion of intelligibility, as it is deployed by Butler, suggests the way one can be recognized "as a legible subject" only with reference to a culturally produced "normative framework" (Lloyd, M. 2007, 33) In other words, the norms of recognition set the scene at which we might come to appear enabling but also restricting the

possibilities of our appearance in the social world. As Butler puts it, these norms accomplish this by imposing "a grid of legibility on the social" (UG, 42). The world is thus perceived only through a normative conceptual framework that gives phenomena their intelligible, recognizable form. In this way the norms contribute to the production of reality and the "real" itself: they are what makes somebody real and deems some other body unreal or impossible. (See UG, 15 – 39, 52, 206.)

The idea concerning the productive character of the norm is related to Butler's assumption that our recognition of somebody as a person depends on whether we can recognize "a certain norm manifested in and by the body of that other" (UG, 58). According to her the emergence of the subject is indeed grounded in the recognition conferred upon it by others. In other words, one emerges as a subject only to the extent one becomes socially recognized as one (UG, 32). As this recognition is conditioned by social norms, such as gender, there is practically no place in this view for a subject beyond the normative. Even as one may embody the norm incorrectly and as one never completely exemplifies it anyway (GT, 179), one is still perceived through the normative *lens*. Even every deviance from the norm will still be understood in terms of it. (UG, 42.) This means that one is recognized, for instance, as a mannish woman, or a man not quite masculine enough.

As the above quotation suggests the role of the body is central when it comes to recognition and subject constitution enabled by it. That the norm manifests in and by the body, refers here to the way both the morphology of the body and the practices the body performs are according to Butler constituted with reference to the norm. In this material embodiment of the norm the body too is culturally produced rather than natural and indisputable.

The essential bonds between recognition and subjecthood on the one hand and norms and recognition on the other have some important consequences when it comes to our autonomy as subjects. First of all from the tie between recognition and subjecthood follows that our status as subjects depends crucially on what is outside of us, on the others, who might recognize us as intelligible human beings. In this way we are form the start interdependent on each other, this dependency lying at the heart of our subjectivity (see PLP, 9 – 10). Secondly, what the bond between recognition and norms implies is that the outside, the social world of others we depend on is never fully captured by reference to the actual relationships we have and live in. This is because the capacity of the others to recognize us as intelligible human beings does not originate in them, or in their intentions. Rather, this capacity entails there to be suitable norms of recognition available for our social emergence.

In order them to operate, the social norms of recognition must be in a way impersonal. In other words, one is recognized as a representative of certain gender on account of one's socially shared features (expressions, postures, habits et cetera), not based on what would be unique in one. As already suggested, the norms also exceed any subject who might use them in conferring recognition, as one's capacity for recognition is a social rather than personal one. As follows, the one who recognizes me could be practically anyone, at the same time as I, as a recognized subject, am recognizable only to the extent I could be substituted by whoever like me (GAO, 25).

Despite the impersonal character of the norm it cannot, however, operate without subjects who would cite[32] it in their everyday interactions with one another. Nor can any recognition take place without subjects who confer it upon their others. In this sense the relation between the norm and the subject is two-way: the subject needs the norm in order to appear as a legible human being and the norm calls for the subject who would put it into practice in order to execute the very normative force it stands for.

Butler writes that to conceive gender as a norm is not exactly to say it is a model individuals try to approximate (UG, 48). That kind of understanding would, I suppose, be more neatly in line with theories of socialization, that presume (according to Lloyd, M. 2007) a sexed subject who takes on certain gendered practices by way of learning them[33]. Contrary to these notions, in Butler there is no more originality in sex than there is in gender: sex too is conceived in normative terms. Moreover, she suggests, the category of "sex" is always already a gendered category (GT, 11; BTM, 5). As a norm it governs the materialization of culturally intelligible bodies according to the gendered coordinates (BTM). No more than attaching "natural" sex to a body postulated beyond the cultural influences of gender, it makes sense to assume any subject prior to its gendering, for this gendering conditions the subject formation in the first place. In other words, gender cannot be a model individuals try to approximate because, from the point of view of Butler's understanding, there are no individuals, capable of any pursuits whatsoever, prior to their gendering.

To speak of gender as a norm is not exactly the same as to say that there are normative ways of performing femininity and masculinity, either (UG, 42). Even as hegemonic femininities and masculinities surely exist, Butler warns us not to suffocate our notion of gender with them. As I will argue later in this paper gender as a norm is according to Butler open to resignificatory practises that might redirect its meanings. Thus rather than endeavouring to fix its terms we should try to

---

[32] The idea of this citational character of the norm will be further clarified below in chapter 3.3.1.
[33] About the differences between the assumptions that ground Butler's thinking on the one hand and socialization theory on the other see Lloyd, M. 2007, 48.

keep the category open to future articulations. (UG, 223 – 227).

Aside with conceiving gender as a norm, Butler refers to gender also as a "historical category", as "one way of culturally configuring a body" (UG, 10). These shifts in terminology illustrate well not only the importance of the dimension of temporality to her notion of gender but also her understanding of the relations between "sex" and gender. As already suggested, Butler conceives gender as a norm that contributes to the materialization of the body, its anatomy, and "sex" and it is only afterwards that these constructions may get to appear as original sources of or impulses for a gendered identity. (See GT, 3 – 44; BTM, 1 – 2.) Thus, contrary to how it is conventionally figured, the anatomy of the body is no more pre-, or extra- cultural than gendered and sexual identities (UG, 10). Rather, these may all be seen as normative in character, interconnecting and lending support to each other.[34]

What the conception of gender as a norm thus refers to is "a form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which the gender binary is instituted" (UG, 48). In this way the norm of gender operates *retrospectively* to produce subjects, who, as mentioned, do not precede their gendering. At the same time it also works to establish and reproduce the binary gender system and, by covering over these processes of social construction, makes it seem like inevitable and natural.

As the retrospective dimension in the norm's operation suggests, the ideality of gender, gender as an idealized entity, is seen in this view as an effect of the very practices the norm governs (UG, 48). This means that, even though one's acting in accordance with certain gender appears to derive from some inner core of gender identity, it is actually in and through these acts that this identity gets produced. As in Nietzsche (1989), the deed thus precedes the doer, who only retrospectively gets constituted as an effect of the deed. In this way Butler focuses her theoretical gaze on the sphere of practice and this is also where her notion of gender is rooted.

On a general level, Butler[35] describes the emergence of the social norm as marking "the movement by which…juridical power becomes productive" (UG, 49). In other words, the norm performs the transformation of "the negative restraints" into "the more positive controls of normalization" (UG,

---

[34] "Heterosexual matrix" was in Butler's early writings one way of trying to describe these relations. As she states in "xtracts from Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler." the concept appeared, however, to be oversimplifying and too un-malleable for the uses of political theorizing. In her later writings, writings after *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990), Butler uses the term "heterosexual hegemony" to refer to the interconnectedness of the norms of "sex", gender, and desire.

[35] Referring here to Foucault-influenced François Ewald (1991)

49). Butler's notion of norm stresses thus *the productive* dimension in regulations: Besides restricting the field of possible action, the norm also enables any possible action within that field.

According to Butler, regulation is on the one hand what makes somebody regular (UG, 55). In this sense the regulatory power of gender as a norm enables one to appear in understandable ways and become socially recognized through the acknowledged categories. On the other hand, however, regulation suggests a mode of surveillance and discipline (UG, 55). Failures in acting according to regulations will normally be punished in one way or another. As I understand it, the conceptual sphere of regulation exceeds in Butler the sphere of normative. Even as norms surely are an important way regulation operates, it may work its force also through for instance laws or rules, both of which Butler explicitly distinguishes from norms (UG, 41)[36]. However, as far as regulation draws on anonymous categories, that treat subjects interchangeable with one another, it is according to Butler "bound up with the process of *normalization*" (UG, 55). This reminds of what was already written about the ignorance of individuality characteristic to the operation of gender as a norm. Because norms are impersonal one is recognized only to the extent one could pass as another (GAO, 25).

To conclude, recognition functions as the site of power on which our notion of human acquires and re-acquires its meaning. For this reason, the norms that regulate the conferring of this recognition become sites of political contestation. (UG, 2.) According to Butler gender is one central norm with regard to which we are recognized as intelligible human subjects, which makes it above all a political question. In order to contest this norm it is important to understand how exactly does it work. Hence, I will next move on to discuss in more detail the operation of gender as norm.

3.3. ON THE OPERATION OF THE NORM - PERFORMATIVITY AND INTERPELLATION

As has already become clear, gender as a norm is crucially intertwined with power. But what exactly does this "power" here refer to? In considering how to approach the issue of power Butler reminds us about Michel Foucault's advice to become nominalists about it. This means according to

---

[36] Despite this explicit differentiation between norms, rules, and laws (UG, 41) Butler still seems to use them sometimes synonymously. For instance, in *Excitable Speech* (Butler 1997) she writes "[t]he rules that constrain the intelligibility of the subject continue to structure the subject throughout his or her life" (ES, 136) apparently referring to what might as well be argued in terms of the norm. I suggest, thus, that the differentiation given in *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) works, at least partly, to specify Butler's notion of norms in the context of her discussion on structural rules of kinship and the Lacanian law. As Butler nevertheless uses all these concepts without always properly defining them, the reader may get confused whether or not to interpret Butler's writing on rules, for example, as relevant to her notion of norms too. As far as I see it, this must be decided with reference to the (con)text at hand.

her that the relevant question concerning power is not the standard metaphysical ***question about*** its essence. According to Butler we should rather inquire into the workings of power and ask, "[w]hat does power do?" (GAO, 124.) The same goes for gender, too. As Pulkkinen argues, Butler pursues a genealogical analysis of gender, in which the interest in the ongoing production, the practising of gender, substitutes for the notions of foundation and originality (Pulkkinen 2003, 175 - 177). In other words gender is conceived as a mode of doing rather than being, which directs the theoretical emphasis from the notions of essence towards more concrete practising.

According to Butler the norm of gender operates performatively (e.g. GT, 173) (and) through interpellation (e.g. BTM, 7). As already mentioned, the notion of performativity is based on Austin's theory of speech acts, whereas the idea of interpellation is grounded in Althusser's writings. I will next introduce these concepts and provide a reading of what kind of a role they play in Butler's theorizing on the norm of gender.

3.3.1. PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES

Butler develops her notion of gender in close relation to the concept of performativity. The idea of performativity was first introduced in the context of Austin's theory of performative speech acts (Austin 1975, originally published in 1962), and later reworked by Jacques Derrida (Derrida 2003, originally published in 1972) with the help of another concept, reiteration, that emphasises the temporal dimension of it. Even as the way Butler conceives performativity does not strictly coincide with either of these formulations, her understanding is much influenced by Derrida's conceptual schemes and his critique of certain assumptions in Austin's theory.

According to Austin (1975) the workings of speech are not fully conceived in terms of its descriptive functions. Moreover, the way he sees it, some acts of speech function primarily to induce the very state of affairs they apparently refer to. Along these lines Austin then differentiates between the descriptive utterances on the one hand and the performative utterances on the other. The first mentioned are the kind of utterances constating something about reality, something that can (at least in principle) be judged true or false. Performative utterances, on the contrary, cannot be reasonably considered true or false but function instead to perform their own truth. (Austin 1975, 3 – 6.) In this manner characteristic of a performative is that it performs certain states of affair, whereas a constative, according to Austin's conception, primarily expresses something[37].

---

[37] Later in the same book, *How to Do Things with Words* (1975), Austin makes more sophisticated a classification, according to which certain aspects of performance are to be found in basically every act of speech. Thus, the binary

As an example of a performative Austin mentions the ceremonial act of marrying[38] (Austin 1975, 5). This act consists of the uttering of certain conventionally given words in defined situations. It must, according to Austin, be conducted by persons properly authorized in order it to perform the state of marriage between the two persons, now named a husband and a wife[39]. (Austin 1975, 14 – 15.) According to Derrida (2003), what is problematic in Austin's view is that he, contrary to his explicit aims, ends up presuming the presence of certain personal intentions as a precondition for a successful performance (Derrida 2003, 291 – 292)[40]. For instance, Austin explicitly excludes from his considerations the cases where a performative act is conducted by an actor on the stage, for he takes this kind of an act to be "parasitic" and "*in a peculiar way* hollow or void" (Austin 1975, 22). Thus, as Derrida states, it seems to be of importance to Austin whether one really intends to perform the state of affairs in question or has some other kind of, possibly untruthful, intentions. Derrida claims that Austin's assumption of these "proper" intentions involved in accomplishing a performative act is unnecessary when judging the successfulness of an act. According to him the success of a performative depends merely on whether or not there exists a prior structure of convention, where the performative force of for instance certain words derives from. (Derrida 2003, 290 – 297.)

The main idea in Derrida's rewriting of performativity is that the performative act recites, or reiterates, a recognizable form that gains its meaning through its contextualizing in a chain of past and future repetitions of the act in question (Derrida 2003, 295). Thus the force of a performative, its success in performing what it seemingly names, is no more reducible to the uniqueness of the act than it is derivative from the individual intentions involved in the performing of it. As Derrida states quite the opposite holds. The performative force of an utterance derives according to him from several other acts that have the same "form" but are not fully present at the moment of the utterance. Due to their contribution to the success of the present performing, however, these "other" acts are not fully absent either. From these assumptions follow that a performative act exceeds any given circumstances at the moment of its utterance these circumstances including time, place, and the intentions of the subject who conducts the act. In other words, the act exceeds its apparent context and it is only through this breakage with the present that it comes to perform in the first place. (Derrida 2003, 298 – 299.)

division introduced does not strictly hold. For the sake of simplicity, I will however, stick to the roughly outlined picture. For more about these different aspects of speech, cf. Lecture XI in Austin 1975.

[38] For an interesting critique on this heterosexually interested example of Austin see Sedgwick 1993.

[39] It should go without saying that the description provided here is very simplifying compared to the original, much more complex and detailed analysis in Austin's *How to do things with Words.*

[40] Added to this, Derrida criticizes Austin for taking the context of an act as fully knowable (Derrida 2003, 290). As will be argued below, in Derrida's view the act always exceeds any contextualizations we might be able to construct.

As already suggested, the idea of *iterability* of a performative act plays a central role in Derrida's reformulation of Austin's theory. Iterability carries in its etymological or paleonymical[41], to be more loyal to Derrida's original vocabulary, roots the meanings of both other (*itara* in Sanskrit) and *again* (*iter* in Sanskrit). Thus it implicitly alludes to the way repetition is always alteration at the same time. (Derrida 2003, 282.) Because Derrida assumes this iterability to structure the performative act from its inception and contribute essentially to the performative force of it, there can be no original (meaning of an) act in his view but only citations, copies of copies[42]. (Derrida 2003, 282.)

Derrida's own example in this respect is the convention of signature. He argues that, due to the logic of citationality (that presumes no original), we basically cannot distinguish between an "authentic" signature and its counterfeit or copy. These both embody the same recognizable form, that performs certain social function in a given structure or convention. (Derrida 2003, 299.)

As already mentioned Butler introduces her notion of gender performativity in the book *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) and continues to revise it throughout her later writings. Already in the introduction to her next book *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993) she pursues to clarify certain aspects of this notion that had caused confusion after the publication of *Gender Trouble* [43]. Basing on Derrida's writings she states, "…performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse[44] produces the effects that it names" (BTM, 2). Later in *Excitable Speech* (Butler, 1997) she writes on the performative force of an action as follows "If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that "success" is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices.*" (ES, 51.)

---

[41] Enwald writes on Derrida's notion of paleonymy as follows, "Paleonymy is concerned with the investigation of the ancient (*palaoi´s*) meanings of words (*nomen*)…One can indeed claim that Derrida uses the word paleonymy because it is less like a metaphysical property and actuality than the word 'etymology'. …from the Greek words *etymos*, meaning 'real' and 'right', as well as *logos* meaning reason and reason." (Enwald 2004, 292).

[42] In *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) Butler writes "[t]he replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy." (GT, 41.)

[43] This confusion has much to do with whether Butler's theorizing leads to either voluntarist or determinist view on subject and its agency. For more about this, see Lloyd, M. 2007, 57 – 61; Disch 1999, 549.

[44] The concept of discourse is something Butler obtains from Foucault. It refers to the established practices and ways of speaking and thinking that mould both their objects as well as the ones participating in these practices. Thus discourses guide subjects in their (moral) conduct and provide the ground for a subject's self-reflection. (Helén 1999, 504; Husso 2003, 60.)

As becomes evident through these quotations the assumption that the seemingly individual gender performatives relate necessarily to other, prior performings of the act is central to also Butler's conception of performativity. It is, as mentioned, the accumulation of authority rather than personal intentions of a subject that accounts for the performative force of an utterance. That this accumulation, then, takes place in and through citational practices, stresses the linkage between performativity and conventions: a performative act may succeed only on condition that it is legibly based on an existing social convention, where this legibility is guided by the social norms of recognition. When it comes to gender this means that, no matter how subversive one intends one's gender performance to be, in order to truly perform *gender* the act or practice must be legible with regard to the conventional ways of enacting the norm, or be supported by prior performings of such an act.[45] In other words, not anything counts as a gender performative. Nor can one autonomously authorize the meanings one's gender performing socially acquires.

Despite, thus, the inevitable alteration in citational practices, the requirement concerning the similarity of the form is equally important to emphasise, as that there must be limits to the extent to which a citation may alter in order to still count as the kind of an act it were supposed to be. This is to say as far as an act has this recognizable copy-like character it cannot be entirely different from the other similar acts; a copy must be recognized as a copy and for this it must be to similar enough to the other copies of which it is a copy. The convention of signature Derrida uses to exemplify performativity seems to be more formally framed than performing of gender, which may allow for more alteration within its sphere. There typically is a specific row for a signature, at least in official forms, and no signatures are usually performed in unexpected occasions where there is no well-established or explicit request for one. Performative acts of gender on the other hand, might prove less alterable. Because gender performing cannot be confined to only certain areas of every-day life the performative acts of gender might have to be more similar with one another in order to be conceived as acts of precisely gender and not of something else.

According to Butler the act acquires its act-like status and appears as a single act only due to the foreclosure of its constitutive past (BTM, footnote 7, p. 244). This means that the convention on which an act is based, the sequence of other similar acts preparing the ground for its performative

---

[45] In *Excitable Speech* (Butler 1997, 147 ff.) Butler discusses the case where there is no prior authorization to an act but where the act nevertheless manages to effect social transformation. The possibility of this kind of a claiming of authority is presumed also in her recent writings on resignification (See, e.g. UG, 224; AC). Terry Lovell (2003) argues that, despite her trying to explain the authority of such a previously un-authorized act, pleading the incompleteness of any interpellation and shifts in meaning in language Butler actually fails to account for the possibility of it in terms of her theoretical presumptions (Lovell 2003).

force, must be hidden or denied in order the act to appear as authentic. As Butler writes the dimension of time in which the reiteration of performative acts takes place is not to be conceived as (fully) external to these acts for these performatives are, it seems by definition, "sedimentations" of their temporal repetition[46]. For this fundamentally temporal character, then, gender performatives do not remain "intact and self-identical" in the course of their repetition by several subjects in different times and places. (BTM, footnote 7, p. 244.) Quite the contrary: as Derrida's notion of iteration suggested, performative acts are profoundly vulnerable to shifts in meaning through time.

In this way Butler conceives gender to take place in temporal process of performative construction, which is understood here as the reiteration of the norm (cf. e.g. BTM, 1 – 23). Moreover, it is precisely this temporal character of performativity that introduces the potential for change in the middle of the norm's reproduction. (BTM, 10.) This means that the norm of gender can be (and actually *is*) contested in the course of its reiteration, even as the successfulness of this contestation is not grounded in deliberate actions of the subject.

Thus, the performative force that fabricates gender does not derive from empty nothingness. Nor is it an outcome of any personal intentions of a subject. According to Butler's Derrida-influenced (but not exactly Derridean[47]) view, this force is, rather, implicated in the prior instances of reiteration, the prior citations of the norm. This is despite the fact that these citations may "acquire an act-like status in the present" and in this way conceal their genesis. (BTM, 12.) Butler writes, "[a] structure only remains a structure through being reinstated as one." (ES, 139.) Thus, as far as the norm of gender is a structure it is a temporal one, as opposed to the structuralist accounts, that postulate structures beyond (space and) time. As the norm of gender depends thus on its being reiterated over time it follows that the site of this reiteration functions at the same time as the site of challenging the norm (ES, 19). In Butler's words, "the logic of iterability… governs the possibility of social transformation" (ES, 147), where this transformation is situated in the field of practice. What this logic also implies is that "the temporality of the act exceeds the time of the utterance" (ES, 33). Thus a performative act participates in histories the subject conducting the act cannot fully conceive. In this sense then one never fully authorizes what appears to be one's own conduct (UG, 1). Quite the contrary, there certainly are limits to the extent the subject can consciously reflect and control by intention the effects of its performative practicing.

---

[46] In a sense, the past invocations of a performative are always present when we recite it. See ES, 1 – 41.
[47] Despite her explicit drawing on certain ideas of Derrida Butler also criticizes him, most importantly for understanding iterability as purely structural (ES, 148). Instead of postulating performative force beyond the sphere of social, Butler's view stresses the social and temporal dimensions of iterable performatives. As she puts it, she seeks to define "the logic of iterability as a social logic" (ES, 150). For more about Butler's critique on Derrida, see ES, 127ff.

I presume the kind of formulation of citational gender performativity described above is emphasised by Butler partly in order to counter the accusations for voluntarism. Basing on what she wrote in *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) some have interpreted Butler to suggest that gender would be something one might freely choose and alter according to one's deliberation and will. However, if we assume performatives to be citational in character and acquire their meaning necessarily in relation to a normative structure that precedes and exceeds any singular "act", it is not possible to view gender as something volitional, as something that could be transformed and subverted according to individual intentions. Performing gender is rather reciting a norm one cannot possibly invent, much less authorize, by oneself.

3.3.2. INTERPELLATIVE CALLS

According to Butler interpellation is an important way the norm of gender operates. Interpellation refers to the processes of subject constitution and it highlights the social character of these processes. Probably the best-known example of a scene of interpellation is the one Althusser introduces in the essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (Althusser, 1971)[48]. In this metaphorical scenario (as it is described by Butler in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997)) a policeman hails a passer-by on the street, who then turns toward the voice recognizing itself as a social subject, the one being hailed. Thus, according to Butler's interpretation of the notion of interpellation, the subject as a reflexive being emerges out of its responding to the call of the other without ever getting to choose the terms by which it is addressed. (See PLP, 107 – 108; ES, 24 – 28.)

In this way the interpellative address precedes the one who is addressed and the social world of others is in this theoretical frame seen as the condition on which a subject can emerge and reflect on itself. On the first glance this might seem to lead to a deterministic account of subject constitution, as the subject apparently has no power to resist the ways it gets to be constituted. Butler makes two assumptions, however, that help to secure the possibility of social transformation: Firstly, an interpellative call can never inaugurate the subject once and for all. Secondly, these addresses do not always succeed in the ways intended by those who deliver the address. Thus there are certain critical possibilities and breakages to be found in the scene of interpellation.

Butler conceives interpellations, through which subjects are "hailed" into being, as social performatives. As performatives these interpellations are ritualized and sedimented through time.

---

[48] This is also where the concept is first introduced.

(ES, 153.) This means that they gain their force through being reiterated and no singular call will work as an interpellation. What this temporal dimension also suggests is that, even while one usually is subjected to one interpellative call at a time, each of these calls carries with it historical chains or sediments of past invocations of the call. Thus an interpellative call temporally exceeds the moment of its utterance as well as the instant of one's response.[49] As was suggested above, this temporality of a citation in performativity delimits the possibilities of a subject, who delivers the address, to establish by intention the meaning of its words, which makes addressing through interpellation as partly unpredictable in its effects. As Butler puts it the "success" of a performative act is thus "always and only provisional" (ES, 51).

Butler writes, moreover, that not only does "interpellative power" exceed the subjects it inaugurates, but these subjects too "exceed the interpellation by which they are animated." (ES, 34.) In other words, according to her no interpellative address can fully determine the subject it inaugurates. The precise character of the excess mentioned remains, however, unclarified. If one is enabled as a subject only as far as one is interpellated what, in the subject, could exceed this enabling call? I presume Butler refers here to the way the subject, after its emergence, participates in reiteration and thus potentially in alteration of the norm.

Butler's own example concerning the interpellative production of gender is the assignment of sex/gender when a child is born[50]. According to her the doctor pronouncing, "It's a girl" begins the "long string of interpellations by which the girl is transitively girled" (ES, 49; BTM, 7 - 8). Thus, to become a girl is to become subjected to a series of gendering interpellations, to be socially recognized and addressed as a girl. As the example clearly indicates, one is subjected to this addressing already before one could possibly evaluate its terms. This highlights what Butler understands to be our fundamental vulnerability in the face of the others: Before any possible moment of autonomy one is defenceless and dependent on the others (PLP, 8).

Moreover, as Butler writes in *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1991), "The mark of gender appears to "qualify" bodies as human bodies; the moment in which an infant becomes humanized is when the question, "is it a boy or girl?" is answered." (GT, 142.) This is to suggest not only that there is a normative dimension in the anatomy of human bodies — the material organization of the human

---

[49] Butler discusses this temporality characteristic of interpellation especially in *Excitable Speech* (Butler 1997) in considering hate speech and the possibility of resignifying certain "words that wound" (ES, 4.)
[50] In the binary gender order only two types of bodies are recognized, male and female, boys and girls. Intersexual bodies that do not fit into either of these exclusive categories are usually surgically operated to match one sex/gender or the other.

body is conceived in terms of the norm — but also that the norm of gender contributes to the (re)production of what we understand by "human". In other words, despite its apparent neutrality regarding gender, our very notion of "human" seems to be invested with the presumptions concerning gender. According to Butler "human" is, indeed, a notion produced and deproduced by the norms of recognition (UG, 32).

As the idea of the normative dimension in anatomy suggests, there is not more originality in sexed body than there is in gender; also the biological is conceived through the normative conceptual schemes[51]. This means that the very materiality of a sexed body becomes inaugurated in and through the repeated interpellative calls one is subjected to ever since the birth (if not already before that). Butler's view is based here on her general conception of the relations between materiality and ideality, which can be clarified with the help of the concept "materialization".

Materialization, in Butler's writings, designates the way matter is performatively produced with reference to the prevailing norms that govern our understanding of, for instance, human bodies. (BTM, 1 – 19.) Thus, rather than being pre-discursive or even unreachable through the means of language, materiality figures according to Butler as the most productive effect of power (BTM, 2), an effect not fully separable from language. As she writes, "The social life of the body is produced through an interpellation that is at once linguistic and productive. The way in which that interpellative call continues to call, to take form in bodily stylistics that, in turn, performs its own social magic constitutes the tacit and corporeal operation of performativity." (ES, 153.) In other words, the sexed body in its materiality, as well as the idealized gender identity are both effects of the performative production initiated by the interpellative address.

As the example of sex/gender assignment indicates one is first hailed as either a girl or a boy and only through the repetition of the kind of addressing and the subsequent embodiment of the norm socially, psychically, and bodily becomes one[52]. Because the address, that inaugurates the subject, takes place much before one is capable of considering whether or not to except it Butler supposes that one turns toward the hail necessarily [53]. As follows, it is only after being already addressed and

---

[51] For more about the conceptual presumptions in biology, see Keller 1988, 141ff.

[52] As already suggested, every interpellation is, however, definitionally incomplete. Besides this incompleteness, Butler (basing on Foucault) supposes certain "self-crafting" involved in taking on the terms by which one is addressed that is incorporating the norm. By this self-crafting she refers to the activity the subject exercises in forming and negotiating its relations with the available norms. (GAO, 22.) What the notion of self-crafting thus points to is that the norms that condition the emergence of the subject do not fully determine who/what the subject will be. It is rather only through the reiterative practising the subject participates in that the norms gain and lose their force. For some critical notes on Butler's notion of self-crafting, see footnote 64.

[53] As Butler notes in introducing Althusser's notion of interpellation, even though the subject is discursively

thus participant in the embodied reiteration of the norm that one may come to question the terms of the address, as far as one can. As Butler puts it, "[t]he "constructive" power of the tacit performative is precisely its ability to establish a practical sense for the body, not only a sense of what the body is, but how it can or cannot negotiate space, its "location" in terms of prevailing cultural coordinates." (ES, 156 – 160.) Any critical agency is, thus, a kind of an unintended side-product of constraint and the name one is called functions ambivalently both to subordinate and enable the one addressed. (ES, 163.)

As was written above on the notion of performativity, in order an act to succeed and appear as authentic it must conceal its reliance on the chain of other, similar acts, that only can authorize it; as Butler writes, "a performative "works" to the extent that it draws on and covers over the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized". (ES, 51.) For this covering over, then, an act may appear as authentic even as it actually is a kind of citing of a preceding structure or convention. When it comes to gender, this means that gender, as an identity, must hide its temporal foundations in a social norm in order it to appear as unconditional and self-evident.

Butler writes that performative interpellation operates through a kind of "a metalepsis" (ES, 49) on account of which the one who cites the performative is produced as the origin of that act. In other words, no subject precedes the citational activity in which it takes part. It is, rather, the chain of repetition of gender performatives that has the subject as its effect. (ES, 49.)[54] Nevertheless, as this

interpellated into existence at the very moment of the turn in the scene of address, we cannot tell the story about this turning without always already presuming somebody there that performs the turn and, apparently, pre-exists it. In other words, the metaphorical scene of interpellation cannot be discussed without at least linguistically figuring some agency there that performs the turn, by which the subject is inaugurated. (PLP, 4 – 5.)

On the one hand, this problem has to do with the requirements of language. As Butler puts it, "we are…trapped within the grammatical time of the subject", which makes it "almost impossible" to discuss the emergence of this subject (PLP, 117). In this respect, she suggests that we should consider the "turn" as a "trope" (PLP, 4 - 5). Actually, she writes, the word 'turn' derives etymologically from the classical Greek word *tropikos*, *tropos*, meaning "turn".

According to Butler, a trope can be taken as either a deviation from customary language or as constitutive of the condition of possibility for it. In the first case, a trope marks certain departure from "an accepted version of reality" and in the latter it can be seen as constitutive of it. In both cases, however, a trope figures as generative or productive of new meanings and it is needed in explaining the generation in question that is the becoming of the subject. (PLP, footnote 1, p.201.)

On the other hand, the problem indicates that there must be some kind of a "readiness" that would precede the address, a readiness that suggests one to be "already in relation to the voice before the response" (PLP, 111). Whereas in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997) Butler seeks to explain this readiness with the help of Nietzsche's ideas concerning the constitution of conscience in terms of a punishment, later in *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) and in *Giving Account of Oneself* (Butler 2005) she seems to subscribe to a slightly different account, which is based more on the notion of our primary desire to persist. This desire will be further discussed in the next section of the paper.

[54] It appears that performative interpellation contributes to the production of not only the addresser but the addressee too. When one addresses the other in terms of gender one appears to possess the power to confer recognition to the other, recognition the other needs in order to recognize itself. This makes the addresser appear as a subject, as a cause for certain effects. The addressee entails the scene of recognition to take place in order to emerge as a subject and, as the notion of interpellation suggested, to recognize itself in the first place. Still it seems fair enough to conclude that neither of the two at the scene of interpellation is, actually, at charge of the social processes that inaugurate both of

state of being "conditioned and mobilized" in the citational practices becomes dissimulated, the subject appears as the originator of its effects and gender as one of its attributes.[55]

As the notion of "string of interpellations", that produces one as gendered being (ES, 49), suggests assuming and maintaining a gendered subject status is a matter of reiteration. One is constantly subjected to gendering addresses and must keep recognizing and performing oneself as the addressee of these calls in order to reproduce one's status as a legible subject. However, much due to precisely this reiteration the risk of failure accompanies every possible success in the workings of interpellation (ES, 49). As Butler notes interpellation always risks misrecognition. As follows, it does not necessarily succeed in bringing its addressee into being (PLP, 95). According to her, especially when it is related to social categories, like those of gender, interpellation may well be interpreted in multiple ways (PLP, 96). For instance, to be hailed as a "girl" may be taken as an insult or as an affirmation, or even both at once, depending on the context. Due to the impossibility of the norm to fully determine its subjects, somebody with a penis might turn.

---

them. This is basically because the norms involved are never authored by an individual. As I will argue below the terms by which the agency of a subject is established are by definition out of its hands.

[55] Here one can sense an implicit reference to Nietzsche's (1989) idea of there being no doer beyond the deed. This means that the doer becomes only retrospectively cast as responsible for the deed; the subject is produced as the originator of the acts that actually produce it. This, of course, is contrary to how it *appears.*

PART IV: SUBJECTS OF THE NORM

4.1. DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION - DESIRE TO PERSIST

The notion of our dependence on recognition is central in understanding Butler's idea of gender as a norm. According to her we, as subjects, are dependent on the recognition by others in our very persistence. As this recognition then is governed by social norms, that provide the categories through which one can appear as intelligible, it seems we depend finally on these norms of recognition that can provide us with social existence. Butler conceptualizes this fundamental need for recognition (and for the norms through which this recognition might proceed) as desire[56]. It is in this desire where our existence as human beings is grounded. In this chapter, I will consider the idea of desire for recognition in order to explain the authority of gender as a norm.

In introducing her notion of desire for recognition, Butler refers to Benedict de Spinoza's theorizing of *conatus*, the principle of self-persistence[57]. She associates this profound desire to persist in one's own being with Hegel's conception of recognition as the condition for possibility of life itself. According to Butler "[f]or Hegel… the desire to persist in one's own being…is fulfilled only through the desire to *be recognized*" (GAO, 43). As our recognition of somebody as a person is dependent on whether we can recognize "a certain norm manifested in and by the body of that other" (UG, 58), without suitable norms, through which one could be recognized, one loses one's possibility as a legible human being (UG, 31).[58]

What the desire for recognition, or the desire to persist, described accounts for is the "motivational" side involved in the "acceptance" of a subject the terms by which it is being hailed[59]. If one understands the desire to persist as a fundamental desire, as Butler obviously does[60], it seems indeed that the subject would prefer anything to extinction. Even the most oppressive address enables at least some agency, whereas the lack or recognition would risk one's very reality and persistence. As

---

[56] The way Butler utilizes the concept of desire is loaded with philosophical connotations as well as other implications I will not interrogate in this paper. For an interested reader, I recommend Butler's book *Subjects of Desire – Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (Butler 1999).
[57] For more about conatus, see SD, 11. Cf. Reuter 2003, 205.
[58] Butler writes also that, as the terms by which we are recognized may well work to "fix and capture" us running "the risk of arresting desire, and of putting an end to life", desire itself may delimit and condition the operation of recognition (GAO, 44). In other words, norms of recognition both enable our persistence and work against our fundamental desire to persist, the desire to be. We cannot be recognized but through them and in case the recognition does take place we may find ourselves trapped in categorizations that make life unbearable.
[59] I use the words 'motivational' and 'acceptance' in quotes here to underline that one cannot actually have any motivations prior to one's answering to the interpellative call. Neither can one truly accept anything before this "acceptance" through which one acquires the status of a subject in the first place. This means that any motivations and acceptances on this level must be conceived as prior to reflection and choice.
[60] According to Moya Lloyd (2007), despite her explicit arguing against postulation of pre-discursive foundations Butler seems to place this desire for recognition beyond the sphere of social in never subjecting the notion to a critical analysis. Thus Butler undercuts, according to Lloyd, her own argument concerning the profound sociality of psychic life. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 102.)

Butler writes, one can be oppressed only on condition that one already exists as a possible subject, whereas to be unreal means that one is impossible in terms of the prevailing norms of recognition.[61] (UG, 218.) In other words, one who does not embody the norm as expected, one whom the "grid of legibility" (UG, 42) does not cover may not have the access to the "human" yet. As Butler puts it, one may find oneself "speaking only and always as if one were human, but with the sense that one is not" (UG, 218). In this way, without the possibility of recognition no real subject position is possible either.[62]

It is important to note in discussing recognition that, even while the other that I recognize and who confers me recognition may be singular, the norms through which this recognition occurs must be "to some extent impersonal and indifferent" (GAO, 25). Our social relations are in this way mediated by the norms of recognition that treat us as interchangeable with one another. According to Butler this implies certain "disorientation of the perspective for the subject in the midst of recognition as an encounter" (GAO, 25 – 26). This is to say the recognition we might offer is never exactly in our hands. Neither is the recognition, we may receive animated by any original or innate features of our "true selves." Rather than being a capacity of a subject, recognition thus demarks the way the norm reproduces itself in and through the actions of the subjects it enables. In offering, as well as receiving[63], recognition one's agency becomes hardly separable from the norm's agency or even "instrument" of it (GAO, 26). I presume this is one point Butler refers to when she writes "[one] is used by the norm to the extent one uses it" (GAO, 36).

Despite the disorientation the "indifference" of the norms implies, our recognition of our selves depends crucially on the recognition conferred upon us by others. Butler writes that in Foucault's writings the idea of a regime of truth emerges to account for the possibility of this self-recognition (GAO, 22). According to her this historical regime offers the terms by which self-recognition can

---

[61] When it comes to gender this is to say that while women indisputably are oppressed, they are oppressed as possible subjects, whereas for instance those transgendered who remain unintelligible in terms of the binary gender order, are according to Butler's conception not even included in the prevailing notion of human. This does not mean, though, that to struggle for better conditions for the lives of women would be somehow unimportant or unnecessary. It is just not the only struggle needed regarding gender. As I suggested in the introduction to this paper, a much more profound rethinking of gender is needed than can be conceptualized in terms of the current binary schema. This is what Butler seems to pursue through subjecting the very notion of gender under scrutiny. As far as I see it, the kind of reaching for a more inclusive notion of gender that Butler advocates does not have to counter the aims of feminist politics, as far as this politics is willing to critically interrogate some of its premises.

[62] Some kind of a position is, however, entailed here as one can nevertheless speak and be spoken (and written) of. There seems to be certain ambivalence in this respect as Butler apparently recognizes in her texts bodies and identities that were supposed to be beyond recognition. If somebody is not recognizable with reference to the norm of gender, how can one have any knowledge on this body if we agree that recognition entails one to be covered by and made intelligible with reference to the norm? I will come back to this question in Part VI.

[63] What this "disorientation" implies in the context of receiving recognition will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

take place, the terms that "are also presented as the available norms" (GAO, 22). Thus the regime of truth, understood as consisting of social norms, provides the "framework for the scene of recognition" and decides in advance of any particular individual whether it will, or will not, "qualify as a subject of recognition" (GAO, 22).

However, as Butler (following Foucault) adds there is always "a mode of self-crafting" taking place with regard to the social norms of recognition. By this self-crafting Butler refers to an activity the subject exercises in forming and negotiating its relations with the available norms.[64] (GAO, 22.) This points to an important assumption in Butler's view: The norms that condition the emergence of the subject do not fully determine who/what that subject will be. It is, rather, only through the reiterative practising the subject more or less actively participates in that the norms obtain (and may also lose) their force. As was argued in discussing the idea of reiteration, due to the temporality reiteration introduces into the operation of the norm, there is always a possible breakage or challenge involved in the practising of the norm. This is to say the very operation of the norm may work also to undermine it (UG, 42).

For the necessary relationship between the subject and the social norms of recognition one's relation to the regime of truth will at the same time be one's relation to oneself. Gender as a norm is never truly external to the subject, but rather a principle of its social existence. This accounts for the reflexive dimension in the operation of critique as Butler (also here following Foucault) understands it (GAO, 22): In questioning the normative order, we cannot but call into question the very truth of ourselves this order, nevertheless, provides us with (GAO, 23).

To conclude, according to Butler desire is always desire for recognition, that is desire for social existence (UG, 2). The available norms that govern this recognition can operate both to confer and withdraw it. As Butler argues, in both cases it is possible that the person in question becomes "undone" by them. This means that one may be recognized as someone one is not[65], or would rather not be, or one may not be recognized at all. According to Butler, it is precisely this failure in either

---

[64] The precise character of the self-crafting activity mentioned remains, however, more or less obscure. As Butler subscribes to a Derrida-influenced view on performativity and maintains that the subject is profoundly dependent on others and the norms of recognition, it is not very clear what kind of activity the subject could exercise in performing the norm. That the subject must perform surely entails it to be somehow actively involved in the practising of the norm, but this performing is nevertheless constraint activity with regard to which the subject seems to have only little if any power to negotiate its relations. Thus, even as the notion of self-crafting involved in the practicing of the norm obviously widens the sphere of freedom in the frame of Butler's theorizing it fits rather uneasily with her other, prior assumptions concerning performativity, the subject, and the norm.

[65] In a sense this is always the case, for, in making oneself recognizable, one necessarily makes oneself "to some degree" substitutable (GAO, 37).

conferring or receiving recognition that may motivate one to call into question "the normative horizon within which recognition takes place" (GAO, 24). Thus the criticism too is seen here as a part of the desire for recognition, as the unsatisfiability of that desire pushes us to critically interrogate the available norms (GAO, 24).)

4.2. REFLECTION AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Butler discusses Hegelian conceptions of desire especially in the book *Subjects of Desire* (Butler 1999, originally published in 1987). She cites Hegel in noting that "self-consciousness in general is Desire" (SD, 7), and continues to clarify that desire signifies here the reflexivity of consciousness. According to Butler's Hegel-influenced view consciousness turns into self-consciousness in becoming other to or mediated to itself. This mediation then, the coming (of consciousness) out of itself and turning back as reflection is required for any self-knowledge. It forms the structure of a subject capable of reflecting its conduct. (SD, 7.) Thus, as Butler writes, "To be a self is…to be at a distance from who one is, not to enjoy the prerogative of self-identity…but to be cast, always, outside oneself, Other to oneself." (UG, 148.)

According to Butler the "staging and structuring of affect and desire" is one way the norms work their way into what one feels belonging most properly to oneself (UG, 15). Thus the norms that always exceed the subject and remain in a sense other to it become nevertheless formative of the psychic phenomena and self-reflection of the subject. From this vague dividing line between what appears to be internal and what external to the subject follows that precisely at the point where one expects to be oneself one is necessarily other to oneself, dependent on norms that in their sociality exceed and precede the one they provide self-understanding with (UG, 15). Gender identity, for instance, might be experienced as highly personal and intimate, as something that refers to who one deep inside is. The way Butler conceives it, however, this identity actually marks our necessary distance from ourselves, the way we cannot but reflect ourselves in an otherness that comes, as follows, to structure us as self-conscious beings.

Social norms, such as gender, provide, in other words, the ground for our reflecting ourselves in what is outside of us. This outside, however, can never be fully present to us when we reflect because the field of the norm's operation, from which it derives its power from, exceeds spatially and temporally what an individual's self-understanding could ever accommodate. Thus we are, in our self-reflection, profoundly opaque to ourselves and, as Butler puts it, "dispossessed in sociality" (UG, 7) exactly where we thought to know and possess ourselves.

This emphasis in Butler on the ec-static positioning of the self (UG, 32 – 33) bases on Hegel's understanding of a necessary self-loss that grounds the self-consciousness. Butler writes that in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977) the primary encounter with the Other is narrated in terms of this loss: Consciousness must lose itself in order to reflect itself in or as another. From this state of being deported outside of itself, it can never return to what it was; it is in this way fundamentally affected by the otherness and cannot reflect itself but as external to itself. As the subject thus in a sense "recovers" itself in and through this reflection, in and through this self-loss into an otherness, its relationship to the Other will be forever ambivalent. (UG, 147.)[66]

If one considers the question of social norms in the context of this Hegelian understanding of "the external status of reflection" (UG, 147), it is easy to see how the norms might well occupy the place of the Other: It is in and through the embodiment of these norms that we reflect ourselves and acquire thus our sense of the "self" in the first place. Our self-understanding is, in other words, mediated by the social norms that make us intelligible not only to others but also to ourselves. The norms in question are both external to us, as they precede and exceed the (spatio-)temporal dimensions of our individual bodily lives, and integral to who we are, because it is by way of these norms that we come to exist to others and to our selves. In *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Butler 2005) Butler refers to this intertwinedness in writing that "the "I" has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation – or set of relations – to a set of norms" (GAO, 8). This is to say it is only with the reference to the social norms that one can narrate one's life and make it intelligible it in terms of language. As follows, no subject can fully author the way its life will be narrated: the variety of possible stories is limited in advance by a sociality "that radically contests the notion of authorship itself" (UG, 1).

What makes Butler's account of social norms confusing is that there is certain ambivalence involved in our relation to them. As the above discussion suggests, norms are not something that *only* restricts us. They also enable us and make ourselves, and the sociality we live in, intelligible. Thus we cannot possibly do away with the norms, even while they might as well *undo* us[67] or enable us only in ways that make our lives unbearable. Butler refers to this ambivalence as the "doubleness of the norm" (UG, 206).

---

[66] For more about Butler's reading of Hegel, see e.g. PLP, 31 – 62; UG, 131 – 151.
[67] In the title of the book *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) Butler apparently plays with the verb "undo" in a kind of an interesting manner: The verb may be interpreted to refer both to the way gender as norm may undo one (in a sense one is cancelled a status as a subject in case one does not embody the norm correctly) and to the possibility of contesting the norm itself. The norm of gender may, in other words, be both undoing in its operation and possible to undo by way of some sort of a political practice.

What this doubleness implies then is that the norms enable our intelligibility always at a price. As Butler writes, the norms of recognition ground the very sociality we are implicated in. They make the world a legible place and form the basis for our knowledge on our selves as well as the others. At the same time this bond of commonality, on which the possibility of recognition is based, is possible only though the constitutive exclusions (or foreclosures) that form the apparent outside of the normative[68]. (UG, 206.) In this way the social norms of recognition operate partly through exclusion and (re)draw the dividing line between inside and outside: normal and abnormal, real and unreal.

When it comes to gender, this division between inside and outside can be understood on at least on two levels. On the level of individuals it means that incorporating the norm is formative of the emergence of the psyche as internality. This means that no internal psychic space exists prior to its normative regulation from (what will be) the outside of the subject. As Butler writes in the introduction to *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997), the "process of internalization *fabricates the distinction between interior and exterior life*, offering the distinction between the psychic and the social" (PLP, 19.)[69] On a general level of sociality the dividing line is drawn to separate the intelligible, that which will be legible with reference to the prevailing norms, from the unintelligible, that which will not appear as legible in terms of these norms. For instance, the bodies that materialize in accordance with the norm have, according to Butler, access to the sphere of "human" whereas those "otherwise gendered" (UG, 25), the bodies that perform sex/gender in unusual ways, are excluded from that sphere and cast as unintelligible. Butler argues that these bodies deemed unintelligible do not *matter*[70] in the sense that they cannot be recognized and

---

[68] Actually, as for instance Leena-Maija Rossi points out, there is in Butler's view no outside to the sphere of normative. Also resistance to the norm occurs thus within its terms (Rossi 2006, 22). That the normative knows no outside means that nobody will be recognized outside of normative terms: Also those gendered "otherwise", as Butler (UG, 25) puts it, will appear, as far as they do, as not properly fitting to the normative scheme (UG, 42). This does not necessarily contravene with the fact that someone might suffer the lack of suitable norms that could make one appear as a legitimate subject in reality. For instance intersexual persons are not conceived of as part of the social reality, because this reality is structured around the presupposition of gender binary. They cannot, however, escape the norm of gender as it operates but are rather forced to find a way to, at least seemingly, fit in. More often than not this means surgical re-materialization of their unintelligible bodies.
What is important, though, is that the social norms of recognition, such as gender, are not situated beyond time and place, but are instead temporal in character. This makes possible changes in what is intelligible and what is not. As Butler writes, new modes of subjectivity become possible on the occasion that the liming conditions of our being "prove to be malleable and replicable". This contesting of norms of recognition involves risking a self in its intelligibility, and even in its life, in order to expose "the inhuman ways the in which "the human" continues to be done and undone". (GAO, 133 – 134.) I will come back to this in the next part of the paper.
[69] For more about this, see e.g. PLP; GT, 171 – 174.
[70] Butler writes "…to be material is to materialize, where the principle of that materialization is precisely what "matters" about [the] body, its very intelligibility. In this sense, to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters, where "to matter" means at once "to materialize" and "to mean."" (BTM, 32.)

appreciated within the available norms of recognition.[71] (BTM, 1 – 23.)

For the norms thus differentiate between those who fit and those who do not fit into the frame of humanly intelligible they become easily means of oppression. Even as they are not always and only oppressive, the social norms of recognition do sometimes operate violently to withhold certain humans the status of human. Whenever this is the case, we must, according to Butler, oppose these norms and seek to make them more inclusive (UG, 223 – 224).

Besides Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977), also Foucault's writings are of importance to Butler's discussion on reflexivity of the subject. According to Butler, Foucault sees one's relation to oneself as invariably social and public. This means that the reflexive relation takes place within normative context, which regulates the possibilities of our self-understanding and appearing. (GAO, 114.) It does not follow, however, that we would be deterministically bound to the prevailing forms of subject formation, or to the given manners of relating to ourselves. What it rather implies is, according to Butler, that we cannot overcome the sociality of any of those possible relations. (GAO, 114.) In other words, we cannot decide on ourselves, on what we are, but are, more accurately, forced to negotiate our being with the others who exercise that decisive power on us. As suggested, the sphere of these others exceeds our dyadic relations with each other and should thus be conceived as a kind of abstracted sociality we cannot ever fully identify. In this sense then the subject is, in Butler's view, constituted in and through social relations that take place partially beyond its (possible) knowledge. This accords, apparently, with her psychoanalytical emphasis on the unconscious, formative of the consciousness.

When it comes to this dimension of unconscious in Butler's argumentation, the psychoanalytical concept of foreclosure is of significance. As Butler pursues to overcome the division between the psychic and the social the concept is relevant also to her more general theorizing. "Foreclosure" denotes the way something is constitutively excluded from the consciousness and becomes then formative of the psyche as its necessary border that marks the limits of possible self-reflection (PLP, 8 – 9, 23). According to Butler certain forms of rationality foreclose other forms of knowing oneself (GAO, 120). This is to say something is always lost in the process of making oneself into "an object of possible knowledge" (GAO, 120). Even as this "something" cannot be truly known, since it is precluded from the field of our reflection, we can, according to Butler, exercise "the *critical* function of thought" by opening up the question (GAO, 120). This means that we must

---

[71] As suggested, it is not fully clear what this not mattering and unintelligibility means in practice and in what sense would it be true that the ones who do not fit into the binary schema of gender *could not* be recognized.

48

subject our selves, our very identities under critique and consider at what price exactly is our apparent integrity as subjects achieved.

As the limits of one's possible knowledge on oneself are, thus, set by what the discourse, or the regime of truth, can and cannot "allow into speakability" (GAO, 121), one's intelligibility is always achieved at a price (GAO, 121). On the level of individuals this price consists of what the psyche, regulated as it is by social norms, cannot accommodate, of what is excluded from one's identity in order this identity to hold. On the level of more general sociality the price designates the exclusions on which the prevailing conception of "human" is grounded. Both of these exclusions highlight the profound historicity of "the forms of rationality by which we make ourselves intelligible" (GAO, 121). Instead of them being timeless universals, the categories we use in conceiving ourselves are historical constructions that are constantly in formation. As was already suggested in discussing the sedimentation of authority with regard to performative acts, we must deny the historicity of these terms in order to take the intelligibility, achieved, as natural and for granted (GAO, 121). On the other hand, opening up these notions to critical questioning and genealogical analyses is a way of contesting their authority.

Renunciation of the social constructedness of one's intelligibility is often evident when it comes to gender. It seems that as far as one takes one's own gender identity as self-evident and unquestionable fact about oneself, it may indeed be distressing to bear any explicit discontinuities and breakdowns in the expected coherence when it comes to others' identities.[72] Maintaining the assumed factual status of gender entails, finally, disavowing its temporality, as the temporality of the norm denotes the constructedness of it. In order to critically interrogate gender as a norm one must thus let go of the assumptions of stability and authenticity of it and reconceptualize it a thoroughly temporal social norm. As follows, in opening up the question concerning the constructedness of gender one inevitably risks the coherence of one's own identity too.

To conclude, according to Butler the reflexivity of the subject is socially constituted with regard to social norms that exceed the time and place of one's life. In this sense the subject, as a reflexive being, is outside of itself from the inception (UG, 32). One can appear to oneself only to the extent there exists social norms of recognition that can make one intelligible. What this association

---

[72] Butler discusses the case also in psychoanalytical terms claiming that as far as one's identity is constituted through foreclosures that bar certain desires and identifications from the consciousness, the expression of them by others may pose a severe threat to one's integrity as a subject. This is because these foreclosed desires and identifications remain stored in the unconscious and must be constantly denied a possibility of existence in order the subject to appear as self-identical. (PLP, 23; UG, 34 – 35.)

between reflexivity and the norms implies is that certain mediation, that places one exterior to oneself in self-reflection, is the only way to gain any knowledge on oneself (GAO, 28). In this way then the self reflects itself in and as the other, its identity becomes occasioned by what is outside of it. As Butler writes, only through the formation of reflexivity, this "apparent self-bondage", the subject acquires what is taken to be its identity (PLP, 65).

4.3. FUNDAMENTAL VULNERABILITY

What Butler's assumptions concerning the external status of reflection seem to underscore, is the relational character of the subject: One is never oneself on one's own account. When it comes to her notion of the subject, this state of profound sociality is associated with yet another important supposition. According to Butler, the subject is fundamentally vulnerable in its dependency on the others. In this chapter I will discuss this vulnerability with regard to gender as a norm.

Butler writes that the self is "given over to the Other in advance of any further relation, but in such a way that the Other does not own it either" (UG, 149). What this given-overness here refers to, is the sociality of the processes of subject constitution, by which one is cast as intelligible through recourse to social norms. In other words, one is "given over to the Other" in the sense that one takes place inevitably in a set of social relations, only partially recoverable to one, as the peculiar temporality of the norm indicated.

This state of being given over from the outset acquires in Butler's thought two intertwined meanings. Firstly, this given over-ness is something that binds us as humans regardless of any of our possible differences. That one cannot survive without being socially recognized and enabled by the close as well as the distant others (who contribute to the (re)production and legitimacy of the norms that make up the social reality) applies to everyone. According to Butler, this primary dependency, that we share, could provide an ethical ground for our relating to one another. In this way it could be utilized as a point of departure for politics. (UG, 17 – 39.) Secondly the state of dependency means that the subject is profoundly defenceless when it comes to the relations by which it is inaugurated. This is to say one cannot control the ways one is treated, but needs to be treated in one way or another. (PLP, 20.) As was emphasised in discussing the interpellative scene, no address at all is not an option for the subject, even as there is the risk of (intended or unintended) humiliation in every interpellation. This is what makes the subject vulnerable in the face of others.

What Butler's notions of primary dependency and fundamental vulnerability seem to draw special attention to, is the temporal bodily existence of a subject, who, as mentioned, materializes in and

through the embodiment of the social norms of recognition. It is *as bodies* that we are given over and come to appear in the "normative field of the visual" (GAO, 29). As bodies we are recognized and treated, and as bodies we manifest the norm, as far as we do. As already suggested, in the context of Butler's theory the body is, in this way, seen as a social phenomenon temporally constituted in the public sphere rather than "inhabited as a spatial given" (UG, 217). Much due to this bodily dimension of our social existence, we are subjected to changes over time. These changes depend according to Butler on our interactions and "the web of visual, discursive, and tactile relations" that become constitutive of the historicity of our bodies (UG, 217). In this way what seems to be outside of us and take place only after our emergence as subjects, the set of relations and interactions in which we are taken to participate, is actually formative of what and who we are, of the very bodies we are and the agency we practise.

The world of others, to which we are given over from our inception (UG, 21), is, of course, a world we cannot rule over. It, as a world of multiple temporalities and partially unrecoverable relations that contribute to the authorization of our performative deeds, has our very existence in its hands. It exercises the power either to sustain our existence or annihilate us, the possibility of annihilation referring here not only to the withdrawal of recognition (in the mode of lack of norms that could realize us) but also to the very literal violence and death. Because the norm of gender operates in and through the performative bodily practicing of the subject, the body becomes not only a site of politics but also a site of violence,[73] always available: For not acting in accordance with the norm one may be physically punished or even killed.

Butler's notion of fundamental vulnerability[74] is bond to the idea of social norms in at least two interrelated ways. Firstly, this vulnerability conditions our taking on the prevailing norms through which recognition might be conferred upon us. This means that, as we all are born and raised in dependence on the others who might sustain us and respond to our physical and emotional needs, we have no other options but to unconditionally attach to these caretakers and turn toward their addressing. (PLP, 8) This, according to Butler, makes us exposed in a way that might be described with the help of Emmanuel Levinas' notion of "passivity before passivity" (GAO, 87). Levinas'

---

[73] The threat of violence is yet severed by the fact that the bodies who do not manifest the norm correctly but, rather, threaten the binary gender with unraveling and challenge the unconstructedness of the prevailing notion of "human" may not be sufficiently covered by any (protective) laws. This is probably most evident, when it comes to intersexual people, whose bodies are surgically "corrected" to fit the norm. Thus, series of painful interventions may legally take place before the one not fitting is able to speak a word. For more about this, see UG, 57 – 74.

[74] The vulnerability in question is fundamental in the sense that it is not something we could, in Butler's words, "argue with." This is based on the assumption that our embodiment, as a source of this vulnerability, precedes the formation of the subject as a reflexive being, (UG, 23.)

"passivity before passivity" is understood by Butler to denote the way we are acted on constitutively and prior to any possibility of our own acting. It is seen as a condition that precedes not only the subject but the very possibility of the active-passive distinction too (GAO, 87). Also gender, as a norm, profits in its authority from the general vulnerability and dependence of the emerging subject, relying partly on the incapability of this subject to resist the ways it might be socially recognized and sanctioned. Vulnerable to any address whatsoever, the child will "turn" before any possibility of critically considering the terms by which it is hailed.

Secondly, vulnerability relates closely to the social norms of recognition in being implied in the embodiment (or incorporation) of them. As the norm of gender operates to outline and produce the material reality of human bodies (UG, 28; see also BTM, 27 - 55), performing of gender makes one further vulnerable not only to the gaze but also to the physical touch, that may either affirm or negate one's being. (UG, 35.) Thus, others appear to possess the power to either legitimate or nullify one's social existence, for it is by them that one is addressed, in one way or another. As already emphasised, according to Butler the state of being addressed is not an option. The subject is, rather, addressed by definition even as this address may take the form of abandonment or abuse. "[T]he void and the injury hail one in specific ways." Butler writes (GAO, 53). Also silence as a withdrawal of recognition might operate as an interpellation (CHU, 157). This kind of interpellation, that refuses to recognize one, produces the one as unintelligible and unreal, devoid of the possibility to appear as a fully authorized subject.

When it comes to gender, this kind of injuring interpellation might be exemplified by for instance situations where a female-to-male transsexual is addressed as a woman instead of being recognized as a man who he conceives himself to be. Another example would be a situation where somebody transgendered in a way that challenges the very binary conception of gender has to choose her/his "side" in order to go to a toilet in a public building, where the toilets are designated for only men and women.

As the above discussion on the public dimension of the body suggests we never exactly own our bodies, or at least do not own them originally. (UG, 21.) Our bodies, as socially constituted sites of materializing the cultural norms, are, rather, authorized by the social world that surrounds us. As Butler writes, "[a]s bodies, we are always for something more than, and other than, ourselves" (UG, 25). This dispossession in the sociality of the norms is something we cannot possibly overcome, even as it more or less threatens our sense of autonomy. Instead of it being only a threat, however, the "particular sociality that belongs to bodily life" might, as mentioned, provide the basis for

ethical relations between people who all share this state of bodily vulnerability and dependence (UG, 25). As Butler writes, it is this physical vulnerability that "forms the horizon of choice, and… grounds our responsibility" (GAO, 101). On condition of this profound sameness one can learn to appreciate also the differences between individuals interdependent.

PART V: MORE THAN ONE TIME - ON POSING A CHALLENGE

5.1. TOWARD A POLITICS OF HOPE AND ANXIETY

As Lloyd writes, Butler's theory has being read by the critics in obviously paradoxical ways. According to some of the readings a voluntarist subject is postulated in her thought, one who can simply choose its gendered status, whereas other readings take her theory to lead to determinism of some kind. According to Lloyd these conflicting readings are partially[75] based on differing assumptions when it comes to proper feminist conceptions of agency and politics (Lloyd, M. 2007, 59)[76]. As she writes, there is an idea of an autonomous and self-directing agent entailed in a typical feminist way of conceiving the political. In this picture collective political action is seen to necessitate the "(quasi-)Kantian" agency that is thought to be innate to the subjects who come to exercise it. Possibility of this kind of an agency is, however, exactly what Butler's theory explicitly disallows. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 57 – 58.) As has been suggested throughout this paper, in Butler's view, which relies on a psychoanalytical reading of the Foucauldian notion of power as both regulatory and productive, subjects only come to be to the extent they become subjected to regulatory power (UG, 41).

What this notion of power implies, in the context of discussing the political prospects of a subject, is that in trying to counter the effects of regulatory power it will not do to embrace the notion of the subject as the ground for agency. This is because the power the subject tries to fight − instantiated for example as the norm of gender − functions not only to regulate but also to produce the subject by providing it "a principle of self-definition". ("CU", 151.) In other words, there certainly are limits to the extent the subject, itself an effect of oppressive but at the same time productive power, can act consciously to counter it. Agency of the subject is in this way paradoxical. It is implicated in the social norms that precede and exceed the subject, who, according to Butler, cannot but try to do something with what is done to it. (UG, 3, 7.) This "something", however, may well contribute to social transformation over time as the authority of unruly acts accumulates.

---

[75] Partially these readings base according to Lloyd on the tension in Butler's thought between the notions of "performativity understood as constitutive of the subject" and "a more theatrical sense of performance where an actor volitionally plays a part" (Lloyd, M. 2007, 58). This tension is indeed evident in Butler's early writings, for instance in the essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (Butler 1988) where Butler writes "…the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts". In this essay Butler uses the metaphor of theatre to clarify the performative character of gender in a way that makes room for also volitional interpretations of her ideas. However, in her writings after *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) Butler seems to be much more wary of this kind of shifts in meaning and explicitly differentiates between performatives and "mere" performances. In the interview given in 1993 she states that whereas performance presumes a subject, performativity "contests the very notion of the subject" ("xtracts from Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler.")

[76] This is particularly evident in the exchange between Butler and Seyla Benhabib. For more about this exchange see Benhabib, Butler & al. 1995; Webster 2001.

According to Butler, neither a life for which no norms of recognition exist nor a life for which those norms constitute "unlivable constraint" is livable (UG, 8). It seems, indeed, to be the notion of life in its liveability where Butler's political ideas are grounded. In order to pursue more liveability, more life affirming conditions for existence, in qualitative as well as quantitative sense, we need, according to her, to be able to distinguish between the norms that support life and enable people to act and the norms that function to counter life in its liveability and constrain people in ways that make their lives unbearable (UG, 8).[77] As a norm may be enabling for some and unlivable for others we should be careful not to legislate for all lives according to what functions to legitimate only some (UG, 8).

This kind of a view poses overt challenges to conventional feminist politics and makes one think critically especially the identity-based notions of it. When a presumed collective identity, "women", is taken to be a premise for feminist politics, quite a range of lived situations, not necessarily similar in their needs, preferences, and requirements, get to be subsumed under one category. This normative category of gender appears thus as a false unity that covers over many of the significant differences between those assigned women. It operates to conceal not only the fact that what is desired by some of these "women" might be unbearable for others but also that some of the "women" gain from the direct exploitation of the others. As for instance some Black feminist theorists[78] have argued, there may well be much more in common in the political needs of a racialized group of people than there are in the needs of "women", problematically conceived as a unified identity-based group undivided by the lines of "race", sexuality and overall social status.

One political aspiration of Butler's is thus to critically question what she takes to be problematical presumptions in the conventional ways of configuring gender politics. These presumptions include at least the notions of gender(,) identity, the subject, and the character of that subject's agency. It is important to note here, however, the difference between calling a notion into question and doing away with it. As Butler stresses, to put the notion of the subject, for instance, under critical scrutiny does not mean that we would do away with it completely. According to her, it implies only that the term cedes to be "a building block on which we rely, an uninterrogated premise for political argument" (UG, 179). Thus the notion of subject does have its place in Butler's theory and political views but this place is just not foundational anymore (UG, 179).

---

[77] Butler is well aware of the deployment of The Right Wing the term "life" to support what she takes to be conservative politics. See UG, 223 – 227. The way Butler utilizes this notion, critically reworking the way it can be deployed in political discourse, exemplifies the politics of resignification that will be introduced in the part V of the present paper.

[78] See e.g. hooks 1984.

In *Excitable Speech* (Butler 1997) Butler emphasises this point by calling for "a modernity without foundationalism." This kind of rearticulated modernity would imply for her something she refers to as "politics of both hope and anxiety" (ES, 161). The notion of anxiety derives here from the supposition that in questioning the subject one puts under question and risk what one knows and is. As suggested above, rethinking gender in order to make the norm more inclusive entails one to take a critical stance on also one's own reality. According to Butler one does this (as far as one does), however, because one's status as a subject has already become under severe doubts[79] (UG, 227). Hope appears, thus, as a kind of vague promise at the edge of the risk: We cannot predict the future course of our lives but cannot sometimes do with the current course either.

That the negotiable character of a term does not, according to Butler, imply its un-usefulness (ES, 162) goes for categories of identity too. This means that it will not do to withdraw from the conventional vocabulary of gender completely, as though one could step outside the normative field of the social and claim oneself autonomously a status as a legible human being. As Butler writes, the path in politics should rather be conceived as double. On the one hand, we must be able to use the conventional language of gender in order to participate in the current political discourse and to struggle for the rights of those already recognized within its terms. On the other hand, we must simultaneously call into question the very categories we rely on and reproduce, by actively resisting their identity. (UG, 37 – 38.)

This is to say we should not take our basic categories as given and known, as they were unchangeable and could or even should not acquire any new meanings. As Butler's notion of gender as a norm suggests, gender in its present form is a historical construction constantly in formation when we act rather than a static structure beyond history. Even though it might appear as if one *knew* gender and could epistemologically master its terms, these terms are by definition open and subject to temporal changes. On these grounds then, the sphere of gender, as Butler conceives it, exceeds the current binary schema of masculinity and femininity (UG, 42)[80].

As was argued in the previous parts of the paper, according to Butler's view the subject cannot be thought to exist outside the conditions of sociality and recognition provided by its constitutive others. The reason for interrogating the operation of social norms and the possible ways of

---

[79] For instance, those assigned women may be conceived as both recognized as subjects and deprived of the conditions of full subjectivity.

[80] "To keep the term "gender" apart from both masculinity and femininity is to safeguard a theoretical perspective by which one might offer an account of how the binary of masculine and feminine comes to exhaust the semantic field of gender." she maintains (UG, 42). Thus the conception of gender as a norm is a politically motivated and critical notion, more akin to a question than an answer.

contesting them lies in the supposition that the recognition, needed to count as "one", depends on these norms that guide our understanding of what is intelligibly "human" (UG, 32). When a livable human life is dependent on recognition by others and this recognition then is based on social norms that provide the framework for one's legibility, social norms of recognition prove to be at the heart of the struggles of many marginalized groups of people.[81]

According to Lloyd, the social norms, formative of the subject and its agency, function in Butler's thought not merely to constrain and oppress the subject but as the very site of critical agency, too (Lloyd, M. 2007, 60). In terms of gender this means that even as we cannot reject the norm, as if it were something external to our being and agency (including the acts of rejecting), gender can become a site of reworking the terms of our subjectivity[82]. In other words, assuming a constitutive relationship between the subject and the norm is not to suggest the first mentioned would be determined by the latter. According to Lloyd this conception is, rather, based on a particular understanding of constitution in which the temporal dimension of performativity plays a central role. As has been argued above, acting in accordance with the norms is a matter of (social) repetition and it is this spatio-temporal reiteration that makes the subversion of normative structures[83], such as the prevailing schemes of gender, possible. (Lloyd, M. 2007, 61.)

I suggest, thus, that the temporal dimension of performativity is where Butler's notion of politics is based, for it opens up the space needed for the resignification and critique of normative structures. I will next move on to discuss further the notions of resignification and critique, as well as the related idea of what Butler calls "radical democracy".

5.2. ON THE AIMS AND MEANS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Regardless of any possible differences between the various feminist views, strive for some kind of change in social relations is one feature characteristic to all feminist theory. Feminist thinking is by definition political thinking. As I have argued Butler to be, however, highly critical towards the kind of assumptions concerning the subject and its agency that underlie conventional feminist ways of conceptualizing gender politics, the question arises, how does she then conceive the political prospects of her theorizing?

---

[81] Especially in *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) Butler discusses issues concerning the International Human Rights discourse and the "human" it performatively produces. See UG 17 – 39, 192 – 193, 222 – 223.

[82] This kind of conception applied to the notion of heterosexuality is one major difference between Butler and Wittig. According to Lloyd (Lloyd, M. 2007, 35) Wittig aims in her sexual politics at a complete overcoming of the norm of heterosexuality, whereas according to Butler's theoretical presumptions no such overcoming would ever be possible, maybe not desirable either.

[83] "Structure" is used here in a specific sense as referring to a profoundly temporal entity.

According to Butler's view not only the premises but also the goals and means of gender politics must be rethought. Gender politics is not necessarily a project of emancipating any pre-established and strictly defined group of people, such as, for instance, "women". The way Butler conceives it this politics should have more to do with contesting the notions of identity, subject, and gender that feminist views with identity political premises utilize as given. In other words, the very categories that are conventionally understood as the point of departure for gender politics should according to her be subjected to a critical scrutiny. Thus, rather than emancipation from the norms Butler endorses resignification of them.

In this way, there is an emphasis in Butler's view on politics on the continuing struggle over the terms we use in making sense of our lives and the social reality. By way of this self-critical contesting of the normative categories we may then approach what she calls "radical democracy". As Lloyd notes, Butler does not offer any exact definitions on the political ideal of radical democracy, that she, nevertheless, explicitly advocates. However, the way Lloyd interprets the notion, radical democracy can be seen as "a constitutively open-ended rather than teleological process, sustained by its very unrealizability" (Lloyd, M. 2007, 148). This is to say radical democracy is something forever out of our reach and, as such, worth pursuing for. It has to do with the normative demand in Butler's thought to make the social norms or recognition more inclusive.

A total inclusivity of a norm would, of course, never be possible: Differentiation through exclusion seems to be, after all, what makes up the meaning of the norm. What the demand for more inclusivity rather implies is that we should actively contest the present terms of intelligibility and seek to keep our categories open to "future rearticulations" (UG, 180, 223 – 227). As Lloyd concludes, Butler emphasises thus the disruptive nature of democratic activity over the rational and conceives the project of radical democracy as a process of contesting and radicalizing the central terms of liberalism in order to make them more inclusive and dynamic (Lloyd, M. 2007, 148)[84]. Here the related notions of critique and resignification come to her aid.

5.2.1. CRITIQUE

As suggested, rather than any final solutions and pre-established objectives central to Butler's notion of gender politics is constant questioning of the terms by which we come to appear as legible subjects. This questioning is basically what Butler means by "critique." Because one is, as

---

[84] The kind of a notion of politics described is obviously unfamiliar in the context of especially Finnish discussion on feminist politics, where certain level of collaboration with the state is often positively valued. According to Leila Haaparanta, Butler bases her though on a typically American way of conceiving politics (Haaparanta 1997, 10).

mentioned, enabled by the very normative terms one might call into question, there is always certain risk involved in critique. In critically interrogating the conditions of her/his social existence the poser of critique inevitably risks her/himself too.

Thus, in order to subject the norm of gender to critical interrogation one cannot but question also oneself, as a coherent subject and as a fully conscious and legible being. Because the norm of gender is not exactly exterior to the subject but rather formative of it, internalized/incorporated as it is in and as the processes of subject constitution, one is inevitably intertwined with the norm, even as one takes a critical stance to it. Besides this deconstructive dimension in critical self-reflection, there is a risk of violence involved in critique. For not complying with the norm one is, almost without doubt, socially punished, where the nature of this punishment may vary from "words that wound" (ES, 4) to the very physical violence and even death. Partly because the norm operates mainly as an "implicit standard" (UG, 41) rather than explicitly stated rule the subject would consciously follow much of this violence goes unrecognized and legitimated by silence.[85] When, for instance, transgendered humans (referring here especially to those neither women nor men) are excluded from the sphere of recognized social reality as well as from the universal category of "human" there seems to be no legal ways of recognizing and fighting violence against them.[86] As the existence of these humans is not even recognized in the vocabulary of legislation, that expects one to represent one or the other legitimate gender, it seems hard indeed to take on the issue[87].

Regarding the risks involved, one might of course wonder if the costs are far too high in taking a critical stance and following Butler's political agenda. However, as Butler points out the risks are "taken in response to being put at risk" (ES, 163). This means that, for many, gender as a norm does not imply possibility of life, let alone a life worth living: One's subjectivity, as mentioned, may have already come under severe doubts. Added to this, as was stated in the previous part of the paper, the norm always already places us in a sense outside of ourselves and makes us vulnerable in the face of others. In this sense then the norm only enables one at the cost of certain risk.

The dimension of these risks involved is quite evident when one considers for instance those

---

[85] Especially hard seems to be to recognize this violence as hate crime that always carries with it histories of its past instantiations. For more about hate crime, see ES.

[86] The connections between gender and violence are nowadays widely discussed at least in the field of feminist research, but what would it mean to step out of the binary order and consider the peculiar kind of violence transgendered and/or intersexual people face?

[87] That violence as such can be recognized in legal terms does not seem to be enough, because there certainly are different kinds of violences that need different kinds of approaches. The kind of hate crime considered is something else than, for instance, a random street fight between two men, for a random attack may be considered as an isolated case, whereas hate crime carries with it by definition a historicity of past humiliations and violations. For more about hate crime, see ES. Cf. also Husso 2003, 41 – 58.

assigned women. To perform as a woman surely enables one to appear in the field of social reality (given that this womanhood is in accordance with the sex assigned at birth), but this alone does not secure the conditions of livable life, physical autonomy, or recognition as a full subject. Quite the contrary, to be recognized as a woman may as well deprive one of the conditions of livable life and subjecthood. The case is yet more complicated if one thinks of somebody to whom practising gender in accordance with the sex assigned implies suffering and misery as such, regardless of whether the surrounding society values the given gender or not.

Referring to the risks, involved in critically interrogating gender as a norm, Butler writes, "[o]ne cannot criticize too far the terms by which one's existence is secured." (PLP, 129.) This suggests that we are, to an extent, necessarily complicit with the norm and cannot ever fully turn it down. Even if one may occasionally act subversively one cannot completely reject the conventional ways of performing the human, for one must be recognized as an intelligible subject in order one's actions and words to carry any meaning. As follows, according to Butler one *can* contribute to the challenging of the norm through subversive gender performances, but these performances acquire performative force only to the extent they will be reiterated and took up by others too. This is to say the possibility of social transformation entails the sedimentation of authority when it comes to doing gender differently: What the norm, in its present form, cannot accommodate may well be possible in future within its revised terms.

In the Introduction to *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) Butler describes her theoretical-political goals as follows "…critique is understood as an interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different modes of living; in other words, not to celebrate difference as such but to establish more inclusive conditions for sheltering and maintaining life that resists models of assimilation" (UG, 4). What the quotation hints to is that the basic normative emphasis in Butler's view is on making what is yet impossible possible in order to provide the conditions of livable life to those who still lack them. As Lloyd puts it, Butler's political thought entails "extending to the disqualified the norms that define a livable life" (Lloyd, M. 2007, 148). This involves calling into question the binary notion of gender and the subject, as they are presently "known."

By way of critical intervention into the naturalized categories on which our social reality is based, it might, according to Butler, become possible to recognize those ways of materializing the norm that do not appear within the present terms of reality. Transgendered people, for instance, lack recognition as intelligible subjects, which might be altered if gender as a norm ceded to stand

exclusively for either – or, masculine men and feminine women. According to Butler *resignification* of the norm is needed in order to make it, and the subject-hood it enables, more inclusive.

5.2.2. RESIGNIFICATION

Lloyd writes, "[a]gency, as Butler presents it (…) is intimately connected with signification", where signification is seen as the practice of establishing "the terms of intelligibility or meaning" (Lloyd, M. 2007, 54). As a practice, signification is based on repetition (Lloyd, M. 2007, 54) or, more precisely, on reiteration, which is by definition open to change. The notion of resignification points thus to the way signification is never complete. Operating by way of reiteration, (re)signification indicates also certain unpredictability of meaning, which is based on the contingency of the association between the signifier and the signified. This association is contingent in the sense that it is established through social practices that can exercise also the potential to alter this relation.

Butler discusses resignification with reference to gender, understood as a universal category and as a norm[88]. As a universal, gender appears to be a category whose full meaning is established and known. However, as has been argued throughout this paper, the semantic field of gender cannot be exhaustively understood in terms of its current, binary formulation. As any other norm, gender is indeed highly exclusive. It differentiates and regulates what will appear as real and who will count as an intelligible subject. As already suggested, the social reality the norm provides intelligibility with is not an eternal order of things, however. In being articulated in and through social practices, this reality is by definition open to rearticulations over time. Thus, rather than established and known for good, the significance of gender too is constantly under construction.

According to Butler every universal is indeed endlessly in the state of not yet being articulated and, hence, open to continuing contestation of its existing formulation (ES, 90). The reference point of a universal is, in other words, a matter of social practice rather than of logical or structural necessity. In her recent writings Butler discusses much especially the universal of "human", which, as already suggested, is anything but neutral when it comes to gender. As has been argued one must embody the norm correctly in order to count as a human being. The paradoxical state of there existing humans who are, nevertheless, not recognized as such denotes the way the universal fails to cover what it apparently stands for. Thus rather than descriptive, the universal of "human" is actually

---

[88] As far as I understand, Butler uses the notions of universal and norm parallel: A social norm of recognition makes one intelligible with regard to existing universal categories that account for one's legibility. On the other hand, a universal category is normative in the sense that it can only inhabit what is legible with reference to the norms of recognition. Both the universal and the norm are subject to temporality that exposes them to social transformation. The way Butler uses these different concepts in discussing gender would need a further clarification. In the frame of this paper that will, however, not be pursued.

normative in character. However, as the notion of resignification suggests the sphere of "human" could, according to Butler, be expanded to cover also those currently excluded from it, which forms the core idea in Butler's view on politics.

According to Butler more or less implicit (re)articulations of the terms of "human" take place in discussions concerning for example Human Rights. In these discussions over particular rights the dividing line between what is human and what is not is being constantly redrawn (UG, 33, 222, 225). These kinds of debates over the "human" are also one possible site of challenging the very term in its present formulation. Instead of this challenging being merely reactionary it forms according to Butler the very process of articulation of the meanings of the term (UG, 191), which illustrates well Butler's understanding of resistance as inherent to the very processes it seeks to challenge: Rather than being something external to the practices of construction, certain deconstruction is intrinsic to them.

Because it is partially based on exclusion, the norm produces not only legible subjects but also those abjected by the norm. These abjects[89], the bodies and identities that are unintelligible with regard to the present conception of the "human" subject form thus the constitutive outside of that conception. (BTM, 3.) According to Butler, contestation of the present notion of "human" occurs when "[t]hose deemed illegible, unrecognizable, or impossible nevertheless speak in the terms of the "human", opening the term to a history not fully constrained by the existing differentials of power" (UG, 13 – 14). In other words, especially when those not covered by an universal nevertheless demand for their inclusion, the process of (re)articulation takes place and the universal in question is opened to acquire new meanings. (ES, 90.)

In this sense Butler assumes the possibility of claiming oneself the right to speak with certain authority. Even as this may, on the first glance, suggest a notion of an autonomous subject, which would be inconsistent with Butler's explicit assumptions, the grounds of this possibility actually lie in the notion of performativity she subscribes to. As the authority of an utterance is constituted in the sedimentation of performative force, rather than related to the particular individual spelling or acting it out, one might indeed speak as if one were a legible human, regardless of whether one really is, and through this kind of an imitation of a subject position make the limits of the universal appear. The case, that is somewhat similar to Derrida's example of signature and counterfeit,

---

[89] In *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993) Butler explicates the notion of abject as follows: "[it] designates…those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject." (BTM, 3)

denotes the citable character of performatively produced subjecthood. Due to this citability rearticulations of subjecthood may take place over time.

Just as is the case with the category of "human", to be taken as *real* in terms of gender, to have a *true* gender, is according to Butler a powerful prerogative too. It is, as she puts it, "one way that power dissimulates as ontology" (UG, 27). Through this dissimulation, then, men and women appear as original and real genders, whereas every other possible identification seems like artificial or counterfeit. As was argued above in discussing performativity, this differentiation between what is original and what is counterfeit is merely a matter of convention. Thus, the "excess" the norm produces is simultaneous to its legitimated effects; a copy does not follow an original. What is required for the resignification of the norm, then, is one to use one's unreality to make a claim to reality. In other words, one should according to Butler try to speak and act precisely from a position that was supposed to preclude any intelligible agency. (UG, 27.) As far as I understand it, this claiming of authority works to reveal the way the reality is constructed in and through the social practices of exclusion, that are guided by the norms. It makes the constitutive outside of the reality appear and sheds a light on the exclusions by which that reality is delineated. What were supposed to be unreal and impossible nevertheless appears as if it were real and possible.

This is also where the collective nature of a resignificatory politics becomes evident. As a member of a "queer" community one might be recognized as real, desirable and legitimate according to collectively set non-hegemonic standards. As Butler writes, "an alternative, minority version of sustaining norms" (UG, 3) may be collectively articulated that enable one to act. This kind of resignified normative order allows one to develop a critical relation to the hegemonic social norms by making it possible to "suspend or defer the need for them." (UG, 3.) In other words, as it enables one to receive recognition, this "minority version" can provide one a previously impossible subject position in the backyard of the hegemonic order.

According to Butler this kind of pursuing for social transformation through making yet illegible claims to reality, resist assimilation into prevailing norms. In this claiming the norms as such can be opened up to resignification (UG, 27 – 28). As I will argue below, subjecting the norms to this kind of a critical re-assessment is made possible by the temporal character of the norm.

5.3. THE TEMPORAL HORIZON OF THE NORM AS A PERSPECTIVE FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

According to Butler, developing a critical relation to the norms of recognition presupposes certain distance from them. Butler describes this distance as "an ability to suspend or defer the need for them, even as there is a desire for norms that might let one live" (UG, 3). Thus, what is also needed in the ability to take the distance is the capacity to articulate an alternative set of norms that enable one to act. According to Butler this capacity is "invariably collective". (UG, 3.)

The fundamental need for the norms of recognition in order the subject to *exist* illustrates the way there is, in Butler's view, no outside to the sphere of the normative. Even if one is somehow able to take some distance from these norms, one will still be conceived with reference to them (UG, 42). Moreover, because of the deep-seated desire to persist on the one hand and the inescapable bond between the norms and persistence on the other, one is inclined to desire the norms that would assure the conditions of one's life. As Butler, however, wants to secure the possibility of social transformation in the frame of her theory, it seems necessary to conceptualize the very norms as alterable and open to resignification.

As the possibility of a distance between the norm and the subject suggests, temporalities of these two entities do not fully coincide. Even as the norm and the subject interrelate and depend, in their (re)production, on each other, they do not fully merge. According to Butler, the time of the norm is indeed something else than the time of an individual subject and it is precisely this breakage that makes the reworking of the norm possible, if challenging too.

What the temporal breakage between the norm and the subject implies is that the subject is never totalized by the norm. This suggests that the subject can, under certain circumstances and to an extent, distance itself from the norm, even as no total departure form the sphere of the norm is possible. Despite, however, the alleged possibility of a distance between the subject and the norm resignification of the latter is rather unpredictable and unlikely even: As is emphasised in Butler's idea of performativity the norm carries within it a historicity of sedimented performative force, which may prove hard to resignify. Moreover, as it is precisely this sedimented performative force of the norm that enables the subject in the first place, the norm is capable as well to undo the unruly subject whenever this subject tries to distance itself from it. Thus, the norm can continue to operate regardless of whether a particular subject cooperates with it or not. It also possesses the power to socially annihilate anyone who tries to counter it. In this way the norm signifies an "instance of indifference in sociality" even as it is precisely this indifference that may also sustain one's living

(GAO, 35).

Butler writes, "[i]n living my life as a recognizable being, I live a vector of temporalities, one of which has my death as its terminus, but another of which consists in the social and historical temporality of the norms by which my recognisability is established and maintained." (GAO, 35.) As was argued in part IV of the present paper, this state of being intelligible (to oneself as well as to others) on account of what is, as it were, outside of one posits one in a sense outside of oneself. As the legibility of the subject is achieved in and through the performative practising of gender, it is the peculiar temporality of the performative that opens up the subject to what Butler conceptualizes as its constitutive outside. Because a performative act derives its force from the past and future citations of the act, its temporality always exceeds the time of its utterance (ES, 33). This is basically why no one can intentionally and autonomously govern the meanings one's performing acquires socially. Through the non-optional performing of gender one is, rather, fundamentally vulnerable in the face of the present as well as absent others. As Butler puts it, this makes the performing of gender a kind of "acting in concert" no one fully authors by oneself (UG, 1).

From the incommensurability between the temporalities of one's own perspective and that of the normative discourse follows, according to Butler, that one can give and take recognition only to the extent one becomes "disoriented from oneself" and fails, in this way, to achieve self-identity (GAO, 42). As was already suggested in part IV of the paper, the assumptions of this disorientation of the subject and the necessary failure of its identity become thus integral to the notion of the subject in Butler's view. According to her account the subject emerges in and through the embodiment of the norm and, thus, as other to itself from the very beginning. Because the alleged boundary between the inside and the outside of the subject cannot hold, as the subject in its performative practising is opened up to the temporality of the norm, the subject remains fundamentally vulnerable in its being. However, in assuming a psychic form the norm becomes vulnerable too.

Vulnerability of the norm refers here to the susceptibility to change the reiterative agency of the subject introduces at the heart of the norm's reproduction. Subversive potential in the reiterative practicing of the norm by the subject illustrates the way the subject is, according to Butler, positioned at the edge of power's ambivalence (PLP, 14). On the one hand power precedes the subject as its condition. In this state power conditions the emergence of the subject or, as Butler puts it, "enacts the subject into being" (PLP, 13). On the other hand, in order to enable anything, a condition must, of course, become present (PLP, 13). According to Butler, power assumes its present temporal dimension only as the (reiterative) agency of the subject, who, as follows,

functions as the site of reiteration of conditions of power (PLP, 16). It is precisely this point of "reversal in the horizon of power" (PLP, 14) that implies certain potentially enabling break in to the operations of power. This is to say the power the subject assumes does not necessarily stay continuous with the power that initiates the subject. (PLP, 12, 13.)

This politically important point of reversal can be conceived also in terms of the incorporation of the norm[90]. As already suggested, no embodiment is thinkable without a relation to set of norms (UG, 28). However, once the norm becomes incorporated in the process of subject constitution, it is subjected to changes in the course of its reiteration. As it appears in a material form constituting the recognizable body of the subject, the norm shifts in its status and must now face the challenges of bodily temporality. According to Butler the body can thus exercise transformative potential in the face of the norms: conceived as an embodiment of a set of norms, the body becomes a central site of politics of resignification. (UG, 28)

When it comes to the resignificatory practising of a gendered body, the possibility of "becoming otherwise" is according to Butler constitutive of the very bodily life we live.[91] Emphasising this possibility, Butler sees the body as that which might resist or, more precisely, rework the norm by employing it in alternative ways. In other words, through the potentially critical taking on the norm the body can expose our bond to it as open to transformation. (UG, 217.)[92]

Contributions to social transformation come with price, though. As Butler points out, in critically embodying the norms of recognition, one is subjected to the risks of violence and even death. When a body that was supposed to be unreal nevertheless appears as real and legible it may be violently undone and cast back to impossibility (UG, 35). As Butler stresses, the question of how to embody the norm is closely tied to the issues of survival and liveability of one's life (UG, 217). This aspect of risk in performing gender implies that precisely at the point where one could pursue for more livable life, more life affirming conditions for one's existence, one cannot but threaten one's very persistence. In this respect it seems that the critique sometimes (see e.g. Haaparanta 1997, 13) attached to Butler's conception of gender about it being merely a matter of "play" is not completely reasonable. Instead of being mere play performing of gender is a matter of life itself.

---

[90] Here, it seems, one might as well substitute the notion of norm for the concept of power.

[91] This possibility might be exemplified by for instance a transgendered body, one that does not materialize in a conventionally settled way.

[92] This kind of view on the body clearly challenges the conventional suppositions that shape also much feminist knowledge: More often than not the body is deemed to be precisely that which ties our being to the unchangeable constraints and oppressive relations. Hence it is often the dimension of gender identities and other ideal entities that gets to be positioned as possible sites for political change.

The important role of the bodily practices or practicing the body in Butler's thought seems to base on the assumption that the norm cannot be intervened as an ideal entity. In Butler's view the norm cannot be maintained any more than changed metaphysically. As she writes, the persistence of a norm as a norm depends on its being acted out and reinstituted in "the daily social rituals of bodily life" (UG, 48). In other words, it is in and though these temporal practices that the norm is being constantly "(re)produced" (UG, 48). For basically this reason then bodily practices can, according to Butler, function also to deconstruct the norm.

Butler writes that in course of the performative practising of gender the prevailing notions of what is real and intelligible are called into question. This capacity of the performative practices to resignify the norm lies in their citational character. Even as the norm that one cites always already exists prior to the subject who cites it, it can be "significantly deterritorialized though the citation" (UG, 218). As was pointed out above in discussing performativity, in this notion of citationality Butler draws to Derrida's rewriting of Austin's speech act theory. In this revised view on iterability, conceived as a kind of citationality of an act, forms the basis for the performative force of the act. Because the act is citable in a commonly agreed way, it can perform and be identified even as the contexts of its utterance vary. One could even claim that the structure of citationality is hollow in the sense that in order to be citable the act must be recognizable only in form. In other words, the act performs its effects purely due to its citable form and appears, thus, as indifferent to the varying contexts of the citing, these contexts including the personal intentions of the citing subject. (See, Derrida 2003, 274 – 300.)

Thus, the norm exists as indifferent and prior to any particular subject but can, according to Butler, be "significantly deterritorialized" through the actions of the subject (UG, 218). With the notion of deterritorialization Butler apparently refers here to the making a claim to reality without any pre-established authorization[93]. For instance, where there is no socially recognized non-heterosexual reality, one (or, more precisely, some) can seek to expose the limits of the prevailing notion of reality by exposing what this reality must constantly exclude in order it to appear as coherent and true. In embodying homosexuality as the impossible, on which the possible relies one can, according to Butler, shed a light on the need of the present reality to actively reproduce heterosexuality, even as this reality treats the particular order of heterosexuality as a universal and timeless order of things. In terms of gender the notion of deterritorialization suggests that by

---

[93] For more about this claiming see the previous chapter of the present paper.

appearing as unintelligible, as something/someone that/who[94] cannot be conveniently grasped in the frame of the prevailing notion of binary gender, one might make the conventional boundaries of both gender and the "subject" appear as contingent and socially constructed.[95]

As Butler writes, "[s]peaking and exposing the alterity within the norm (the alterity without which the norm would not "know itself"[96]) exposes the failure of the norm to effect the universal reach for which it stands, exposes what we might underscore as the promising ambivalence of the norm." (ES, 91.) This important failure or ambivalence can become uncovered by the kind of "performative contradictions" (ES, 91) exemplified above. Butler conceives the performing of these contradictions as "double-speaking." According to her this kind of performing the impossible as it were possible designates "the temporalized map of the universality's future" (ES, 91). This is to say, what is possible and intelligible cedes to be a matter of timeless necessity once the boundaries of social reality are revealed to be set in the course of temporal reiteration of the norms. Thus, in and through this double-speaking, these performative contradictions, gender can be exposed to be a social norm rather than a universal law, preset by nature or some eternal ontological order. As a social norm it is produced and reproduced through the reiterated bodily acts that carry performative force. As has been argued in this part of the paper, in reproducing the norm, these performative practices may according to Butler also critically resignify it.

Now that the fundamental intertwinedness of the subject and the norm of gender in Butler's theory have been addressed, it seems that the notion of the agency of the subject needs to be further clarified. As the subject is both enabled and restricted by the norm and may still also challenge it, the question arises what kind of agency does this subject exercise in living its life as a recognizable being?

5.4. AGENCY IN CONSTRAINT

According to Butler, our very existence depends on our being able to do and to act. Because this agency, conceived here loosely as our ability to act, is conditioned by the social norms, such as gender, these norms form, finally, the conditions of our existence. (UG, 3.) We are, in other words, brought into social existence by the norms that provide the frame for the recognition of us as human subjects. As these norms, however, differentiate between what is possible and what is not and confer recognition only to some humans, it turns out the very capacity to persist as a subject with at

---

[94] The obvious difficulty here in picking up the right pronounces has to do with the assumption in Butler that one only emerges as a "one", as a human subject, to the extent one manages to embody the norm of gender in a legible way.

[95] The extent to which appearing as unintelligible is possible is further discussed in chapter 6.2.1.

[96] This refers to the way the norm operates partly through the means of exclusion.

least some agency depends crucially on one's being able to negotiate with the norms (UG, 3).

This notion of negotiation underlines a point already made above that is our relationship with the social norms of recognition is never unilateral, let alone established. Quite the contrary, according to Butler we relate constantly and with some activity to the norms, embodying and performing them time after time. As she writes, certain paradox of agency is indeed the condition of its very possibility. This paradox refers to the way we are, in order to have any agency of our "own", "done by norms," constituted by a social world that precedes and exceeds us (UG, 3.)

As was argued in the previous chapters, despite this fundamental need for norms we might still endeavour to reiterate them in critical and transformative ways (UG, 3). Butler writes "[t]he norm does not produce the subject as its necessary effect, nor is the subject fully free to disregard the norm that inaugurates its reflexivity; one invariably struggles with conditions of one's own life that one could not have chosen." (GAO, 19.) Thus, the way Butler sees it agency takes place in a necessary relation to certain preset but not determining limitations and constraints that manifest as social norms. On these grounds then, agency is neither completely determined nor fully free. That one is always already produced by a world one could not have chosen but must also "in some way" produce oneself forms according to Butler the "primary dilemma" of agency (GAO, 19).

In *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004) Butler uses the notion of sexuality to exemplify the dynamics of the subject and the norms. Though grounded in norms, sexuality is according to her never fully captured by regulatory power. It is, instead, "characterized by displacement" and has thus the capacity to exceed regulation. As she writes, sexuality "emerges…as an improvisational possibility within a field of constraints. … it is extinguished by constraints, but also mobilized and incited by constraints, even sometimes requiring them in order to be produced again and again." (UG, 15.) Because of this ambivalent linkage, Butler argues, to the constraining norms that spatially and temporally exceed the place and time of one's life, sexuality establishes us as outside of ourselves. This means that whenever we are motivated by our sexual desires we are motivated by "an elsewhere whose full meaning and purpose we cannot definitely establish" (UG, 15). The same, apparently, goes for gender too. According to Butler, also gender carries desires that originate beyond our individual personhood, desires whose full context we cannot possibly grasp (UG, 2). Hence, what feels intuitively very intimate, what we understand to be the personal identity that belongs to us, proves to be precisely the point at which we lose ourselves in what is outside of our

perspective.[97]

The growing interest of Butler's in the notion of normativity may be partially explained by her turning away, after *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997), from Nietzsche -influenced conceptualizing of punishment as the scene of incorporating the pre-existing moral order and its norms (see PLP, 61 – 82). From this punishment oriented view, that could afford only little agency involved in the internalization of the norms, she has moved more and more towards a Foucaultian way of understanding social norms as codes of conduct to which individuals somewhat actively relate in the processes of subjectivation (see GAO, 15 – 16). Thus, when it comes to the emergence of reflexivity of the subject, there obviously is a broader notion of activity presumed in Butler's recent writings. According to this slightly revised account, instead of merely internalizing the punishment, and along with it the prevailing normative order, the subject actively relates to the norms (GAO, 16). As this relating is not optional though, but rather socially compelled and regulated – one cannot autonomously invent the possible ways of relating to the norms – the revision suggested does not imply a voluntarist view. More accurately, it emphasises the potential for a change, that lies in the reiterative practicing of the norm by the subject, and brings to the fore the way interpellation is never complete and fully successful.

According to Butler, in Foucault's writings subjects are conceived as forming themselves in relation to moral codes and norms and, moreover, doing this in ways that "establish self-making as part of the broader operation of critique" (GAO, 17)[98]. Butler describes this self-making as delimiting activity implemented on the self. Because one is born into a social world that is already there this self-making takes place in the context of a set of norms that invariably precede and exceed the subject. (GAO, 17.) What this implies is that certain desires and relations of the self must be foreclosed in order the intelligible subject to emerge[99]. (PLP, 8 – 9.) In other words, because one can emerge as a subject only in and through the social recognition that is bond to the norms the normative context of sociality, that prescribes what will and will not appear as legible "within a given historical scheme of things" (GAO, 17), is the only possible place and time for subject formation and any self-making involved in it.

Thus, no subject emerges out of nothingness, without a set of restricting but at the same time affirming norms this subject comes to embody, reproduce, and challenge as its agency. It is

---

[97] In this respect Butler even poses a rhetorical question "What does gender want?"(UG, 2.)

[98] See footnote 64.

[99] For instance, the primary dependency on others and homosexual desires are, according to Butler, barred from the consciousness but they remain formative of the emerging subject as its unconscious. See PLP, 31 – 62, 132 – 150.

precisely these constraints conditioning the emergence of the subject that makes agency possible in the first place. (ES, 141.) For this two-way relationship between the subject and the norms then, the practice of critique, as Butler conceives it, is tied to the deconstruction of the subject as we know and be it. (GAO, 17.) As follows, challenging the norm is only possible in and through challenging and risking oneself.

As she postulates the roots of agency in the normative regulation that exceeds the subject, Butler does not conceive the agency of a subject as exactly a property of that subject. Instead of it standing for an infinite source of possibility for creative volition, agency is, in Butler's words, "implicated in power" (ES, 141). It is founded on a socially preset array of norms that utilizes (the agency of) the subject in reproducing itself (GAO, 36). This is not to say the subject would be fully determined by the preceding norms, though, because from "the necessary temporality of the norm" (UG, 47) derives also the capacity for critical agency. In order to maintain its force the norm must be reproduced again and again as the agency of the subject, but in this very citational activity lies always the risk, or possibility, of resignification.

PART VI:
DISCUSSING (THE LIMITS OF) FREEDOM AND REALITY

6.1. BETWEEN DETERMINISM AND FREEDOM

As Lloyd notes Butler's theory has frequently been taken by the critics to be either deterministic or voluntarist (Lloyd, M. 2007, 57). Especially when it comes to the book *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990) and the initial notion of gender performativity introduced in it, many have interpreted Butler to provide an account of gender as a role freely chosen, something one could perform more or less uniquely according to one's will. As far as I see it, this kind of reading not only confuses the performative character of gender with mere performance, but also draws to an understanding of the subject that does not accord with Butler's views.

As was argued in the part III of the paper performativity refers, in the context of Butler's theory, to a specific kind of production of meaning and reality that cannot be fully directed by the conscious intentions of an individual. Moreover, performing of gender is, as mentioned, "acting in concert" (UG, 1) in the sense that it is profoundly social affair. Thus, in one's performing of gender, one is fundamentally dependent on others. In part IV of the paper I pursued further to clarify the close relationship between the subject and the norm. On the grounds of that discussion, it can be stated that the notion of the subject, as it is presented in Butler's writings, is not separable from the sphere of social norms of recognition.[100] Providing the basis for the self-reflection of the subject, the norm remains integral to its self-knowledge and agency. What the subject might decide and will is, thus, never irrespective of the norm.

This kind of argumentation has raised suspicions about whether Butler's view actually leads to a deterministic account of the gendered subjectivity. If it does, how useful can her theorizing be for a political movement that strives to change the oppressive gender relations? As the discussion in the part V of this paper portrayed, determinism is not a correct attribute in describing Butler's notion of the subject either. The temporal character of the norm, as well as the (related) two-way relationship between the subject and it[101], makes it possible to effect changes in the normative order. Thus, the possibility of social transformation is secured in the theory, with two qualifications. Firstly, the object of this transformation cannot be reached by an isolated individual but must, instead, be collectively pursued. Secondly, as has been emphasised throughout the paper, especially when it comes to gender, reaching for a change is a risky business also when it comes to the persistence of

---

[100] However, as I suggested in chapter 5.3., the norm and the subject do not fully merge either. In terms of gender this means that the norm is, strictly taken, neither exterior nor interior to the subject. It is the condition for the subject but, as a condition that exceeds and precedes the subject, it enables the subject as an ec-static being.
[101] This relationship is two-way in the sense that the agency of a subject is dependent on the norm but operates at the same time as the only possible site for the norm's reproduction.

the subject: One might be deprived of life or end up in reproducing the very norm one intended to challenge. That challenging the norm is complicated and uncertain does not, however, make it impossible.

One assumption that obviously complicates challenging of the norm in the frame of Butler's theory is the slight ambivalence in her notion of social norms. As has been suggested above, this ambivalence is based on the supposition that the norm enables us as subjects and forms the basis for our sociality, but manages this only through certain violent exclusions (UG, 206). Thus, the norm may operate both in favour of and against our existence, enabling it by way of restricting it. Gender, for instance, has functioned as a uniting norm also when it comes to feminism, as feminist movement has typically presumed gender identity as one of its presuppositions. This identity cannot, however, acquire its meaning without exclusions (and foreclosures[102]) in individual as well as collective level. To be a woman is to be structured and produced at the cost of what is excluded from that identity. According to Butler's psychoanalytical account, what is in this way deported from the field of intelligibility[103] must be constantly denied for the coherent identity to hold. This, apparently, contributes to exclusions on yet another level, namely, to the collective exclusions that make and sustain ideal communities that are based on the notion of a common identity. For instance, not anybody who experiences herself as a woman socially counts as one. This kind of social policing of identity manifests in the exclusions of butches, male-to-female transsexuals and Black women, to name but a few, from the normative category of "woman", even in occasions they would prefer to include.

On the other hand, what this ambivalence or the "double nature of the norms" also suggests is that, even while we cannot accept the norms as they are and have, accordingly, good reasons to try to contest and challenge them, we cannot completely do away with them (UG, 207). That is to say, according to Butler's understanding, a complete overcoming of normativity does not appear as a reachable goal for gender politics. Instead of trying to get rid of the norms altogether, she suggests we should keep on constantly forming our normative categories, keeping them open to "future articulations" by actively contesting and questioning them (UG, 222, 227). Thus, what a "woman" is, is not, and should not ever be, fully known. Instead of trying to fix the category, we must, according to Butler, refigure the directions gender politics should take, as was argued above in chapter 5.2..

---

[102] As suggested, the term foreclosure refers to the psychoanalytical notion of something being foreclosed from the psyche in order to that psyche to emerge. The same goes for identity too: for a somewhat stable identity to be established, certain aspects of the self must be constitutively denied, or barred.

[103] marking here the limits of the subject's self-understanding

6.2. LANGUAGE AND THE PRODUCTION OF REALITY

As the discussion in this paper suggests, Butler's conception of gender as a norm is one way of conceiving gender as socially constructed. According to Risto Heiskala (2000) two differing types of constructivism can be discerned when it comes to the relations of society and nature: a moderate and a radical one. According to the moderate view biology and nature, understood as pre-discursive, set limits to what can be socially constructed. In other words, even as social reality is seen as linguistically interpreted and spatially and temporally varying in its features, the possibilities of its appearance, the spectrum of our possible interpretations of it, is delimited by extra-linguistic natural order of things. When it comes to the radical view, then, every social phenomenon is conceived as completely culturally produced. As follows, there is in the frame of a radical constructivist view no pre-discursive natural order assumed that would somehow delimit and direct our conceptions. (Heiskala 2000, 199.)

Basing on the argumentation in this paper, Butler can be seen to adhere to this radical constructivist position. As I argued in chapter 3.2., it is much due to her denaturalizing notion of a sexed body that her views are differentiated from the theories of socialization. Even as it surely appears suspect when it comes to the conventional way of conceiving the body, the very materiality of the body is, according to Butler, socially constructed. This means that not even our anatomical features are independent of linguistic norms, but rather performatively produced with reference to these norms. As I wrote in chapter 3.3.2., this constructed nature of matter is in Butler's writings highlighted by re-conceptualizing materiality as open-ended and temporal processes of materialization.

Radical as it is, Butler's constructivist position should, however, be further clarified in order to grasp the full logic of her thought. In the introduction to *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993) Butler discusses some problematic features of constructivism that are relevant also to the topic of this paper. Firstly, if gender, on the one hand, is conceived as performatively produced and the subject, on the other, enabled by this performative production of gender, who or what is it that is doing the performing/production here? If, as was written in chapter 3.2.2, the subject emerges in response to an interpellative call, whose, exactly, is this response?

The second set of critical questions concern the possibility of anything unintelligible to appear. How is it even possible, given the assumptions in Butler's theory, that there exist humans/bodies that do not conform to the norm of sex/gender? Through what kind of production do these unintelligible bodies/identities emerge and, moreover, how can they be known apparently outside the normative conceptual schemes through which we perceive ourselves as well others?

When it comes to the subject of construction, Butler argues that the grammatical formulation itself, which always presumes a subject–position, needs to be rethought. This is to say questions concerning the subject behind the constructing activity are motivated by the conventional grammar that adheres to the metaphysics of the subject and, thus, cannot describe the exact nature of the construction in question. (BTM, 8.) According to Butler this construction is "neither a subject nor its act, but a process of reiteration by which both "subjects" and "acts" come to appear at all" (BTM, 9). This means that the subject does not precede the process of its gendering, but neither does it, strictly speaking, follow it. As was argued from chapter 3.1. on, the subject rather emerges in and through the incorporation of the norm, or as Butler puts it "within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves" (BTM, 7). Thus, the subject appears immanent to power. The subject is both subjected and subjectivated by the power (PLP, 2).

As for the possibility of unintelligible humans/bodies then, Butler accounts for it in a kind of deconstructive vein in entailing that in the production of the intelligible the norm produces also the field of the unintelligible. In other words, what becomes excluded from the sphere of intelligibility in and as the production of that sphere forms the boundary to it and remains haunting it as its constitutive outside. (BTM, 8.) This is to say the bodies and identities unintelligible with reference the norm that prescribes the current terms of intelligibility are nevertheless products of that norm. Moreover, without these "exceptions to the rule" it would be impossible for the norm to maintain its integrity and meaning if we take it, as Butler does, that the norm operates partly through exclusion.

However, the question concerning the possibility of this unintelligible to appear as an object of possible knowledge or experience seems to pose more problems, given the theoretical presumptions of Butler's. As has been written above, according to Butler somebody who embodies the norm of gender unconventionally is cast as unintelligible. This suggests that the kind of a person either appears as unintelligible or, as far as only the intelligible may appear, fails to appear at all. Basing on Butler's writings it remains unclear how the epistemological status of this unintelligible should be conceived. On the one hand Butler apparently suggests there to be subversive potential in the unintelligible, but on the other, conceives the intelligibility provided by the norm as a condition for the possibility of recognition. I will next consider the epistemological status of the unintelligible within the frame of Butler's radical constructivist position, on the basis of Veronica Vasterling's critique of her thought.

6.2.1. INTELLIGIBILITY AND THE LIMITS OF APPEARANCE

According to Vasterling (1999) Butler equates *in Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993) linguistic intelligibility and epistemological accessibility in a way that precludes the possibility of a subject to have access to anything it cannot fully articulate. If this is true it implies that nothing unintelligible could appear in the frame of Butler's theory.

Vasterling writes that, in explicating the relations of language and reality and in this explication trying to prove that her theory does not lead in to either linguistic monism or determinism Butler comes to figure this relation in an ambivalent way. On the one hand, it seems that Butler presumes language to determine the epistemological limits of access to reality and condition thus not only the intelligibility of but also the accessibility to this reality. On the other hand, there are, according to Vasterling, certain passages in *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 1993) where Butler seems to subscribe to a more phenomenological understanding of accessibility. According to this understanding also the unintelligible could be accessible to the lived experience of the subject. (Vasterling 1999, 17 - 26.)

As far as I understand, this implicit tension between different conceptions of the relation between language and reality prevails un(der)thematized also in the later writings of Butler, which posits certain ambivalence into her notions concerning especially the transformability of the norm of gender.

As Vasterling argues if we presume, like Butler, that reality in its materiality is "always already linguistically constructed" we can avoid linguistic monism only by conceiving the claim as an epistemological, not ontological one (Vasterling 1999, 18 - 19). This is according to her also Butler's view. Thus, Butler's radical constructivist position would allow that even as we come to know materiality only through the mediation of language, there actually might exist something also beyond our linguistic constructions. (Vasterling 1999, 20 – 22.) In other words, language would form the conditions of appearance of materiality, but would not originate or cause it. In this respect, Vasterling points out, Butler seems to use the concept of "appearance" in a "Kantian" way, referring to what is accessible to us rather than to what exists as such. This would imply that language, "as an epistemological condition of accessibility" would not determine the ontological limits of reality, but would delimit the sphere of accessibility to cover only what is linguistically intelligible. (Vasterling 1999, 20 – 22.) In other words, following Vasterling's argumentation, it would seem that nothing unintelligible could, in Butler's view, be epistemologically accessible to the subject.

Vasterling continues to consider Butler's theory on the level of the subject, its body and its psyche. She argues that what is unintelligible within the present terms of intelligibility is according to Butler's theory constitutively foreclosed from the conscious experience and the sphere of reflection of the subject. Despite thus the assumption that there exists subversive potential within the (unconscious of the) subject, in the form of the foreclosed identifications and desires, the question remains, how could this potential be consciously deployed for any political purposes. If the subject only has access to what is intelligible, how can anything unintelligible be taken as the point of departure for gender politics? As far as the unintelligible cannot be brought within the sphere of conscious articulation but is rather confined to the field of unconscious, is not it bound only to unsystematically distract rather than politically change the intelligible reality? (Vasterling 1999, 25 – 26.)

The solution Vasterling proposes is based on more phenomenological understanding of accessibility. According to her we do sometimes confront phenomena that do not appear as intelligible to us. For instance people, images, sensations and actions that we are not able to articulate may appear and this might motivate us to extend our notion of reality and reconsider the norms on which it relies. (Vasterling 1999, 22- 23.) As Vasterling points out, this kind of understanding seems to be present on occasion also in Butler's texts (Vasterling 1999, 23), even as she may not manage to theoretically account for it (Vasterling 1999, 26 – 27).

There seems, indeed, to be ambivalence, if not a paradox, rooted in Butler's constructivist position. On the one hand she writes about the unintelligible as though it could have a political significance as a moving force of social transformation. That the norm of gender excludes something form the field of intelligible means that this unintelligible is preserved as the constitutive outside to what is intelligible and thus it may operate to deconstruct the norm in its current formulation. On the other hand, as Vasterling's critique demonstrates, it seems hardly possible, according to Butler's own theory, for the subject to have epistemological access to what is beyond intelligibility. This implies at least that the unintelligible cannot be consciously deployed to political purposes; one cannot intentionally use one´s unintelligibility to contest the norm.

I suggest, however, that rather than countering the notion of social transformation in Butler, this ambivalence might actually be in line with her general view on politics. As has been emphasised throughout the paper, the way Butler understands it gender politics should not be conceived taking the subject and its agency as the point of departure. Nor is politics in Butler's view conceived as a fully rational and systematically planned project. More broadly conceived temporality than what the

time of the subject represents is assumed already in the performative operation of the norm. As this operation thus exceeds any particular subject that contributes to it, it might be that what is deemed unintelligible can have transformative effects over time, even if the epistemological access of the subject to this unintelligible is not presumed. As has been stressed, the subject cannot govern the effects of its performing anyway. Is not it partly due to this very lack of access to what is unintelligible within it that Butler rejects the subject as the point of departure for politics? The subject can only reflect on what is intelligible in it with regard to the norm, but, in its gender performing activity, comes to exceed the limits of its self-understanding, as neither the conditions nor the full context of this performing are/is not fully recoverable to it. Even as this kind of understanding surely undercuts the political meanings of the agency of the subject and radically reconfigures gender politics as a project it does not imply the impossibility of social transformation as such.

PART VII: CONCLUSIONS

81

7.1. GENDER AS A NORM – OPERATION, AUTHORITY, AND ALTERATION

In the introduction to this paper I set out to pursue three interrelated questions concerning Judith Butler's notion of gender as a norm. I delineated my interest especially in the operation, authority and alteration of the norm and suggested that the norm of gender relates closely to questions concerning subjectivity and politics. Also, the introduction I provided to the topic emphasised strongly the political significance of the issue. The motivations for the thesis were clearly not only theoretical, but rather deeply grounded in the everyday organization of gendered life. As I argued, the prevailing notion of gender needs to be revised in a way that enables the social recognition of also those who do not fit into the current binary frame of it. My implicit suggestion in this respect was that the notion of gender as a social norm by Butler could provide such a view. Now that I have presented my reading of this notion with regard to the questions I posed, it is time to summarize the main points of the discussion and critically reconsider the political usefulness of the theory.

7.1.1. PERFORMATIVITY OF THE NORM

My first question was how does gender operate as a norm that both enables and restricts the subject and the agency it is taken to have? In part III I discussed Butler's notion of gender as a norm on the level of its operation. I first established the relations in Butler's though between the norm, the subject and social processes of recognition. I argued in chapter 3.2. that according to Butler the subject only emerges in being socially recognized as a legible person and that the norm of gender is understood in this respect as a norm that governs the recognition of subjecthood. In other words it is through the social norm of gender that the recognition, needed in order to count as "one" and to fully "matter", may be conferred. I described the norm as both enabling and restrictive in its operation and argued that the norm may either confer or withdraw one the intelligibility that is the price for one's appearance as a legitimate and intelligible part of the reality.

After having established these relations between the norm, the subject, and social processes of recognition, I argued in chapter 3.3. that gender as norm operates in performative manner (and) through interpellation. Butler's notion of performativity was then described as grounded in the speech act theory by J.L. Austin and especially on Jacques Derrida's critical rewriting of it. The core idea in this performativity is that an act with performative force performs the state of affairs it seemingly names of refers to. In other words, a performative act is productive of what appears to be its referent. In case of gender performativity this is to say the acts that are habitually taken to express an established gender identity rather retrospectively constitute this identity. That the norm of gender is performative in it operation implies it both precedes the particular acts of gender by the

subject and can only be reproduced and manifest materially in this practising by the subject.

This is where the notions of citationality and reiteration (by Derrida) become clarifying: As I wrote, according to Butler the subject cites or reiterates the norm in and as its agency. Moreover, the norm itself needs to be reiterated in this way in order to maintain its normative status. This is because the performative force of the norm can only be (re)produced through an accumulation of authority over time, where this accumulation is made possible by the reiterative practising of the norm. From this same assumption follows, however, that in the practices of the norm's reiteration lies also the possibility of its alteration. That possibility is always present when one cites the norm, for the performative processes of reiteration ever produce the norm exactly the same. On the one hand then the norm is inevitably altered as it is performed in various contexts in the course of its operation. On the other hand, the meanings the act performs are out of the subject's control, as the intentions of the subject bear no decisive meaning with regard to the norm's operation.

As I wrote in chapter 3.3., Butler takes the notion of interpellation from Louis Althusser. This notion has to do with the way one is addressed by the others and only in and through that addressing comes to recognize itself as a subject. In this way interpellation operates in performative manner: Rather than naming what is before it, it performs what it names. The terms by which the interpellative addressing proceeds are according to Butler normative: one is quite simply addressed as a gendered being and, because one depends in one's very emergence on this kind of recognition, one cannot negotiate the terms by which one is "hailed". This means that in one's responding to the interpellative call of/to gender one takes on the norm, incorporates it and emerges thus as gendered from the inception of one's subjecthood. The subject is in this way restricted by the norm, the full context of which it cannot ever conceive. As was argued, responding to the reiterative interpellative calls, is not a choice of a subject since there can be no subject prior to or outside of these calls. However, as a performative act, interpellation is susceptible to failure: the gendered terms by which we are hailed can, according to Butler, be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the context of the address.

In discussing the performative practicing of gender I pointed out that, because the performative act always exceeds the subject in deriving its authority from the other citations of the act, the subject may appear as the originator of its deeds only due to the dissimulation of this peculiar temporality of the norm. This means that gender must constantly hide its status as a norm, its initiation in the interpellative addressing, in order to appear as self-evident and natural fact about the subject. Dissimulating thus its social and temporal character the norm of gender takes the form of identity

retrospectively. As the idea of performativity implies, this identity then appears as productive of rather than produced in the gendered practices the subject participates in.

In part IV I discussed further the way gender as a norm of recognition accounts for the self-understanding of the subject and, in this way, restricts it from within. I argued that, as far as the norm operates by way of providing the subject an identity, it enables the subject capable of self-reflection at the price of certain exclusions: When the subject can only come to know itself through the normative framework of gender, everything unintelligible within this frame will be cast as impossible. Thus, because self-reflection is in this view is based on social recognition it is always mediated and restricted by the norms of this recognition. From this follows, as I emphasised, that in questioning the norm the subject cannot but question the coherence and the truth of itself. This explains why critique of gender cannot, according to Butler, base on subjecthood. There is a reflexive dimension in the operation of critique that, in the case of gender, contests the very principles of one's social existence and intelligibility as a subject.

Butler's notion of critique has been criticized, however, precisely for entailing this necessary dimension of self-criticism and deconstruction of one's subjecthood. As some theorists, involved in psychoanalytical discourse, claim (see e.g. Hekanaho 20009; Rothenberg 2006) Butler's account seems to push the subject to psychosis in its pursue to unravel the exclusionary mechanisms by which it emerges and question thus the very premises of its construction.

7.1.2. DEPENDENCY ON THE NORM

The second question posed in the introduction to this paper concerned the authority of the norm. In this respect I asked where the norm of gender derives its authority from and how is this authority reproduced over time? I argued in chapter 4.1. that, on a general level, the notion of fundamental desire to persist accounts in Butler's theory for the authority of the norm: The subject desires to persist and live as a recognized being, which is only possible in relation to the norm. For this primary desire for self-persistence then, the subject will according to Butler prefer any interpellation whatsoever to no interpellation at all, any kind of existence to extinction. Even as the norm of gender is oppressive to many, if not to everybody, it does enable some kind of existence within the limited subject positions it provides intelligibility with. As the subject in this view can only exist as a subject of social recognition that is as a subject of norms, desire for persistence in Butler's thought takes the form of desire for the norm. I suggested in chapter 4.1. that the desire for persistence/the norm accounts for not only the incorporation but also the criticism of the norm, as the unsatisfiability of that desire may motivate one to critically interrogate the terms by which

recognition is conferred.

As the above discussion on the operation of the norm suggested, reproduction of the authority of the norm takes place in the temporal processes of reiteration, in and through which the sedimentation of performative force is accomplished over time. Because this sedimentation exceeds the time and place of any particular subject, no subject can authorize "its" performatives by itself. The subject is rather dependent, in its very authorization, on the norm and its social context the subject can never fully conceive. As it is on condition of recognition with respect to the normative frame that the subject as a self-reflecting being emerges, the subject is according to Butler gendered from the inception. This means the issues of subjecthood, identity, and person cannot be accurately discussed without taking into account the fundamentally gendered dimension of our existence.

I wrote in chapter 4.3. this dependence on the norm and on the others, who appear to one as capable either to confer or withdraw the recognition one desires, makes one fundamentally vulnerable in one's profound sociality. Besides being formative of the psyche, this vulnerability has also its physical dimension because it is as bodies, materialized with respect to the norm of gender, that we are "given over to the Other" (UG, 149). Thus, even as Butler does assume some sort of "self-crafting" activity of the subject in its practicing of the norm, also any critical activity in this practicing is dependent in its success upon the sociality, to which the subject, as a bodily being, is given over.

When it comes to the notion of self-crafting then, the idea of which Butler assumes from Michel Foucault in her most recent writings on the norm, I stated that Butler does not provide any comprehensive accounts on the precise character of this presumed activity. Given what has been written on subject constitution, performativity, and interpellation the notion of self-crafting would certainly require more clarification in the context of Butler's thought. On the one hand it is entailed that the subject does not accommodate the kind of a place in the ontological order wherefrom it could negotiate the normative terms by which it is enabled. On the other hand the notion of self-crafting seems to suggest some kind of a potentially critical activity in the subject's relating to the norm.

7.1.3. TRANSFORMATION OF THE NORM

The notion of critical activity brings me, nevertheless, to the final issue I set out in this paper to consider. My third and obviously the largest question concerned the political implications of Butler's notion of gender as a norm. I asked, on what conditions and by which means might this

apparently authoritative norm be challenged?

As I argued in the part V of the paper, the issue of gender politics is figured in Butler's thought as critical contestation of the norm and the subject-positions it enables. This contestation, which was discussed in terms of critique and resignification, is possible due to the performative constitution of the norm. Because the norm is performatively produced in the reiterative practices that never reproduce the norm exactly identical with its past instances there is a dimension of alteration embedded in the very practicing of the norm. As the process of signification is based on reiteration, it is never complete. When it comes to gender this means that, rather than being fixed, the norm is always in formation.

I argued in chapters 5.2.1. and 5.2.2. that the notions of critique and resignification in Butler's thought have to do with critically questioning and re-articulating the terms by which recognition is conferred. Because these terms, however, enable one's existence as a subject and are, as follows, not fully separable of one's intelligibility, there are severe risks involved in this kind of a critique. Not only is one's status as a recognized human being put on line, also one's very life is threatened as one pursues to resignify the norm of gender. As was emphasised, any critique of the norm aims at the same token at one's own mandate the norm provides, which obviously delimits the extent to which one, as a subject, may criticize the norm.

Resignification as a means of gender politics was described in chapter 5.2.2. as re-articulation of the norm, that may according to Butler take place, especially, when somebody excluded from the field of the intelligible nevertheless speaks or acts otherwise in terms of the norm. In and through these "performative contradictions" or "double speaking" the limits of what the norm in its present formulation can accommodate, as well as the exclusions by which the universal of gender is constituted may be revealed and opened to resignification. As was argued, in this claiming oneself a position in the chain of the performative reiteration of the norm resides the demand for more inclusivity and, in this demand for inclusion, the norm itself may lose its self-evidence and become further re-articulated.

I suggested in chapter 5.3. that the possibility of resignifying the norm is based on the assumption in Butler's thought that even as the subject and the norm intertwine they do not fully merge. There is, as was suggested, an important gap or breakage between the temporality of the norm and that of the subject. On the one hand this breakage accounts for the possibility of resignification in the reiterative practicing of the norm and provides thus the distance between the norm and the subject,

entailed in order the subject to assume a critical stance toward the norm. On the other hand, however, the exceeding of the norm the temporality of the subject weakens the autonomy of the subject in authorizing its acts. As was emphasised, transformation of the norm is according to Butler's theorizing a matter of temporal practice whose full context is inevitably beyond the limits of one's understanding. With respect to this context one is posited merely as a co-author with no more than limited and uncertain contributions.

On a general level of discussion on politics Butler writes about "radical democracy", which was defined in chapter 5.2. as an open-ended process of critique in which the normative categories and terms of intelligibility are subjected to resignificatory practices. As I argued, according to Butler critiquing of a term does not imply doing away with it. We cannot get beyond the norm of gender and, according to Butler, also should not completely reject the established vocabulary used in politically discussing gender issues. What we rather should do is to treat the categories we use as definitionally open in their meanings and pursue actively to contest the limits of what the norm can include. This means that, instead of pursuing for more fixed knowledge and final truths about gender, we should seek to deconstruct any knowledge we believe to have.

7.1.4. ON THE LIMITS OF THE AGENCY OF THE SUBJECT

By the end of the part V, in chapter 5.4., I discussed the relations between the agency of the subject and the norms that enable and restrict it. As I argued, agency of the subject can take place only within a preceding normative frame the subject cannot choose. Once the subject, however, emerges as a participant to the norm's reproduction, its reiterative agency may operate also to contest the norm. Thus, the norm does not fully determine the agency of the subject, even as it conditions it. Neither can the subject, however, disregard the norm even though it can, and actually must, constantly relate to it and manages this with some activity. There remains, in this way, a peculiar tension in Butler's thought between the agency of the subject and the restrictive norm that enables it, that is a tension between freedom and constraint.

In order better to grasp this tension I discussed in part VI the notion of gender as a norm on the level of philosophical questions concerning determinism and freedom and the relations between language and reality. Basing on Butler's understanding of performativity I argued in chapter 6.1. that this notion implies neither determinist nor volitional view on the subject. This is to say the norm does not fully determine the subject but is, rather, subjected itself to temporal changes, as it becomes assumed and deployed by the subject. On the other hand, I stressed that the subject is in no sense free to make choices concerning the norm that conditions its existence. Transforming the

norm of gender is, in other words, not a question of conscious volition. Nor can it be systematically planned in advance.

What I suggested Butler's conceptualization of the subject, together with her radical constructivist assumptions about the linguistic constitution of reality, confirms is that the agency of the subject fails to provide the enabling grounds for gender politics. Because the subject is constituted in terms of the norm it is, in its self-reflection and knowledge, always restricted by it. In case of gender this means, as I wrote, that the unintelligible, that forms the constitutive outside of the norm, cannot be consciously deployed by the subject to effect social transformation, despite Butler sometimes suggesting otherwise. The processes of social transformation are rather long-term and co-authorized in a way that makes it impossible for any particular subject to maintain control over them. As such, these processes are, however, capable of overcoming some of the limitations that concern the particular individuals who participate in them. This is to say what remains impossible for a subject may well be possible, in the long run, for a collective.

In this way then, the perspective for both the norm and its transformation exceeds the perspective of the subject, which is restricted by its fundamental dependence on the norm. As I have argued the performative operation of the norm produces certain excess in the form of the "otherwise gendered" bodies and identities. This excess, that forms the constitutive outside of the binary notion of gender, can, according to Butler, be included into the sphere of recognition only by way of continuing practice of critique and resignification of gender in its present form. As far as I understand it, conceiving gender as a norm is one way the social transformation longed for might proceed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Brewster, Ben. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.

Austin, J.L.. *How To Do Things With Words*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Benhabib, Seyla, Butler, Judith, Cornell, Drucilla, and Fraser, Nancy. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Brooks, Ann. *Postfeminisms: Feminism, cultural theory and cultural forms* London: Routledge, 1997

Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between life and Death.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Butler, Judith, Laclau, Ernesto, and Žižek, Slavoj. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left.* London: Verso, 2000.

Butler, Judith. "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism"". *Feminists Theorize The Political*. Eds. Butler, Judith, and Scott, Joan, W. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative.* New York: Routledge, 1997.

Butler, Judith. "Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler." *Radical Philosophy* 67 (1994): 32 – 39.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 1990/1999.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.

Butler, Judith. *Hankala Sukupuoli: Feminismi ja Identiteetin kumous*. Trans. Pulkkinen, Tuija, and

Butler, Judith. *Hankala Sukupuoli: Feminismi ja Identiteetin kumous*. Trans. Pulkkinen, Tuija, and
Rossi, Leena-Maija. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2006.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and
Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 519 – 531.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, California: Stanford
University Press, 1997.

Butler, Judith. *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France.* New York:
Columbia University Press, 1999.

Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender.* New York: Routledge, 2004.

Derrida, Jacques. "Allekirjoitus tapahtuma konteksti." *Jacques Derrida: Platonin apteekki ja muita
kirjoituksia.* Eds*.* Ikonen, Teemu, and Porttikivi, Janne. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2003.

Disch, Lisa. "Judith Butler and the Politics of the Performative." *Political Theory* 24. (1999): 545 –
559.

Enwald, Marika. *Displacements of Deconstruction: The Deconstruction of Metaphysics of
Presence, Meaning, Subject and Method.* Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2004.

Ewald, François. "Norms, Discipline, and the Law." *Law and the Order of Culture*. Ed. Robert
Post. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Fox Keller, Evelyn. *Tieteen sisarpuoli.* Tampere: Vastapaino, 1988

Haaparanta, Leila. "Feministisen politiikan mahdollisuuden ehdoista". *Niin & Näin.* 3/1997, 9 – 13.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Heinämaa, Sara, and Oksanen, Johanna (eds.). *Rakkaudesta toiseen: Kirjoituksia vuosituhannen
vaihteen etiikasta.* Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2001.

Heiskala, Risto. *Toiminta, tapa ja rakenne: Kohti konstruktionistista synteesiä yhteiskuntateoriassa.* Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2000.

Hekanaho, Pia Livia. "Performatiivinen sukupuolenteoria, sukupuoliero ja sukupuolittumisen kaavat: mihin Butler-kritiikkiä tarvitaan?" *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* 22:3 (2009): 4 – 20.

Hekanaho, Pia Livia, and Tuhkanen, Mikko. "Queer –teorian sukupuoli ja paradigmaattisten erojen ongelma." *Niin & Näin.* 2/2005, 7 – 15.

Helén, Ilpo. Afterword. *Seksuaalisuuden historia.* By Michel Foucault. Tampere: Gaudeamus, 1999. 495 – 512.

hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center.* Boston: South End Press, 1984.

Husso, Marita. *Parisuhdeväkivalta: Lyötyjen aika ja tila.* Tampere: Vastapaino, 2003.

Juvonen, Tuula. *Varjoelämää ja julkisia salaisuuksia.* Tampere: Vastapaino, 2002.

Kohli, Wendy. "Performativity and Pedagogy: The Making of Educational Subjects." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 18 (1999): 319 – 326.

Liljeström, Marianne. "Sukupuolijärjestelmä." *Avainsanat: 10 askelta feministiseen tutkimukseen.* Eds. Koivunen, Anu, and Liljeström, Marianne. Tampere: Vastapaino, 1996. 111 – 138.

Lloyd, Genevieve. *Miehinen järki: "Mies" ja "nainen" länsimaisessa filosofiassa.* Tampere: Vastapaino, 2000.

Lloyd, Moya. *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.

Lovell, Terry. "Resisting with Authority: Historical Specificity, Agency, and the Performative Self." *Theory, Culture & Society* 20:1 (2003): 1 – 17.

Miller, Seumas. "Social Norms and Practical Reason." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 31 (1999): 312 – 326.

Nainen, järki ja ihmisarvo: Esseitä filosofian klassikoiden naiskäsityksistä. Eds. Alanen, Lilli, Haaparanta, Leila, and Lumme, Terhi. Juva: WSOY, 1986.

Naskali, Päivi. ”Sukupuolitettu subjekti pedagogisella näyttämöllä. Näkökulmia feministiseen pedagogiikkaan.” *Aikuiskasvatus* 21 (2001): 284 – 294.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Kaufmann, Walter, and Hollingdale, R.J. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy. Eds. Jackson, Frank, and Smith, Michael. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Pearce, Lynne. *The Rhetorics of Feminism: Readings in contemporary cultural theory and the popular press*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Pulkkinen, Tuija. *Postmoderni politiikan filosofia*. 2nd ed. Tampere: Gaudeamus, 2003.

Pulkkinen, Tuija (2000a). ”Valta sukupuolen konstruktiossa ja dekonstruktiossa.” *Valtapolitiikkaa – analyyseja valtapuheesta.* Eds. Kananen, Anitta, Soininen, Suvi, and Palonen, Kari. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopistopaino, 2000. 187 – 203.

Pulkkinen, Tuija (2000b). "Judith Butler – Sukupuolen suorittamisen teoreetikko." *Feministejä – Aikamme ajattelijoita*. Eds. Anttonen, Anneli, Lempiäinen, Kirsti, and Liljeström, Marianne. Tampere: Vastapaino, 2000. 44 – 60.

Reuter, Martina. ”Rationalismi ja materia.” *Filosofian historian kehityslinjoja*. Eds. Korkman, Petter, and Yrjönsuuri, Mikko. Tampere: Gaudeamus, 2003. 187 – 212.

Rolin, Kristina. "Mitä feministinen tietoteoria ja tieteenfilosofia ovat?” *Feministinen filosofia*. Eds. Oksala, Johanna, and Werner, Laura. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2005. 143 – 155.

Rossi, Leena-Maija. "Heteronormatiivisuus: Käsitteen elämää ja kummastelua.” *Kulttuurintutkimus* 23:3 (2006): 3 19 – 28.

Rossi, Leena-Maija. *Heterotehdas: Televisiomainonta sukupuolituotantona*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2003.

Rothenberg, Molly Anne. "Embodied Political Performativity in *Excitable Speech*: Butler's Psychoanalytical Revision of Historicism." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23:3 (2006): 71 – 93.

Saarikangas, Kirsi. "Arki, koristeet ja moderni arkkitehtuuri: Tilan ja sukupuolen suhteista." *Feministinen estetiikka*. Eds. von Bonsdorff, Pauline, and Seppä, Anita. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2002. 211 – 241.

Salih, Sara. Introduction. *The Judith Butler Reader*. Ed. Salih, Sara, and Butler, Judith. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Salonen, Marko. *Hiljainen heteroseksuaalisuus?* Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2005.

Sedgwick, Eve. "Queer Performativity: Henry James's Art of the Novel." *GLQ* 1:1 (Spring 1993).

Tuhkanen, Mikko. "Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze ja tulemisen kysymys." *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* 18:2 (2005), 4 – 14.

Vasterling, Veronica. "Butler's Sophisticated Constructivism: A Critical Assessment." *Hypatia* 14:3 (Summer 1999): 17 - 34.

Vänskä, Annamari. *Vikuroivia vilkaisuja: Ruumis, sukupuoli, seksuaalisuus ja visuaalisen kulttuurin tutkimus*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 2006.

Warren, John, T. "Performing Whiteness Differently: Rethinking the Abolitionist Project." *Educational Theory* 51 (Fall 2001): 415 – 466.

Webster, Fiona. "The Politics of Sex and Gender: Benhabib and Butler Debate Subjectivity." *Hypatia* 15:1 (Winter 2000): 1 – 22.

Wittig, Monique. "One Is Not Born a Woman". *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. Eds. Abelove, Henry, Barale, Michèle, and Halperin, David. New York: Routledge, 1993, 103 – 109.

INTERNET SOURCES

Marmor, Andrei. "The Nature of Law." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* 2001. Accessed 5
        May 2008 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lawphil-nature/>

Redding, Paul. "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 1997.
        Accessed 5 May 2008 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/>

"xtracts from Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler." Interview by Peter
        Osborne and Lynne Segal, London, 1993. Accesed 5 February 2008
        <http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm>

Väätäinen, Hanna. *Rumbasta rampaan: Vammaisen naistanssijan ruumiillisuus*
        pyörätuolikilpatanssissa. 2003. Accessed 2 April 2008
        <https://oa.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/4118/TMP.objres.50.pdf?sequence=1>