

## 1: Gender Trouble - Wikipedia

*(see "Values of Difficulty" ) Judith Butler in different registers? I believe it is important that intellectuals with a sense of social responsibility be able to shift registers and to work at various levels, to communicate what they're communicating in various ways ("Changing the Subject").*

Could German Idealism be held accountable for Nazism? And how was one to understand existential theology , including the work of Martin Buber? Journal of Women in Culture and Society. She draws on the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the feminism of Simone de Beauvoir , noting that both thinkers ground their theories in "lived experience" and view the sexual body as a historical idea or situation. For Butler, the "script" of gender performance is effortlessly transmitted generation to generation in the form of socially established "meanings": She states, "gender is not a radical choice Currently, the actions appropriate for men and women have been transmitted to produce a social atmosphere that both maintains and legitimizes a seemingly natural gender binary. Additionally, she compares the performativity of gender to the performance of the theater. She brings many similarities, including the idea of each individual functioning as an actor of their gender. However, she also brings into light a critical difference between gender performance in reality and theater performances. She explains how the theater is much less threatening and does not produce the same fear that gender performances often encounter because of the fact that there is a clear distinction from reality within the theater. She instead says that all gender works in this way of performativity and a representing of an internalized notion of gender norms. Gender Trouble Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity was first published in , selling over , copies internationally, in multiple languages. The book has even inspired an intellectual fanzine, Judy! Although the repeated, stylized bodily acts establish the appearance of an essential, ontological "core" gender, Butler understands gender, along with sex and sexuality, to be performative. Butler explicitly challenges biological accounts of binary sex. The sexed body, once established as a natural fact, is the alibi for constructions of gender and sexuality, which then purport to be the just-as-natural expressions or consequences of sex. Butler writes that this approach reinforces the binary view of gender relations. Butler believes that feminists should not try to define "women" and she also believes that feminists should "focus on providing an account of how power functions and shapes our understandings of womanhood not only in the society at large but also within the feminist movement. The idea of identity as free and flexible and gender as a performance, not an essence, is one of the foundations of Queer theory. An identity category for her is a result of certain exclusions and concealments, and thus a site of regulation. Butler acknowledges, however, that categorized identities are important for political action at the present time. Butler believes that identity forms through repetition or imitation and is not original. Imitation fosters the illusion of continuity. Heterosexual identity, which is set up as an ideal, requires constant, compulsive repetition if it is to be safeguarded. Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. Iterability, in its endless undeterminedness as to-be-determinedness, is thus precisely that aspect of performativity that makes the production of the "natural" sexed, gendered, heterosexual subject possible, while also and at the same time opening that subject up to the possibility of its incoherence and contestation. A Politics of the Performative, Butler surveys the problems of hate speech and censorship. She argues that censorship is difficult to evaluate, and that in some cases it may be useful or even necessary, while in others it may be worse than tolerance. In this way, the state reserves for itself the power to define hate speech and, conversely, the limits of acceptable discourse. In this way, Butler questions the possibility of any genuinely oppositional discourse; "If speech depends upon censorship, then the principle that one might seek to oppose is at once the formative principle of oppositional speech". Butler revisits and refines her notion of performativity and focuses on the question of undoing "restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life". Butler discusses how gender is performed without one being conscious of it, but says that it does not mean this performativity is "automatic or mechanical". She argues that we have desires that do not originate from our personhood, but rather, from

social norms. The writer also debates our notions of "human" and "less-than-human" and how these culturally imposed ideas can keep one from having a "viable life" as the biggest concerns are usually about whether a person will be accepted if his or her desires differ from normality. She states that one may feel the need of being recognized in order to live, but that at the same time, the conditions to be recognized make life "unlivable". The writer proposes an interrogation of such conditions so that people who resist them may have more possibilities of living. Reimer committed suicide in Butler accepts the claim that if the subject is opaque to itself the limitations of its free ethical responsibility and obligations are due to the limits of narrative, presuppositions of language and projection. You may think that I am in fact telling a story about the prehistory of the subject, one that I have been arguing cannot be told. There are two responses to this objection. It is not done with, over, relegated to a past, which then becomes part of a causal or narrative reconstruction of the self. On the contrary, that prehistory interrupts the story I have to give of myself, makes every account of myself partial and failed, and constitutes, in a way, my failure to be fully accountable for my actions, my final "irresponsibility," one for which I may be forgiven only because I could not do otherwise. This not being able to do otherwise is our common predicament page Instead she argues for an ethics based precisely on the limits of self-knowledge as the limits of responsibility itself. Any concept of responsibility which demands the full transparency of the self to itself, an entirely accountable self, necessarily does violence to the opacity which marks the constitution of the self it addresses. The scene of address by which responsibility is enabled is always already a relation between subjects who are variably opaque to themselves and to each other. The ethics that Butler envisions is therefore one in which the responsible self knows the limits of its knowing, recognizes the limits of its capacity to give an account of itself to others, and respects those limits as symptomatically human. In this way, Butler locates social and political critique at the core of ethical practice. This was particularly the case in France during the anti-gay marriage protests. Bruno Perreau has shown that Butler was literally depicted as an "antichrist", both because of her gender and her Jewish identity, the fear of minority politics and critical studies being expressed through fantasies of a corrupted body. It has also changed the lives of countless people whose bodies, genders, sexualities and desires have made them subject to violence, exclusion and oppression. The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power. Schwarzer also accuses Butler of remaining silent about the oppression of women and homosexuals in the Islamic world, while readily exercising her right to same-sex-marriage in the United States; instead, Butler would sweepingly defend Islam, including Islamism, from critics. Over the years, she has been particularly active in the gay and lesbian rights, feminist, and anti-war movements. More recently, she has been active in the Occupy movement and has publicly expressed support for a version of the BDS Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israel. On September 7, , Butler participated in a faculty-organized teach-in against the Lebanon War at the University of California, Berkeley. She cited racist comments on the part of organizers and a general failure of CSD organizations to distance themselves from racism in general and from anti-Muslim excuses for war more specifically. People have asked, so what are the demands? What are the demands all of these people are making? Either they say there are no demands and that leaves your critics confused, or they say that the demands for social equality and economic justice are impossible demands. And the impossible demands, they say, are just not practical. If it is impossible to demand that those who profit from the recession redistribute their wealth and cease their greed, then yes, we demand the impossible.

## 2: Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life? – Radical Philosophy

*Judith Butler's Difficulty The defense was the old line that bad ideas and values are often embedded in common-sensical language. If we want to shake things up.*

History and Scope The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of large-scale political movements—second wave feminism, Black Civil Rights in the U. These social movements are undergirded by and foster a philosophical body of literature that takes up questions about the nature, origin and futures of the identities being defended. Identity politics starts from analyses of oppression to recommend, variously, the reclaiming, redescription, or transformation of previously stigmatized accounts of group membership. In the process of consciousness-raising, actually life-sharing, we began to recognize the commonality of our experiences and, from the sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression. Combahee River Collective It is beyond the scope of this essay to offer historical or sociological surveys of the many different social movements that might be described as identity politics, although some references to this literature are provided in the bibliography; instead the focus here is to provide an overview of the philosophical issues in the expansive literature in political theory. From a contemporary perspective, some early identity claims by political activists certainly seem naive, totalizing, or unnuanced. However, the public rhetoric of identity politics served useful and empowering purposes for some, even while it sometimes belied the philosophical complexity of any claim to a shared experience or common group characteristics. Thus it was barely as intellectuals started to systematically outline and defend the philosophical underpinnings of identity politics that we simultaneously began to challenge them. At this historical juncture, then, asking whether one is for or against identity politics is to ask an impossible question. Wherever they line up in the debates, thinkers agree that the notion of identity has become indispensable to contemporary political discourse, at the same time as they concur that it has troubling implications for models of the self, political inclusiveness, and our possibilities for solidarity and resistance. Indeed, underlying many of the more overtly pragmatic debates about the merits of identity politics are philosophical questions about the nature of subjectivity and the self Taylor Charles Taylor argues that the modern identity is characterized by an emphasis on its inner voice and capacity for authenticity—that is, the ability to find a way of being that is somehow true to oneself Taylor While doctrines of equality press the notion that each human being is capable of deploying his or her practical reason or moral sense to live an authentic live qua individual, the politics of difference has appropriated the language of authenticity to describe ways of living that are true to the identities of marginalized social groups. As Sonia Kruks puts it: What makes identity politics a significant departure from earlier, pre-identarian forms of the politics of recognition is its demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied: Rather, what is demanded is respect for oneself as different For many proponents of identity politics this demand for authenticity includes appeals to a time before oppression, or a culture or way of life damaged by colonialism, imperialism, or even genocide. Thus for example Taiaiake Alfred, in his defense of a return to traditional indigenous values, argues that: Indigenous governance systems embody distinctive political values, radically different from those of the mainstream. Western notions of domination human and natural are noticeably absent; in their place we find harmony, autonomy, and respect. We have a responsibility to recover, understand, and preserve these values, not only because they represent a unique contribution to the history of ideas, but because renewal of respect for traditional values is the only lasting solution to the political, economic, and social problems that beset our people. Thus identity politics rests on unifying claims about the meaning of politically laden experiences to diverse individuals. Sometimes the meaning attributed to a particular experience will diverge from that of its subject: Making sense of such disjunctions relies on notions such as false consciousness—the systematic mystification of the experience of the oppressed by the perspective of the dominant. Concern about this aspect of identity politics has crystallized around the transparency of experience to the oppressed, and the univocality of its interpretation. Experience is never, critics argue, simply epistemically available prior to interpretation Scott ; rather it requires a theoretical framework—implicit or explicit—to give it meaning. Nonetheless,

poststructuralist skepticism about the possibility of experience outside a hermeneutic frame has been countered with phenomenological attempts to articulate a ground for experience in the lived body Alcoff ; see also Oksala and ; Stoller From these understandings of subjectivity, it is easy to see how critics of identity politics, and even some cautious supporters, have feared that it is prone to essentialism. This expression is another philosophical term of abuse, intended to capture a multitude of sins. In its original contexts in metaphysics, the term implies the belief that an object has a certain quality by virtue of which it is what it is; for Locke, famously, the essence of a triangle is that it is a three-sided shape. In the contemporary humanities the term is used more loosely to imply, most commonly, an illegitimate generalization about identity Heyes To the extent that identity politics urges mobilization around a single axis, it will put pressure on participants to identify that axis as their defining feature, when in fact they may well understand themselves as integrated selves who cannot be represented so selectively or even reductively Spelman The second form of essentialism is closely related to the first: Others argue that a relational social ontology, which makes clear the fluidity and interdependence of social groups, should be developed as an alternative to the reification of other approaches to identity politics Young ; Nelson These accounts of subjectivity, ontologies, and ways of understanding solidarity and relationships have enduring importance in philosophical scholarship in identity politics. Liberalism and Identity Politics A key condition of possibility for contemporary identity politics was institutionalized liberal democracy Brown The citizen mobilizations that made democracy real also shaped and unified groups previously marginal to the polity, while extensions of formal rights invited expectations of material and symbolic equality. The perceived paucity of rewards offered by liberal capitalism, however, spurred forms of radical critique that sought to explain the persistence of oppression. At the most basic philosophical level, critics of liberalism suggested that liberal social ontologyâ€”the model of the nature of and relationship between subjects and collectivesâ€”was misguided. To the extent that group interests are represented in liberal polities, they tend to be understood as associational, forms of interest group pluralism whereby those sharing particular interests voluntarily join together to create a political lobby. Citizens are free to register their individual preferences through voting, for example , or to aggregate themselves for the opportunity to lobby more systematically e. These lobbies, however, are not defined by the identity of their members so much as by specific shared interests and goals, and when pressing their case the marginalized subjectivity of the group members is not itself called into question. Finally, political parties, the other primary organs of liberal democratic government, critics suggest, have few moments of inclusivity, being organized around party discipline, responsiveness to lobby groups, and broad-based electoral popularity. Ultimately conventional liberal democracy, diverse radical critics claim, cannot effectively address the ongoing structural marginalization that persists in late capitalist liberal states, and may even be complicit with it Young ; P. Williams ; Brown ; M. On a philosophical level, these understandings of the political subject and its relationship to collectivity came to seem inadequate to ensuring representation for women, gays and lesbians, or racial-ethnic groups M. Critics charged that the neutral citizen of liberal theory was in fact the bearer of an identity coded white, male, bourgeois, able-bodied, and heterosexual Pateman ; Young ; Di Stefano ; Mills ; Pateman and Mills This implicit ontology in part explained the persistent historical failure of liberal democracies to achieve anything more than token inclusion in power structures for members of marginalized groups. A richer understanding of political subjects as constituted through and by their social location was required. In particular, the history and experience of oppression brought with it certain perspectives and needs that could not be assimilated through existing liberal structures. Individuals are oppressed by virtue of their membership in a particular social groupâ€”that is, a collective whose members have relatively little mobility into or out of the collective, who usually experience their membership as involuntary, who are generally identified as members by others, and whose opportunities are deeply shaped by the relation of their group to corollary groups through privilege and oppression Cudd Oppression, then, is the systematic limiting of opportunity or constraints on self-determination because of such membership: I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all historicityâ€”I was responsible at the same time for my body, my race, for my ancestors. For example, in a widely cited article Peggy McIntosh identifies whiteness as a dominant identity, and lists 47 ways in which she is advantaged by being white compared with her colleagues of color.

Critics have also charged that assimilation or, less provocatively, integration is a guiding principle of liberalism. If the liberal subject is coded in the way Young suggests, then attempts to apply liberal norms of equality will risk demanding that the marginalized conform to the identities of their oppressors. If this is equality, they claim, then it looks suspiciously like the erasure of socially subordinate identities rather than their genuine incorporation into the polity. This suspicion helps to explain the affiliation of identity politics with separatism. This latter is a set of positions that share the view that attempts at integration of dominant and marginalized groups so consistently compromise the identity or potential of the less powerful that a distinct social and political space is the only structure that will adequately protect them. Analogous arguments have been made on behalf of Native American and other indigenous peoples and African Americans e. Lesbian feminist separatists have claimed that the central mechanism for the oppression of women under patriarchy is heterosexuality. Only divorce literal and figurative and the creation of new geographic and political communities of woman-identified women will end patriarchal exploitation, and forge a liberatory female identity Rich ; Frye ; Radicalesbians []; Wittig One of the central charges against identity politics by liberals, among others, has been its alleged reliance on notions of sameness to justify political mobilization. Looking for people who are like you rather than who share your political values as allies runs the risk of sidelining critical political analysis of complex social locations and ghettoizing members of social groups as the only persons capable of making or understanding claims to justice. After an initial wave of relatively uncompromising identity politics, proponents have taken these criticisms to heart and moved to more philosophically nuanced accounts that appeal to coalitions as better organizing structures. On this view, separatism around a single identity formation must be muted by recognition of the internally heterogeneous and overlapping nature of social group memberships. This trajectoryâ€”from formal inclusion in liberal polities, to assertions of difference and new demands under the rubric of identity politics, to internal and external critique of identity political movementsâ€”has taken different forms in relation to different identities. Increasingly it is difficult to see what divides contemporary positions, and some commentators have suggested possible rapprochements between liberalism and identity politics e. Gender and Feminism Twentieth century feminism has consistently opposed biological determinism: Whatever experiences women share will be experiences of femininity not necessarily resulting from an immutable sexual difference but rather from social injustice. The fear of biological determinism has led to tremendous caution in feminist theorizing: Carol Gilligan is the best known proponent of this position although the details of her complex paradigm are often glossed over or misrepresented Gilligan []. Her critics charge that she reifies femininityâ€”were women not oppressed, they would not speak in the voice of care, thus casting doubt on the desirability of attempts to reclaim it as part of a liberatory framework. In other words, the current construction of femininity is so deeply imbricated with the oppression of women that such attempts will always end up reinforcing the very discourse they seek to undermine Butler [] ; this critique has strong affiliations with poststructuralism which are discussed below. The most often discussed and criticized second wave feminist iconsâ€”women such as Betty Friedan or Gloria Steinemâ€”are white, middle-class, and heterosexual, although this historical picture too often neglects the contributions of lesbian feminists, feminists of color, and working-class feminists, which were less visible in popular culture, perhaps, but arguably equally influential in the lives of women. Thus for Black women to fight racism especially among white women was to divide the feminist movement, which properly focused on challenging patriarchy, understood as struggle between men and women, the foundational dynamic of all oppressions Firestone Claims about the universality of gender made during the second wave have been extensively criticized in feminist theory for failing to recognize the specificity of their own constituencies. The question of what a global feminism should make of identity political claims, or how it should conceive solidarity among women from massively different locations within the global economic system remains open Weir Thus feminist claims made about the oppression of women founded in a notion of shared experience and identity are now invariably greeted with philosophical suspicion. Some critics have charged that this suspicion itself has become excessive, undercutting the very possibility of generalizations about women that gives feminist theory its force Martin , or that it marks the distancing of feminist philosophy from its roots in political organizing. Others suggest alternative methods for feminist theory that will minimize

the emphasis on shared criteria of membership in a social group and stress instead the possibilities for alliances founded on non-identical connections Young ; Heyes ; Cornell Nonetheless, sex-gender as a set of analytical categories continues to guide feminist thought, albeit in troubled and troubling ways. From Gay and Lesbian to Queer Nowhere have conceptual struggles over identity been more pronounced than in the lesbian and gay liberation movement. The notion that sexual object choice can define who a person is has been profoundly challenged by the advent of queer politics. Visible early lesbian and gay activists emphasized the immutable and essential natures of their sexual identities. For some, they were a distinctively different natural kind of person, with the same rights as heterosexuals another natural kind to find fulfillment in marriage, property ownership, and so on. This strand of gay organizing perhaps associated more closely with white, middle-class gay men, at least until the radicalizing effects of the AIDS pandemic with its complex simultaneous appeals to difference and to sameness has a genealogy going back to pre-Stonewall homophobic activism see discussion in Terry, esp. While early lesbian feminists had a very different politics, oriented around liberation from patriarchy and the creation of separate spaces for woman-identified women, many still appealed to a more authentic, distinctively feminist self. Heterosexual feminine identities were products of oppression, yet the literature imagines a utopian alternative where woman-identification will liberate the lesbian within every woman e. Foucault famously argues that homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. In western popular culture such theories co-exist uneasily with biologically essentialist accounts of sexual identity, which look for a particular gene, brain structure, or other biological feature that is noninteractive with environment and that will explain same-sex sexual desire. If sexual identity is biologically caused, then it is as hard to hold an individual morally responsible for being homosexual as it is to blame someone for being Black which may not be as hard as some would like to think. Whatever the truth of these fears, Eve Sedgwick is right, in my view, to say that no specific form of explanation for the origins of sexual preference will be proof against the infinitely varied strategies of homophobia Sedgwick In addition to historicizing and contextualizing sexuality, including the very idea of sexual identity, the shift to queer is also characterized by deconstructive methods. Rather than understanding sexual identities as a set of discrete and independent social types, queer theorists adduce evidence and read to emphasize their mutual implication: Heterosexuality comes into existence as a way of understanding the nature of individuals after the homosexual has been diagnosed; homosexuality requires heterosexuality as its opposite, despite its self-professed stand-alone essence. An exemplary conflict within the identity politics of sexuality focuses on the expansion of gay and lesbian organizing to those with other queer affiliations, especially bisexual and transgendered activists.

**3: Judith Butler: What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue | www.enganchecubano.com**

3 Valerie Hey, *The politics of performative resignification: translating Judith Butler's theoretical discourse and its potential for a sociology of education*, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, , 27, 4, CrossRef.

Print Judith Butler became a rock star in academia with *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. The work, which argues that gender is performative, derived from social norms, is a core text for queer studies. She advanced her reputation as a leading gender theorist with subsequent works, such as *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* in . While Butler will always be a queer theory icon, she has been well established in the past two decades as a leading political and social theorist. Her most recent book is *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, in which she discusses how movements such as the Arab Spring are driven by precarity, opposing the destruction of livable human conditions. She became a prominent supporter of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement that pressures Israel on behalf of the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice. In *The Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, she argues that Jewish ethics require challenging Israeli policies. How do you view the state of the world right now? So as we are speaking he is requesting loyalty from all deans and rectors. One could pull back and say, well, we see lots of instances like this throughout the world where open criticism of the state is not tolerated and basic principles of academic freedom and democratic freedom are abrogated all the time. We can see that under various regimes and we can even start to develop a comparative framework for such problems. I think that the future of critical thought is really at risk. And critical thought not just as something people do in universities, but critical thought as the term that links, say, academic freedom and democratic freedom—a kind of crossing of the right to dissent and the right to criticize. Security operates differently in South Africa than it does in Istanbul or Turkey more generally or than it does in the United States. I did find it interesting that various European leaders were saying if Turkey wants to be part of the European Union, it must pledge respect for democratic values—no witch hunt, no return of the death penalty. And it gets mobilized and exploited as a rationale for the purposes of immunizing a regime from criticism and dissent. I get a little worried in two directions. And then I get worried in another direction, which is that there is a logic that we can outline, and we can declare this new age of security, and the logical form is instantiated in all these particular instances, at which point we obliterate history and context and specificity from the analysis. Turkey is an important example, given how it is such a nexus for the global crisis. We are having a global crisis that takes many different forms. But I think Turkey is important because there is a certain longstanding debate: Can it be both? How does it figure in relationship to debates about secularism and religion? How does it figure in debates about authoritarianism and democracy? That sweep included climate change protestors who were put under house arrest during the major climate change conference in Paris, and sometimes shackled to their chairs. Is that the West? Is that a European practice? It gets to keep its good reputation with itself through these kinds of regional projections. I think they break down when they look at Turkey, its complexity and the different ways it can go, right? When there was a popular revolt in Gezi, he was seeking to build an extraordinary marketplace on this public site, which is a site that belongs to all people and holds an enormous set of memories, some of them very terrible, some of them very exhilarating. But he is also building a mosque in that same site, and that particular conjunction is complicated. We all see this in many places in the world now. So how do we think about that in terms of regions? I think it is a particular convergence, and maybe it calls into question some of these taken-for-granted ways of thinking about political forms in relationship to regions. That probably would have been catchier. For me, I was interested in the way in which bodies assemble and how they signify certain kinds of political meanings through assembly. How do you interpret the Tahrir uprising in Egypt, and the Arab Spring? I was in Egypt just months before. And what I enjoyed most about that, upon reflection, was that we do live with very strong kinds of epistemic limits. Like, this is what is thinkable, this is as much as we can hope for, this is as much as we can expect. So what I did find quite exhilarating about the early days of the Arab Spring was what people thought was not possible was certainly possible. I suppose like many others I was caught up in that exhilaration, and it seemed to me that these were

popular democratic uprisings. What is a popular uprising? What is a popular revolution? Does it represent the people? Who represents the people? Are the military the people? Do they also represent the people? What about the people who were not at the square? What about the people who supported the older regime, or wish for another regime? Did the people include the Muslim Brotherhood? Do they not include the Muslim Brotherhood? Does the Muslim Brotherhood include the people? Does that include all the people? So you have all these extraordinary divisions and we know the history and we know the outcome. So the truth is that the romantic moment of believing in a popular revolution is always beset by the question of who decides who the people are, and how is it decided. So for instance, in several uprisings you have one crowd in one square, you have another crowd in another square, or you have one crowd in a square one day and another crowd in the square the next day. A lot depends on photography, media, how the people are being constituted through the public circulation of that event. So one has to have a more canny, more complex idea of how power operates, and even how democratic regimes can operate, than relying on the exhilarating force of popular uprising. I think that even in Turkey when we saw briefly an attempted military coup, they were claiming that they were operating in the name of democracy. One question is how to deal with the military and military power. The military cannot install a democracy. There is no such thing as an installed democracy. We can speak that way but it is a perversion of language. Part of what is at play in Egypt, Turkey, in Europe with the backlash against refugees, seems to be identity politics? I think one of the questions that I would have about popular democratic movements is one that Ernesto Laclau articulated most eloquently in his theory of hegemony. How is it that groups which identify with very different kinds of issues—sexual rights, or questions of poverty, or issues of literacy, or perhaps non-violence, or anti-militarism—how do they articulate with one another? How do they come together? Not just physically in the square or on the street, but how do they begin to articulate their political demands in a coalition that demands that they identify what they wish to achieve and who they wish to defeat, having that kind of clear sense of the primary antagonism. And how then do those groups work together even when they do not fully identify with each other, or they do not fully agree with one another? That interests me on the left. We have to assume that harmonious ideas of left unity are not plausible. If only we chose love over hatred, we would come together. I think it is those forms of alliances where people are able to background their hostility, or their strong disaffection for one another, for another purpose. For instance, in bereavement groups that bring Palestinian and Israeli Jewish parents together who have lost children, they have these kinds of conversations where they seek to identify with the extraordinary sorrow that the other is experiencing. It is through expanding that capacity for identification across religious and ethnic divisions that a certain kind of hopefulness is built. I have great respect for those groups, and I actually think that they are probably living out what Martin Buber thought of as the formation of an organic community, something like a community that starts through smaller acts of identification. I think it is not the case that we are ever going to see a full resolution, at least in our lifetimes. I think all we can do is insist that people try to find a political forum in which they live together on land that they share, and defend the rights of everyone to live on that land on the condition of equality, on equal terms, regardless of what they feel about one another. I actually think there are global obligations, and also territorial obligations, to live with other people we may not love and to honor their equal right to live there too. So I think it is in spite of love that we have to build our ideas of cohabitation. I think apartheid South Africa and its aftermath has shown us the difficulty of that. I mean, they did hold out for the truth and reconciliation commission to provide a reconciliation of hearts. A reconciliation that would be to the side of law. But the problem with that is people can give their stories and make their works of art, and they are really important works of art, documenting the suffering, the outrage, the loss, the violence, and brutality. All amazingly important, and I continue to support those efforts. But in fact apartheid was only partially overcome. There are still massive economic inequalities. There are still massive social inequalities. And the apartheid deal that put an end to legal forms of discrimination in no way affected the economic distribution of wealth. In other words, whites got to keep their property and wealth. Blacks got to remain poor, coloreds as well for the most part. And those more basic structures of inequality, which are structures of racial inequality, were nevertheless preserved as apartheid ended. At a certain level the problem of economic distribution cannot be addressed by reconciliation

techniques. Reconcile yourself to economic inequality? I think the student movements now, the Rhodes Must Fall movement, the movements that have been important in Johannesburg and Cape Town, are all evidence of the unfinished status of apartheid.

#### 4: A Commonplace Blog: Difficulty

*Judith Butler, "Values of Difficulty," in Just Being Difficult? Academic Writing in the Public Arena, ed. Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb (Stanford: Stanford University Press, ), p. This volume is a belated reply, by diverse hands, to the Philosophy and Literature Bad Writing Contest, which caused much gnashing of teeth in academic.*

The allusion is brief, only one sentence: You had to know your Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault to catch all the meanings. Reflections on a Methodology. Such a dense, cabalistic style had to signify a superior intelligence. The Bad Writing Contest was the invention of the editor of the journal *Philosophy and Literature*, Denis Dutton, who believed that much of theory was a decadent practice. He argued that people were able to hide patent falsehoods and banal truths behind a loaded, mannered, inflated language. The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power. Even the *New York Times* reported on it. Butler refused to comment in that news story, but she did take to the op-ed page in to defend theoretical stylistics. It was difficult writingâ€”as the *New York Magazine* profile repeatsâ€”and it had a moral purpose. It was a statement of purpose posted on a ballot of the Modern Language Association. Butler was running for an office in the organization and had this to say: The MLA has an obligation to make clear the value of literary studies to the broader public and to counter the anti-intellectualism and sloganeering that threatens the critical thought within the academy. Perhaps most important is to show that a culturally complex range of writing and thinking compose the world of literary studies today. Did you catch the errors? One might chalk the mistakes up to the context, a quick campaign statement by a busy academic. Contemporary feminist debates over the meanings of gender lead time and again to a certain sense of trouble, as if the indeterminacy of gender might eventually culminate in the failure of feminism. Perhaps trouble need not carry such a negative valence. The rebellion and its reprimand seemed to be caught up in the same terms, a phenomenon that gave rise to my first critical insight into the subtle ruse of power: The prevailing law threatened one with trouble, even put one in trouble, all to keep one out of trouble. Hence, I concluded that trouble is inevitable and the task, how best to make it, what best way to be in it. Nothing complicated there, nothing hard to understand, and nothing subversive or critical, either. But Butler thinks it is. The grammar and punctuation are wrong. The task, then, was to determine how best to make it, how to be in it effectively. The next one goes: Again, this is not difficult writing. We can stop there. This is too depressing. Each lapse in grammar and style reflects less upon Butler herself than it does upon the enterprise that has made her an influential celebrity. It is an indictment of the academic humanities.

**5: Butler vs. Reality, Round 2 |**

*Judith Butler and the ethics of 'difficulty' Salih, Sara Judith Butler and the ethics of 'difficulty' 43 desire and capacity to read strategically difficult texts which call into question oppressive, taken-for-granted 'truths' about (for example) the subject, sexuality and 'race'.5 A glance at the publication.*

It may not have been checked over by human eyes. For matters of precision please consult the original pdf. Adorno Prize Lecture Can one lead a good life in a bad life? It is a question to which I return time and again, one that continues to make itself felt in a recurrent way. There is no easy way to answer the question, and certainly no easy way to escape its claim upon us. Indeed, we are left with the question, how does one lead a good life in a bad life? He underscored the difficulty of finding a way to pursue a good life for oneself, as oneself, in the context of a broader world that is structured by inequality, exploitation and forms of effacement. That would at least be the initial way I would reformulate his question. Indeed, as I reformulate it for you now, I am aware that it is a question that takes new form depending on the historical time in which it is formulated. So, from the beginning, we have two problems: The second problem is, what form does this question take for us now? Or, how does the historical time in which we live condition and permeate the form of the question itself? Before I go further, I am compelled to reflect on the terms we use. Many have identified the good life with economic well-being, prosperity, or even security, but we know that both economic well-being and security can be achieved by those who are not living a good life. And this is most clear when those who claim to live the good life do so by profiting off the labour of others, or relying on an economic system that entrenches inequality. If we rely on ordinary language to tell us what the good life is, we will become confused, since the phrase has become a vector for competing schemes of value. When Adorno queries whether it is possible to lead a good life in a bad life, he is asking about the relation of moral conduct to social conditions, but more broadly about the relation of morality to social theory; indeed, he is also asking how the broader operations of power and domination enter into, or disrupt, our individual reflections on how best to live. In his lectures Problems of Moral Philosophy, he writes: Announcement of the prize led to a campaign against awarding the prize to Butler on the grounds of her political positions on Israel and Palestine. Her response to one such criticism in The Jerusalem Post can be found, along with more than twenty translations into other languages, at [www](http://www). If I ask how best to live, or how to lead a good life, I seem to draw upon not only ideas of what is good, but also of what is living, and what is life. I must have a sense of my life in order to ask what kind of life to lead, and my life must appear to me as something I might lead, something that does not just lead me. How does one lead a life when not all life processes that make up a life can be led, or when only certain aspects of a life can be directed or formed in a deliberate or reflective way, and others clearly not? By biopolitics, I mean those powers that organize life, even the powers that differentially dispose lives to precarity as part of a broader management of populations through governmental and non-governmental means, and that establish a set of measures for the differential valuation of life itself. In asking how to lead my life, I am already negotiating such forms of power. The most individual question of morality "how do I live this life that is mine? Whose lives do not matter as lives, are not recognizable as living, or count only ambiguously as alive? Such questions presume that that we cannot take for granted that all living humans bear the status of a subject who is worthy of rights and protections, with freedom and a sense of political belonging; on the contrary, such a status must be secured through political means, and where it is denied that deprivation must be made manifest. It has been my suggestion that to understand the differential way that such a status is allocated, we must ask: The biopolitical management of the ungrievable proves crucial to approaching the question, how do I lead this life? And how do I live this life within the life, the conditions of living, that structure us now? At stake is the following sort of inquiry: Of course, this question becomes most acute for someone, anyone, who already understands him or herself to be a dispensable sort of being, one who registers at an affective and corporeal level that his or her life is not worth safeguarding, protecting and valuing. If it turns out that I have no certainty that I will have food or shelter, or that no social network or institution would catch me if I fall, then I come to belong to the ungrievable. But

these forms of persistence and resistance still take place within the shadow-life of the public, occasionally breaking out and contesting those schemes by which they are devalued by asserting their collective value. So, yes, the ungrievable gather sometimes in public insurgencies of grief, which is why in so many countries it is difficult to distinguish the funeral from the demonstration. So I overstate the case, but I do it for a reason. The reason that someone will not be grieved for, or have already been established as one who is not to be grieved for, is that there is no present structure of support that will sustain that life, which implies that it is devalued, not worth supporting and protecting as a life by dominant schemes of value. The very future of my life depends upon that condition of support, so if I am not supported, then my life is established as tenuous, precarious, and in that sense not worthy to be protected from injury or loss, and so not grievable. One must, as it were, be grievable before one is lost, before any question of being neglected or abandoned, and one must be able to live a life knowing that the loss of this life that I am would be mourned and so every measure will be taken to forestall this loss. In other words, how do I endeavour to lead a good life if I do not have a life to speak of, or when the life that I seek to lead is considered dispensable, or is in fact already abandoned? When the life that I lead is unliveable, a rather searing paradox follows, for the question, how do I lead a good life? Indeed, the question presumes as well that there is an I who has the power to pose the question reflexively, and that I also appear to myself, which means that I can appear within the field of appearance that is available to me. For the question to be viable, the one who asks it must be able to pursue whatever answer emerges. For the question to clear a path that I can follow, the world must be structured in such a way that my reflection and action prove not only possible but efficacious. If I am to deliberate on how best to live, then I have to presume that the life I seek to pursue can be affirmed as a life, that I can affirm it, even if it is not affirmed more generally, or even under those conditions when it is not always easy to discern whether there is a social and economic affirmation of my life. After all, this life that is mine is reflected back to me from a world that is disposed to allocate the value of life differentially, a world in which my own life is valued more or less than others. In other words, this life that is mine reflects back to me a problem of equality and power and, more broadly, the justice or injustice of the allocation of value. In other words, I cannot affirm my own life without critically evaluating those structures that differentially value life itself. This practice of critique is one in which my own life is bound up with the objects that I think about. My life is this life, lived here, in the spatio-temporal horizon established by my body, but it is also out there, implicated in other living processes of which I am but one. Further, it is implicated in the power differentials that decide whose life matters more, and whose life matters less, whose life becomes a paradigm for all living things, and whose life is a non-life within the contemporary terms that govern the value of living beings. Adorno remarks that we need to hold fast to moral norms, to self-criticism, to the question of right and wrong, and at the same time to a sense of the fallibility of the authority that has the confidence to undertake such self-criticism. And since values are defined and distributed through modes of power whose authority must be questioned, I am in a certain bind. Do I establish myself in the terms that would make my life valuable, or do I offer a critique of the reigning order of values? So though I must and do ask, how shall I live a good life, and this aspiration is an important one, I have to think carefully about this life that is mine, that is also a broader social life, that is connected with other living beings in ways that engage me in a critical relation to the discursive orders of life and value in which I live, or, rather, in which I endeavour to live. What gives them their authority? And is that authority legitimate? Since my own life is at stake in such an inquiry, the critique of the biopolitical order is a living issue for me, and as much as the potential for living a good life is at stake, so too is the struggle to live and the struggle to live within a just world. Whether or not I can live a life that has value is not something that I can decide on my own, since it turns out that this life is and is not my own, and that this is what makes me a social creature, and a living one. The question of how to live the good life, then, is already, and from the start, bound up with this ambiguity, and is bound up with a living lebendig practice of critique. If I am not able to establish my value in the world in any more than a transient way, then my sense of possibility is equally transient. The moral imperative to lead a good life and the reflective questions it engenders can sometimes seem very cruel and unthinking to those who live in conditions of hopelessness, and we can perhaps easily understand the cynicism that sometimes envelops the very practice of morality: Because contemporary forms of economic

abandonment and dispossession that follow from the institutionalization of neoliberal rationalities or the differential production of precarity cannot for the most part be analogized with slavery, it remains important to distinguish among modalities of social death. How can one ask how best to lead a life when one feels no power to direct life, when one is uncertain that one is alive, or when one is struggling to feel the sense that one is alive, but also fearing that feeling, and the pain of living in this way? Under contemporary conditions of forced emigration, vast populations now live with no sense of a secure future, no sense of continuing political belonging, living a sense of damaged life as part of the daily experience of neoliberalism. I do not mean to say that the struggle for survival precedes the domain of morality or moral obligation as such, since we know that even under conditions of extreme threat, people do offer whatever acts of support are possible. We know this from some of the extraordinary reports from the concentration camps. In the work of Robert Antelme, for instance, it could be the exchange of a cigarette between those who share no common language, but find themselves in the same condition of imprisonment and peril in the KZ. Or in the work of Primo Levi, the response to the other can take the form of simply listening to, and recording, the details of the story that the other might tell, letting that story become part of an undeniable archive, the enduring trace of loss that compels the ongoing obligation to mourn. Or in the work of Charlotte Delbo, the sudden offering to another of the last piece of bread that one desperately needs for oneself. And yet, in these same accounts, there are also those who will not extend the hand, who will take the bread for themselves, hoard the cigarette, and sometimes suffer the anguish of depriving another under conditions of radical destitution. In other words, under conditions of extreme peril and heightened precarity, the moral dilemma does not pass away; it persists precisely in the tension between wanting to live and wanting to live in a certain way with others. Hannah Arendt insisted on the crucial distinction between the desire to live and the desire to live well, or, rather, the desire to live the good life. Only the good life makes life worth living. She resolved that Socratic dilemma quite easily but perhaps too quickly, or so it seems to me. I am not sure her answer can work for us; nor am I convinced that it ever did quite work. For Arendt, the life of the body had for the most part to be separated from the life of the mind, which is why in *The Human Condition* she drew a distinction between the public and private spheres. The private sphere included the domain of need, the reproduction of material life, sexuality, life, death and transience. She clearly understood that the private sphere supported the public sphere of action and thought, but in her view the political had to be defined by action, including the active sense of speaking. So the verbal deed became the action of the deliberative and public space of politics. Those who entered into the public did so from the private sphere, so the public sphere depended fundamentally on the reproduction of the private and the clear passageway that led from the private to the public. Those who could not speak Greek, who came from elsewhere and whose speech was not intelligible were considered barbarians, which means that the public sphere was not conceived as a space of multilingualism and so failed to imply the practice of translation as a public obligation. And yet we can see that the efficacious verbal act depended on a a stable and sequestered private sphere that reproduced the masculine speaker and actor and b a language designated for verbal action, the defining feature of politics that could be heard and understood because it conformed to the demands of monolingualism. The public sphere, characterized by an intelligible and efficacious set of speech acts, was thus perpetually shadowed by the problems of unrecognized labour women and slaves and multilingualism. And the site where both converge was precisely the situation of the slave, one who could be replaced, whose political status was null, and whose language was considered no language at all. Of course, Arendt understood that the body was important to any conception of action, and that even those who fight in resistances or in revolutions had to undertake bodily actions to claim their rights and to create something new. The body appears again as a central figure in her important conception of natality, which is linked with her conception of both aesthetics and politics. If there is suffering in acts of political resistance or, indeed, in giving birth, it is a suffering that serves the purpose of bringing something new into the world. And yet, what do we make of that suffering that belongs to forms of labour that slowly or quickly destroy the body of the labourer, or other forms that serve no instrumental purpose at all? However, since any conception of the political has to take into account what operation of power demarcates the political from the pre-political, and how the distinction between public and private accords differential value to different life processes, we have to

refuse the Arendtian definition, even as it gives us much to value. Or, rather, we have to take the Arendtian distinction between the life of the body and the life of the mind as a point of departure for thinking about a different kind of bodily politics. After all, Arendt does not simply distinguish mind and body in a Cartesian sense; rather, she affirms only those forms of embodied thought and action that create something new, that undertake action with performative efficacy. Actions that are performative are irreducible to technical applications, and they are differentiated from passive and transient forms of experience. Thus, when and where there is suffering or transience, it is there to be transformed into the life of action and thought. Such action and thought have to be performative in the illocutionary sense, modelled on aesthetic judgement, bringing something new into the world. If there is no political actor who cannot assume that the private domain operates as support, then the political defined as the public is essentially dependent on the private, which means that the private is not the opposite of the political, but enters into its very definition. This well-fed body speaks openly and publicly; this body which spent the night sheltered and in the private company of others emerges always later to act in public. That private sphere becomes the very background of public action, but should it for that reason be cast as pre-political?

6: Common Places » Extending Judith Butler's "Vulnerability"

*Judith Butler. Judith Butler. biography. but offers a new practice of values based on that very suspension. I will say that critique is the movement by which.*

He is majoring in English and hopes to pursue a medical degree after Davidson. He is passionate about literature, the education of children, and his faith in Jesus Christ. His paper was written for Dr. Campbell in WRI Reading Like a Writer. For social philosopher Judith Butler, this pendulum swing toward control is an illusion. Surprisingly, Butler describes vulnerability as a sense of ecstasy—“being beside oneself”—which can be prompted by passion or grief. Butler urges us, then, to embrace vulnerability rather than delimit it, diminish it, or deny it altogether. The intersex community consists of individuals with dual reproductive physiologies, which have typically been considered an abnormal manifestation which must be corrected by medical intervention. But, as the Intersex Society of North America suggests, intersex is not a black-and-white distinction, with maleness or femaleness easily differentiated. They liken sexual gradations to the color spectrum in which distinct colors inevitably converge at some point. Looking at a shade from the convergent area of red and orange, for example, two people may differ on which of the two colors is seen. But in human cultures, sex categories get simplified into male, female, and sometimes intersex, in order to simplify social interactions, express what we know and feel, and maintain order. Individuals with not XX female nor XY male chromosomes are born 1 in 1,, but individuals whose body morphology differs from the typical male or female are both 1 in She reminds us that a world where recognition is contingent on clearly demarcated male-female identities is an impossible place for intersex persons to thrive. The ideology she hopes to disrupt that of male and female being the only acceptable identity positions bears a similarity to the practice of racism in the antebellum South and its white-black deterministic binary. Slavery should never be defended, but it pays to observe the conditions that made it conceivable. To the plantation owner, the death of a slave meant the loss of property. His death meant the loss of a laboring machine, equal to the loss of material property, like a burnt storehouse of cotton. One must push farther to understand what forces made such an ideology and way of life possible and what forces held so many Americans back from accepting a non-racist ideology during Jim Crow and beyond. These men grew up under the instruction that the white race was supreme, that Caucasians were a higher species than blacks. Butler notes that when a government responds to crimes against humanity with violence—as she notes America did after the terrorist attacks of September 11, —“attempting to dispel fear of vulnerability, the violence simply changes hands, and someone else becomes the victim of fear. A better way to respond to vulnerability, she claims, would be to seize the opportunity to newly understand our mutual dependency and vulnerability, to step into the shoes of others across the globe and across time who have experienced similar fear. Martin Luther King, Jr. Though some fought fire with fire, Dr. King sought nonviolence that he hoped would one day bloom into racial equality: Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Butler pleads with readers to take the general misunderstanding and occasional persecution of intersexed persons as an opportunity to recognize vulnerability: Still, just as Dr. Works Cited Butler, Judith. On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy. An Anthology for Writers. King, Reverend Martin Luther, Jr. Collins and World,

### 7: Review: Precarious Life by Judith Butler | Books | The Guardian

*Judith Pamela Butler (born ) is an American philosopher and gender theorist whose work has influenced political philosophy, ethics and the fields of third-wave feminist, queer and literary theory.*

It has now been more than twenty years since Judith Butler wrote the first edition of *Gender Trouble*, and the observations that she highlighted in its first chapter still resonate with us today, even as we ponder their significance for contemporary political action. Likewise, we might ask: It is with this in mind that Butler claimed: Subjects are discursively constituted within a political system that by means of such constitution aims at validating and reproducing itself. Public discourse sets the expectations for what characteristics, forms of behavior, etc. The disgraceful North Carolina anti-trans bathroom law is a clear example of language being used to dictate what passes for a woman or man and what does not. For feminists thinkers, this raises the question: Or is it the case that, in order to be a woman and demand recognition of the rights that one should be granted as such one has to fit certain criteria that make one recognizable as a woman to begin with? This realization, however, does not in and of itself spell the end of problems for feminist thinkers. The idea that a stable notion of gender runs counter to feminist theory insofar as it opens up issues of essentialism and reification also requires looking for new ways to effectively organize. I think a middle ground can be found. To be fair, Butler certainly does not desire to inspire inaction. On the contrary, her whole point is that feminist political actions can be carried out without pre-existing unity. My point is to argue that solidarity is needed for political action, particularly for those of us who do not want to participate in political movements that simply effect symbolic changes here and there like the legalization of same-sex-marriage without actually injuring the superstructure sustaining the system. We need a certain solidarity to serve as the motor of political action because we need people to care about those who are different from themselves. In her engagement with the issues of unity and solidarity, Butler seems to assume that unity and solidarity can only apply to issues of identity. I like to think that we can feel and exercise solidarity not only because we are like others, but because we feel respect for their goals. In this sense, partaking in a political struggle does not necessarily require that I see myself in others, or vice versa. But it does require that I understand their causes and that I endorse them to the point of being able to fight for them. We have to feel some kind of hope in face of the transformations that our peers in struggle are longing for. This is the kind of unity that I think is needed for political action, within and beyond the horizons of feminist struggles. Of course, it might be said that Butler would not be opposed to such a manifestation of unity and solidarity but this is not a conclusion that emerges from reading her intervention concerning what the subject of feminism should be.

**8: Project MUSE - Judith Butler's Henry James**

*Whatever one wants to say about the philosopher Judith Butler's contribution to contemporary thought, I suspect that not even her most devoted disciple would call her a lucid writer. In her.*

Summary[ edit ] Butler criticizes one of the central assumptions of feminist theory: For Butler, " women " and " woman " are categories complicated by factors such as class , ethnicity , and sexuality. Moreover, the universality presumed by these terms parallels the assumed universality of the patriarchy , and erases the particularity of oppression in distinct times and places. Butler thus eschews identity politics in favor of a new, coalitional feminism that critiques the basis of identity and gender. She challenges assumptions about the distinction often made between sex and gender, according to which sex is biological while gender is culturally constructed. Butler argues that this false distinction introduces a split into the supposedly unified subject of feminism. Sexed bodies cannot signify without gender, and the apparent existence of sex prior to discourse and cultural imposition is only an effect of the functioning of gender. Sex and gender are both constructed. Examining the work of the philosophers Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray , Butler explores the relationship between power and categories of sex and gender. For Beauvoir, women constitute a lack against which men establish their identity; for Irigaray, this dialectic belongs to a "signifying economy" that excludes the representation of women altogether because it employs phallogocentric language. Both assume that there exists a female "self-identical being" in need of representation, and their arguments hide the impossibility of "being" a gender at all. Butler argues instead that gender is performative: In this way, Butler provides an opening for subversive action. She calls for people to trouble the categories of gender through performance. Discussing the patriarchy, Butler notes that feminists have frequently made recourse to the supposed pre-patriarchal state of culture as a model upon which to base a new, non-oppressive society. For this reason, accounts of the original transformation of sex into gender by means of the incest taboo have proven particularly useful to feminists. Butler revisits three of the most popular: Butler extends these accounts of gender identification in order to emphasize the productive or performative aspects of gender. For Butler, "heterosexual melancholy is culturally instituted as the price of stable gender identities" 70 and for heterosexuality to remain stable, it demands the notion of homosexuality, which remains prohibited but necessarily within the bounds of culture. Finally, she points again to the productivity of the incest taboo, a law which generates and regulates approved heterosexuality and subversive homosexuality, neither of which exists before the law. In response to the work of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan that posited a paternal Symbolic order and a repression of the "feminine" required for language and culture, Julia Kristeva added women back into the narrative by claiming that poetic language is "the " semiotic " " was a surfacing of the maternal body in writing, uncontrolled by the paternal logos. For Kristeva, poetic writing and maternity are the sole culturally permissible ways for women to return to the maternal body that bore them, and female homosexuality is an impossibility, a near psychosis. Butler criticizes Kristeva, claiming that her insistence on a "maternal" that precedes culture and on poetry as a return to the maternal body is essentialist: Butler accuses Foucault of romanticism, claiming that his proclamation of a blissful identity "prior" to cultural inscription contradicts his work in *The History of Sexuality*, in which he posits that the idea of a "real" or "true" or "originary" sexual identity is an illusion, in other words that "sex" is not the solution to the repressive system of power but part of that system itself. The notion of "sex" is always coded as female, according to Wittig, a way to designate the non-male through an absence. Women, thus reduced to "sex", cannot escape carrying sex as a burden. Wittig argues that even the naming of the body parts creates a fiction and constructs the features themselves, fragmenting what was really once "whole". Butler questions the notion that "the body" itself is a natural entity that "admits no genealogy", a usual given without explanation: Building on the thinking of the anthropologist Mary Douglas , outlined in her *Purity and Danger* , Butler claims that the boundaries of the body have been drawn to instate certain taboos about limits and possibilities of exchange. Butler attempts to construct a feminism via the politics of jurido-discursive power from which the gendered pronoun has been removed or not presumed to be a reasonable category. The notion of a subject is for her formed through repetition, through

a "practice of signification" Butler offers parody for example, the practice of drag as a way to destabilize and make apparent the invisible assumptions about gender identity and the inhabitability of such "ontological locales" as gender. All page numbers are from the first edition: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Publication history*[ edit ] *Gender Trouble* was first published by Routledge in 1990. Later that year, a second edition was published by Routledge. In 2004, a Routledge Classics edition was published. According to Elliott, the core idea expounded in *Gender Trouble*, that "gender is a kind of improvised performance, a form of theatricality that constitutes a sense of identity", came to be seen as "foundational to the project of queer theory and the advancing of dissident sexual practices during the 1990s".

**9: Identity Politics (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)**

*"The Values of Difficulty" by Judith Butler (ATD,) Active Reading: According to Butler, common sense is an idea that is socially familiar or seen as natural, but which is not necessarily "common" and therefore, should be challenged.*

But matters become more vexing if we attempt to distinguish between a critique of this or that position and critique as a more generalized practice, one that might be described without reference to its specific objects. Can we even ask such a question about the generalized character of critique without gesturing toward an essence of critique? And if we achieved the generalized picture, offering something which approaches a philosophy of critique, would we then lose the very distinction between philosophy and critique that operates as part of the definition of critique itself? Critique is always a critique of some instituted practice, discourse, episteme, institution, and it loses its character the moment in which it is abstracted from its operation and made to stand alone as a purely generalizable practice. But if this is true, this does not mean that no generalizations are possible or that, indeed, we are mired in particularisms. On the contrary, we tread here in an area of constrained generality, one which broaches the philosophical, but must, if it is to remain critical, remain at a distance from that very achievement. So, for Williams, the practice of critique is not reducible to arriving at judgments and expressing them. Judgments operate for both thinkers as ways to subsume a particular under an already constituted category, whereas critique asks after the occlusive constitution of the field of categories themselves. What becomes especially important for Foucault in this domain, to try to think the problem of freedom and, indeed, ethics in general, beyond judgment: He not only asks what critique is, but seeks to understand the kind of question that critique institutes, offering some tentative ways of circumscribing its activity. What remains perhaps most important about that lecture, and the more developed essay that followed, is the question form in which the matter is put. Indeed, I would suggest that what Foucault seeks to do with this question is something quite different from what we have perhaps come to expect from critique. Habermas made the operation of critique quite problematic when he suggested that a move beyond critical theory was required if we are to seek recourse to norms in making evaluative judgments about social conditions and social goals. The perspective of critique, in his view, is able to call foundations into question, denaturalize social and political hierarchy, and even establish perspectives by which a certain distance on the naturalized world can be had. But none of these activities can tell us in what direction we ought to move, nor can they tell us whether the activities in which we engage are realizing certain kinds of normatively justified goals. Hence, in his view, critical theory had to give way to a stronger normative theory, such as communicative action, in order to supply a foundation for critical theory, enabling strong normative judgments to be made, [5] and for politics not only to have a clear aim and normative aspiration, but for us to be able to evaluate current practices in terms of their abilities to reach those goals. In making this kind of criticism of critique, Habermas became curiously uncritical about the very sense of normativity he deployed. But if those very formations and delimitations have normative consequences, then it will be necessary to ask after the values that set the stage for action, and this will be an important dimension of any critical inquiry into normative matters. And though the Habermasians may have an answer to this problem, my aim today is not to rehearse these debates nor to answer them, but to mark the distance between a notion of critique that is characterized as normatively impoverished in some sense, and another, which I hope to offer here, which is not only more complex than the usual criticism assumes but which has, I would argue, strong normative commitments that appear in forms that would be difficult, if not impossible, to read within the current grammars of normativity. Indeed, in this essay, I hope to show that Foucault not only makes an important contribution to normative theory, but that both his aesthetics and his account of the subject are integrally related to both his ethics and politics. Whereas some have dismissed him as an aesthete or, indeed, as a nihilist, I hope to suggest that the foray he makes into the topic of self-making and, by presupposition, into poiesis itself is central to the politics of desubjugation that he proposes. Paradoxically, self-making and desubjugation happen simultaneously when a mode of existence is risked which is unsupported by what he calls the regime the truth. Critique will be dependent on its objects, but its objects will in turn define the very

meaning of critique. Further, the primary task of critique will not be to evaluate whether its objects “social conditions, practices, forms of knowledge, power, and discourse” are good or bad, valued highly or demeaned, but to bring into relief the very framework of evaluation itself. What is the relation of knowledge to power such that our epistemological certainties turn out to support a way of structuring the world that forecloses alternative possibilities of ordering? Of course, we may think that we need epistemological certainty in order to state for sure that the world is and ought to be ordered a given way. To what extent, however, is that certainty orchestrated by forms of knowledge precisely in order to foreclose the possibility of thinking otherwise? If we do not have a moral framework in which to decide with knowingness that certain new possibilities or ways of thinking otherwise will bring forth that world whose betterness we can judge by sure and already established standards? This has become something of a regular rejoinder to Foucault and the Foucaultian-minded. And shall we assume that the relative silence that has greeted this habit of fault-finding in Foucault is a sign that his theory has no reassuring answers to give? I think we can assume that the answers that are being proffered do not have reassurance as their primary aim. This is, of course, not to say what withdraws reassurance is, by definition, not an answer. But here I would ask for your patience since it turns out that critique is a practice that requires a certain amount of patience in the same way that reading, according to Nietzsche, required that we act a bit more like cows than humans and learn the art of slow rumination. One asks about the limits of ways of knowing because one has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives. The categories by which social life are ordered produce a certain incoherence or entire realms of unspeakability. And it is from this condition, the tear in the fabric of our epistemological web, that the practice of critique emerges, with the awareness that no discourse is adequate here or that our reigning discourses have produced an impasse. Indeed, the very debate in which the strong normative view wars with critical theory may produce precisely that form of discursive impasse from which the necessity and urgency of critique emerges. Significantly, for Foucault, this exposure of the limit of the epistemological field is linked with the practice of virtue, as if virtue is counter to regulation and order, as if virtue itself is to be found in the risking of established order. He is not shy about the relation here. Virtue is most often understood either as an attribute or a practice of a subject, or indeed a quality that conditions and characterizes a certain kind of action or practice. It belongs to an ethics which is not fulfilled merely by following objectively formulated rules or laws. And virtue is not only a way of complying with or conforming with preestablished norms. It is, more radically, a critical relation to those norms, one which, for Foucault, takes shape as a specific stylization of morality. Foucault gives us an indication of what he means by virtue in the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume Two*. Just as critique intersects with philosophy without quite coinciding with it, so Foucault in that introduction seeks to make of his own thought an example of a non-prescriptive form of moral inquiry. In the same way, he will later ask about forms of moral experience that are not rigidly defined by a juridical law, a rule or command to which the self is said mechanically or uniformly to submit. And this form of moral experience will be different from the submission to a command. Indeed, to the extent that Foucault interrogates moral experience here or elsewhere, he understands himself to be making an inquiry into moral experiences that are not primarily or fundamentally structured by prohibition or interdiction. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, [7] he sought to show that the primary interdictions assumed by psychoanalysis and the structuralist account of cultural prohibitions cannot be assumed as historical constants. Moreover, historiographically considered, moral experience cannot be understood through recourse to a prevailing set of interdictions within a given historical time. Although there are codes to be studied, these codes must always be studied in relation to the modes of subjectivation to which they correspond. On the contrary, the self fashions itself in terms of the norm, comes to inhabit and incorporate the norm, but the norm is not in this sense external to the principle by which the self is formed. Only with reference to this prevailing ontological horizon, itself instituted through a set of practices, will we be able to understand the kinds of relations to moral precepts that have been formed as well as those that are yet to be formed. For instance, he considers at length various practices of austerity, and he ties these to the production of a certain kind of masculine subject. The practices of austerity do not attest to a single and abiding prohibition, but work in the service of crafting a certain kind of self. Or put in a more precise way, the

self, incorporating the rules of conduct that represent the virtue of austerity, creates itself as a specific kind of subject. Thus, in section 3 of that same introduction, Foucault makes clear that it will not suffice to offer a chronicled history of moral codes, for such a history cannot tell us how these codes were lived and, more specifically, what forms of subject-formation such codes required and facilitated. Here he begins to sound like a phenomenologist. But there is, in addition to the recourse to the experiential means by which moral categories are grasped, a critical move as well, for the subjective relation to those norms will be neither predictable nor mechanical. The point will not be to refer practice to a pregiven epistemological context, but to establish critique as the very practice that exposes the limits of that epistemological horizon itself, making the contours of the horizon appear, as it were, for the first time, we might say, in relation to its own limit. Moreover, the critical practice in question turns out to entail self-transformation in relation to a rule of conduct. How, then, does self-transformation lead to the exposure of this limit? It is, of course, one thing to conduct oneself in relation to a code of conduct, and it is another thing to form oneself as an ethical subject in relation to a code of conduct and it will be yet another thing to form oneself as that which risks the orderliness of the code itself. The rules of chastity provide an important example for Foucault. There is a difference, for instance, in not acting on desires that would violate a precept to which one is morally bound and developing a practice of desire, so to speak, which is informed by a certain ethical project or task. The model according to which submitting to a rule of law is required would involve one in not acting in certain ways, installing an effective prohibition against the acting out of certain desires. But the model which Foucault seeks to understand and, indeed, to incorporate and exemplify takes moral prescription to participate in the forming of a kind of action. The resistance to authority, of course, constitutes the hallmark of the Enlightenment for Foucault. And he offers us a reading of the Enlightenment which not only establishes his own continuity with its aims, but reads his own dilemmas back into the history of the Enlightenment itself. In his view, critique begins with questioning the demand for absolute obedience and subjecting every governmental obligation imposed on subjects to a rational and reflective evaluation. Although Foucault will not follow this turn to reason, he will nevertheless ask what criteria delimit the sorts of reasons that can come to bear on the question of obedience. He will be particularly interested in the problem of how that delimited field forms the subject and how, in turn, a subject comes to form and reform those reasons. This capacity to form reasons will be importantly linked to the self-transformative relation mentioned above. To be critical of an authority that poses as absolute requires a critical practice that has self-transformation at its core. But how do we move from understanding the reasons we might have for consenting to a demand to forming those reasons for ourselves, to transforming ourselves in the course of producing those reasons and, finally, putting at risk the field of reason itself? Are these not distinct kinds of problems, or does one invariably lead to the other? Is the autonomy achieved in forming reasons which serve as the basis for accepting or rejecting a pregiven law the same as the transformation of the self that takes place when a rule becomes incorporated into the very action of the subject? It is of course unclear how the desire not to be governed is linked with virtue. He does make clear, however, that he is not posing the possibility of radical anarchy, and that the question is not how to become radically ungovernable. It is a specific question that emerges in relation to a specific form of government: We will have to ask why. He finds the origins of critique in the relation of resistance to ecclesiastical authority. It meant returning to the Scriptures And this objection was clearly waged in the name of an alternative or, minimally, emerging ground of truth and of justice. Does the validity derive from the consent to accept authority? If so, does consent validate the reasons offered, whatever they are? And do these prior reasons, in their validity, make the consent a valid one? For the practice by which the limits to absolute authority are set is one that is fundamentally dependent on the horizon of knowledge effects within which it operates. The critical practice does not well up from the innate freedom of the soul, but is formed instead in the crucible of a particular exchange between a set of rules or precepts which are already there and a stylization of acts which extends and reformulates that prior set of rules and precepts. But this reflexivity does not take place internal to a subject. For Foucault, this is an act which poses some risk, for the point will not only be to object to this or that governmental demand, but to ask about the order in which such a demand becomes legible and possible. In this difference, we might say, one begins to enter a critical relation to such

orderings and the ethical precepts to which they give rise. The problem is precisely that they seek to foreclose the critical relation, that is, to extend their own power to order the entire field of moral and political judgment. They orchestrate and exhaust the field of certainty itself. How does one call into question the exhaustive hold that such rules of ordering have upon certainty without risking uncertainty, without inhabiting that place of wavering which exposes one to the charge of immorality, evil, aestheticism. The critical attitude is not moral according to the rules whose limits that very critical relation seeks to interrogate. But how else can critique do its job without risking the denunciations of those who naturalize and render hegemonic the very moral terms put into question by critique itself? A subject will emerge in relation to an established order of truth, but it can also take a point of view on that established order that retrospectively suspends its own ontological ground.

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