

Unraveling the self: How postmodern philosophy reshaped the narrative of personal identity

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ABSTRACT. This paper examines the philosophies of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Judith Butler, focusing on their insights into identity and individualism. While self-help literature often advocates fixed identities, this study argues for an alternative: existence as constant transformation, challenging stagnation in personal growth. Using a materialist lens, it explores identity through interactions of internal and external experiences with power dynamics. Postmodernists collectively highlight the self's fluidity and its perpetual evolution. The goal is to assess their influence on understanding the self and explore implications for future narratives on identity.

Keywords: *identity, body, becoming, performativity.*

Introduction

My recent research aims to reveal contemporary mechanisms of control, resistance, and survival. In this effort to understand complex relationships, I have become aware that no research can be started without some definition of the individual. This obsessive issue of the individual does not claim any innovation; on the contrary, it is highly visible how it becomes more and more prominent in contemporary

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society due to oppressive capitalist systems that want to intentionally shift the focus on the problem of the individual, of self-accountability, taking away the importance of the institutions, of the systemic issues, and painting an image of the ultra-potent self, that is always alone and fully functional in its own singularity.

In contemporary times, there has been a growing trend towards embracing self-belief and our authentic selves. Therapy encourages us to give ourselves the upmost importance, as do self-help books, movies, modern social sciences, and other similar sources. The discourse on revolution has shifted its focus from collective societal actions to individual capabilities. Unfortunately, this mindset originates from the assumption that we have a fixed and unchangeable identity. It suggests that we can discover our true selves by pursuing external achievements, such as climbing mountains, changing jobs, or adopting a more positive mindset. In his book *The Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han argues that

Today's society is no longer Foucault's disciplinary world of hospitals, madhouses, prisons, barracks, and factories. It has long been replaced by another regime, namely a society of fitness studios, office towers, banks, airports, shopping malls, and genetic laboratories. Twenty-first-century society is no longer a disciplinary society, but rather an achievement society [Leistungsgesellschaft]. Also, its inhabitants are no longer "obedience-subjects" but "achievement-subjects." They are entrepreneurs themselves.¹

which only highlights the way in which our toxic cult of the self, where we are the own gods of our existence and no external factor can overcome that, makes us the slaves of our own existence. The existence of your current state implies that you are obligated to exert greater effort, refrain from idleness, and consistently recover from setbacks, regardless of the circumstances, as it is perpetually your own culpability and obligation.

This essay aims to refute the widely held notion that one's identity is solely self-determined. Instead, it presents postmodern perspectives that argue that one's identity is a social construct shaped by external influences. It emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and recognizing that our identities are not fixed but rather an ongoing process of development. Without appealing to the sources of classical philosophy, this paper aims to understand the identity crisis and to demonstrate the need to redefine identity on an ontological level. This paper will first examine the conceptual

¹ Han, Byung-Chul. *The burnout society*. Stanford University Press, 2015, pp. 8.

framework, beginning with Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche in the twentieth century, followed by postmodernist perspectives. Next, I will analyze Michel Foucault's insights on medicalization and its implications for the body, considering the influence of power dynamics. Subsequently, I will incorporate a Deleuzian perspective and conclude with Judith Butler's contemporary interpretation of Foucault, elucidating her rationale and perspective.

Understanding the postmodern framework

And yet, although this is not a historical work, we will resort to a genealogical method in unraveling the hegemony behind the cult of individuality. Thus, a key point in the effort of mapping this phenomenon is represented by the emergence of existentialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which marked a crucial moment in philosophical discourse, proposing a profound reconsideration of the nature of human existence and identity.² At the heart of this philosophical revolution was a fundamental question: *is identity something fixed, immutable, and predetermined, or is it a dynamic, evolving process of becoming?*

Among the notorious existentialists, Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre are the ones who dared to confront conventional notions of identity directly.³ This has paved the way for the future postmodern perspective we will talk about. Firstly, Nietzsche, in his philosophical work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, shattered the prevailing belief in fixed identity, proclaiming the death of God: "And lately, did I hear him say these words: "God is dead: of his pity for man hath God died"⁴ and advocating the emergence of *the Übermensch*⁵—a being freed from the shackles of traditional Christian morality and able to shape its own morality. For Nietzsche, identity is not a fixed structure from the exterior but a dynamic process of self-actualization and continuous transformation. Similarly, Jean-Paul Sartre, in his seminal text *Existentialism is a Humanism*, challenged the idea of a pre-existing fixed identity,

² Bakewell, Sarah. *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails with Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Others*. Other Press, LLC, 2016, pp. 8-12.

³ Gold, Greyson. "Meaning, Morality, and the Good: Articulating the Self through Nietzsche, Sartre, Taylor, and Murdoch." PhD dissertation, 2023, pp 10-30.

⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, New York: Modern Library, 1995, pp. 96.

⁵ Idem.

stating that “For if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one’s action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism—man is free, man is freedom”.⁶ Rejecting any predetermined essence or teleological purpose of human existence means for Sartre, that individuals are thrust into a world deprived of any inherent meaning and are thus free to define themselves by their actions and choices. So, to sum it up, according to Sartre’s existentialist framework, identity is not a given but a perpetual project, shaped and reshaped by the continuous flow of lived experience.

While Nietzsche and Sartre’s existentialist investigations revealed the limits of fixed identity, their insights paved the way for a broader examination of the self in later philosophical thought. Postmodern philosophy, which gained prominence in the mid-to-late 20th century, has frequently critically examined and rejected the concepts of essentialism, universality, and the fixed nature of identity that have traditionally been fundamental to modern Western philosophy. This also meant going against other types of philosophy, such as psychoanalysis and metaphysics. The postmodern approach is distinguished by its skepticism towards grand narratives or meta-narratives that claim to universally structure and elucidate knowledge and reality, as expressed by Jean-François Lyotard.⁷

Postmodern philosophers such as Jacques Derrida have questioned the notion of a fixed and stable identity, emphasizing the instability and inconsistency of language and signs. Derrida’s notion of *différance* argues that meanings are not fixed, but rather vary and defer from each other, implying that identity is never fully present or singular but is always in relation to other identities and meanings⁸. This perspective argues that individual identities are malleable, constantly evolving, and shaped by language and cultural circumstances rather than being predestined. He argues against the existence of a *secret self* by stating:

⁶ Kaufmann, Walter. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Pickle Partners Publishing, 2016, pp. 287-310.

(Jean-Paul Sartre, 1946, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*)

Can also be found: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.html#idem..>

⁷ Lyotard, Jean-François. “The Postmodern Condition,” in *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Modern Theory*, 27-38. 1994.

⁸ Derrida, Jacques. “Différance.” In *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp. 1–27.

How can another see into me, into my most secret self, without my being able to see in there myself and without my being able to see him in me? And I (my secret self, that which can be revealed only to the other, to the wholly other, to God if you wish, is a secret that I will never reflect on, that I will never know or experience or possess as my own, then what sense is there in saying that it is "my" secret, or in saying more generally that a secret belongs, that it is proper to or belongs to some "one," or to some other who remains someone? It is perhaps there that we find the secret of secrecy, namely, that it is not a matter of knowing and that it is there for no-one. A secret doesn't belong, it can never be said to be at home or in its place [chez soi].⁹

What this statement proves to us, apart from his viewpoint on secrecy and the fact that it transcends the individual if we go deeper into the argument, is that he did not see this *self* as accessible, as a given, or even as something we should ever be certain of, as we cannot check it. It also shows the *other* as the one that is able to recognize or acknowledge the self, as a mere truth revealing contingencies and need for the self to be reaffirmed through the other, confirming once again the theory according to which our hyper-individualized bodies need the others, the system if we may, and so it is dependent on it.

Postmodernists oppose essentialism, which is the belief that entities possess a fixed set of attributes that are essential to their identity and function.¹⁰ Philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler have played a crucial role in this analysis, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. Foucault's examination of how discursive practices influence and generate individuals within particular historical and cultural contexts implies that identity is a type of social fabrication that can be altered. Butler's theory of gender performativity¹¹ suggests that gender is not an inherent characteristic but rather a series of actions and expressions that are shaped by societal expectations. These theories will be discussed extensively later in this paper.

Discussions of identities are not purely neutral or descriptive but rather strongly influenced by power dynamics that seek to regulate and control. Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge elucidate that power is not simply a force exerted

⁹ Derrida, J. *The gift of death ; and, literature in secret*, 2008, p. 92.

¹⁰ Ashley, David. "Postmodernism and Antifoundationalism." In *Postmodernism and social inquiry*, Routledge, 2015, pp. 53-75.

¹¹ For more information about what performativity means for Butler see *Gender Trouble*, 1990, Routledge, Preface, passim..

by a higher authority but rather a pervasive element that shapes the fundamental nature of identities through processes of knowledge generation and communication. As I shall demonstrate, postmodernist perspectives emphasize the influence of language, power, and knowledge on the formation of identity narratives, highlighting the political aspect of personal identity construction.

Foucault: a genealogical approach in the era of medicalization

Foucault explores the same themes we find in Nietzsche's work regarding the idea that humans are in a state of collective historical transformation. Human nature is thus not fixed but shaped by historical circumstances, power dynamics, and pervasive inequalities. In his article *Nietzsche, genealogy, history*, Foucault discusses his approach as a genealogical method. According to Foucault, genealogy is the process of revealing the origins of contemporary thought.¹² In order to fully understand these, it is imperative to engage in the study of history; however, mere historical analysis is not enough because, to fully understand history, it is necessary to carefully examine the specific complexities and points of contingency that coincide with the emergence of a particular idea or way of life.¹³ Thus, it is at least as important to examine the circumstances of ordinary people as it is to focus on the governing authorities of a particular era. Genealogy does not, however, involve searching for origins through questions such as: *Where did the concept of capitalism come from?* Instead, it focuses on understanding the complex and gradual development of things before they are even aware of their own development.

Foucault asserts that the basic truth about things is that they lack any essence; thus, coinciding with one of Sartre's main points, whom I mentioned in the introduction, *existence precedes essence*, and due to the existence of the body on which relations are prescribed as it develops, objects have no singular source.¹⁴ Concepts, values, institutions, societies and configurations all emerge in a complex and somewhat disorganized manner. Foucault's interest lies in demonstrating the diverse nature of existing institutions and the diversity of what has been conceived as intrinsically coherent outside of a relationship. Similar to Nietzsche, Foucault

¹² Foucault, Michel. 1977. "*Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.*", pp. 150-153.

¹³ Idem, pp. 139.

¹⁴ Idem, pp. 142-143.

challenges the notion of a historical perspective existing outside of history. In his article, the author discusses the concept of actual history, arguing that it encompasses all aspects of development and includes all that is considered immortal or transcendent. Everything, including emotions and physical bodies, has a historical context.¹⁵ Genealogy attempts to uncover the hidden narratives of entities that may seem to lack historical records.

But we cannot only dwell on the influence of existentialism, Foucault was among the few openly homosexual philosophers of his time¹⁶. However, he takes a rather negative view of the gay liberation movement that took place during the period in which he wrote. One reason for this is that such a movement claims that individuals possess an inherent and unchanging identity that should be celebrated.

In this context, homosexuality is appropriated by what we can call in Deleuze's texts the *body without organs (BwO)*¹⁷, by that we mean a machine of such vast dimensions that it can control and appropriate any culture, because once fixed, identity is subject to power dynamics. Such an approach could take away from the potential of genealogy by putting all kinds of sexuality into pre-established sexual categories. Instead, genealogy does not operate in predetermined patterns but emphasizes the importance of recognizing discontinuity, change and unexpected transformations.

What is the body?

But as we have opened a new theoretical lane, we note that we cannot embark on the discovery of personal identity without an analysis of the *body*. Gilles Deleuze, together with Félix Guattari, introduced the notion of the *body without organs* in their influential publication *Anti-Oedipus* and later extended it in *Thousands of Plateaus*¹⁸. This body without organs is not a static or predetermined entity but rather a space of possibility, a virtual plane of existence in which desire can flow

¹⁵ Idem, pp. 139-164, *passim*.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 1, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1998), 135–155.

¹⁷ First introduced in Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Felix, 1983. *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pp. 8 while talking about Desiring Machines.

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

without being constrained by the limitations of structure and organisation.¹⁹ As a response to the abstract concept of the body in metaphysics and of the unconscious in psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari propose this theory that materialistically encapsulates the given theme and closes the issue of the metaphysics of the body. They argue that conscious and unconscious fantasies reveal potential forms and functions of the body that require liberation. They also suggested using biology, especially the body's homeostatic process, which maintains stability, is constrained by its organization and especially its organs, which can be interpreted as conditioning the being to be a certain way according to *the code* assigned through experience. The concept of BwO (body without organs) in Deleuze's philosophy thus intersects with Foucault's examination of the body, particularly in their mutual focus on the physical aspects of power and resistance. Foucault's examination of disciplinary techniques and biopolitical regimes highlights how power manifests itself on and within the body, controlling its actions, behaviours and aspirations. Through the implementation of surveillance, normalization and medicalization, individuals are subjected to systems of bodily control that generate certain kinds of subjectivity while suppressing any alternative ways of expression.²⁰ However, Foucault recognizes the potential of the body to resist and defy the disciplinary systems imposed upon it, perceiving it as potentially a space of rebellion and subversion. In his later works, such as *The History of Sexuality* and *The Courage of Truth*²¹, Foucault examines the ways in which individuals engage in self-governance as a means of resisting power structures.²² Through the process of regaining control over their own bodies and developing ethical practices to shape themselves, individuals challenge the established norms that dictate their identities and assert their independence in the presence of controlling influences.

Foucault's analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how the gay movement has responded to these perspectives that view homosexuality through

¹⁹ see Deleuze, Gilles. "Lecture 03/12: Body without Organs." Purdue University Deleuze Seminars. Accessed 02.11.2024. https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/lecture/lecture-03-12/#_ednref6.

²⁰ These ideas are mainly discussed in Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and punish The Birth of the Prison*, but also many courses such as lectures at the State University of Rio de Janeiro where he firstly mentioned biopolitics.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Springer, 2011.

²² Idea that he especially highlights by introducing the concept of parrhesia (or truth-telling) in Michel Foucault, Edited by Frédéric Gros; Translated by Graham Burchell., *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, which is best described from pp 42-68 as a way of living, and better described starting at pp. 74 with a political approach to parrhesia.

a medical lens.²³ The medicalization²⁴ of homosexuality recognized it as a fundamental aspect of a person's identity, rather than a temporary behavior. This unintentionally created the conditions for the creation of a collective sense of community, which served as a focal point for the mobilization of the gay rights movement. From this perspective, the term „pathological label“²⁵, despite its oppressive and stigmatizing nature, played a role in the formation of a political identity and community among individuals who were given this label. The platform has served as a common ground for resistance, allowing the gay movement to challenge negative perceptions and promote alternative visions of identity. However, Foucault was wary of the movement's occasional reliance on scientific discourse that initially labeled homosexuality as a pathology. By relying on medical and psychological science to seek validation and affirm normality, such as by arguing that homosexuality is an inherent characteristic, the movement risks reinforcing the influence of these discourses in determining social and sexual acceptability. Foucault expressed his disapproval of any approach that unintentionally supports the dominance of the medical gaze and reinforces the power/knowledge structures he believed were responsible for marginalizing and dividing individuals into normal and abnormal classifications²⁶. Therefore, while recognizing the oppressive characteristics of medicalization, Foucault also recognized the potential for marginalized groups to use these structures to establish unity and advocate for independence and recognition. However, he always maintains a critical approach, urging movements to be wary of inadvertently reinforcing the existing power structures they seek to dismantle. This approach is consistent with his overall philosophy, which involves continually questioning impartial truths to expose the power dynamics they support.

In short, Foucault's exploration of identity is closely intertwined with his analysis of power dynamics and discourse. He argues that power is not only repressive but also has a productive aspect, generating knowledge, subjects and practices. According to Foucault, institutions such as prisons, hospitals and schools exercise power by using authoritarian discourses to dictate and restrict identities.

²³ The problem of homosexuality is discussed in interviews, and its theoretical approach is present in Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality vol. I* pp 23-102.

²⁴ The problems of medicalization for Foucault we can find in the *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Routledge, 2010, this specific fragment is a commentary on pp. 104-111.

²⁵ Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality vol. I*, pp 67-68.

²⁶ see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Routledge, 2010, chapters 1 and 3.

Identities are formed through historical and cultural discourses that objectify individuals, positioning them in a complex system of social and political connections. Foucault's notion of *technologies of the self*²⁷ demonstrates how individuals internalize these discourses and actively engage in their own subjectification.

Butler expands on Foucault's theories, offering significant critiques, particularly of his approach of the body. In his works such as *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, to name a few, Foucault examines the process by which societal institutions and discourses shape and standardize the human body. He sees the body as a physical space in which power is present and where power dynamics are both executed and challenged. Butler agrees with this framework, but criticizes Foucault for inadequately investigating the body's capacity to resist these norms.²⁸ According to her, Foucault's model sometimes implies a deterministic viewpoint in which the body seems to passively accept and comply with cultural and social commands. However, Butler refutes this argument by emphasizing the significant influence of the body on the performativity of gender. She argues that every performative act is a restatement of a standard but also has the potential to deviate from the norm. Each instance of repetition has the capacity to cause disruption and deviation, creating an opportunity for opposition and transformation.²⁹ This subtlety adds another layer of complexity to Foucault's portrayal by implying that the body is not only shaped by power but at the same time capable of resisting and contesting the oppressive narratives that try to define it. According to Butler, physical (bodily) actions produce meanings that go beyond what is required by societal regulatory norms. This particular manifestation of performative actions has the potential to disrupt the fundamental structures that define the physical limitations of individuals. She argues that the body possesses a concept known as *performative agency*—the capacity of bodies to reshape the rules that govern them through practices of meaning that go beyond those rules.³⁰

Butler's examination of Foucault not only offers critiques, but also broadens his discussion, providing powerful resources for feminist and queer analysis of conventional gender and sexual identities. Butler's reimagining of the body as a participant engaged in performative action expands the possibilities for what we today call social activism

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Springer, 2011, *passim*.

²⁸ More about her approach on the body: Butler, Judith. "Bodies and power, revisited." in *Radical Philosophy* (2002): 13-19.

²⁹ Butler, Judith, *Gender trouble*, pp 37-38.

³⁰ Idem, pp 101-163.

and political defiance. She provides a theoretical basis for LGBTQ+ movement's claims that gender and sexual identities are not static but malleable and can be transformed at both individual and societal levels.

From Michel Foucault to Judith Butler: contingencies and differences

Judith Butler's work challenges and expands on Foucault's theories, particularly in relation to the idea that bodies are not merely passive recipients of disciplinary forces but rather active participants in their own agency. This extension is central to understanding current issues around gender and sexuality, providing a powerful framework for ongoing struggles for personal control over the body and recognition of identity. Her theoretical advances promote an ongoing reassessment of how identities are shaped, expressed, and potentially changed through the physical actions of everyday existence. Her entire ontology revolves around the concept of performativity, which she focuses on primarily in relation to gender identity. As previously discussed, Butler argues that gender is not an inherent or fixed quality that individuals possess, but rather a behavior that is repeatedly enacted according to societal norms and expectations. Frameworks like heteronormativity or the gender binary are in charge of regulating these performances. Through frequent repetition, these norms are assimilated, causing individuals to perceive them as inherent elements of reality. Butler's concept of performativity suggests that these fixed categories of identity are cultural-social constructs that can be challenged and possibly modified by undermining or disrupting the actions that constitute them.³¹

Both Butler and Foucault argue that identity is formed through social mechanisms.³² While Foucault explores disciplinary practices linked by power and knowledge, Butler examines this process by concentrating on performative actions within gender norms. Both authors reject the notion of a pre-existing self, independent of social interaction. Instead, they argue that the self is constantly shaped and changed, either through language and discourse (Foucault) or through actions and performativity (Butler).

³¹ Idem, pp. 174.

³² Idem, pp. 166, agrees with Foucault.

Butler's theoretical focus is specifically on gender and the performative nature of gender norms. In contrast, Foucault's scope is broader, encompassing a wider range of institutions and discourses, such as sexuality, criminality, and mental health. Foucault's framework allows for the analysis of different manifestations of identity, which are not limited exclusively to gender. Thus, at first reading or impression, we can consider the two perspectives as complementary. However, this type of interpretation would not be complete since the differences between the two are extremely strong, not in the way they identify the problem but in their approach to solving it. Butler stresses the ability of individuals to exercise agency when they become aware of their identity. She proposes that through the act of disrupting performance, individuals have the ability to resist and redefine oppressive norms. In Foucault's earlier work, such as *Madness and civilization*³³ or *The birth of the clinic*³⁴ the prominence of agency in performance is diminished, as he seems to present a more deterministic view of how discourses influence individuals. In his later work, such as *The courage of truth*³⁵, Foucault presents additional avenues for resistance and self-creation³⁶ through what he calls *technologies of the self*³⁷. Butler's approach is explicitly normative in nature, focusing on norms and values. She critically examines the restrictive norms governing gender and sexuality in her discussion of the performativity of gender. In contrast, Foucault typically refrains from normative assessments and instead focuses on elucidating the processes by which power is disseminated and individuals are formed. The differences between Foucault's and Butler's theories stem from their distinct interpretive emphases, concerns, and angles of approach, despite their shared agreement on the constructed nature of identity and its connection to wider societal structures. Butler uses a microanalytic methodology to examine the everyday operations of power, particularly in relation to gender. She uses Foucault's comprehensive theory of power and discourse as a contextual framework.

Essentially, this analysis demonstrates two key points: firstly, that Judith Butler's approach can be regarded as more effective in contemporary society due

³³ Foucault, Michel. *Madness and civilization*. Routledge, 2003.

³⁴ Foucault, Michel. *The birth of the clinic*. Routledge, 2002.

³⁵ Foucault, Michel. *The courage of truth*. Springer, 2011.

³⁶ James Mark Shields, "Foucault's Dandy: Constructive Selfhood in the Last Writings of Michel Foucault," 1992.

³⁷ see Foucault, Michel. "Technologies of the Self." In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault/Tavistock*. 1988.

to its adherence to normative principles, and secondly, that Foucault and Butler's works present a similar perspective on the issue of personal identity, albeit with distinct approaches to its resolution.

To sum it up, my ongoing investigation into Judith Butler's work has left me with great appreciation for her theory, but also with some reservation. The effectiveness of her work appears to align with the capitalist system, rather than contradicting it, as she intends to convey³⁸. This critique takes into account some of her more recent work following the publication of *Undoing Gender* in 2004. It examines her non-violent approach, which engages with the excessively optimistic paradigms of capitalist strategy in opposition to revolutionary thinking. Furthermore, it should be clarified that Foucault's approach is not inherently violent; in fact, it is a peaceful endeavor. However, it does necessitate a greater level of disruption to existing structures, whereas Judith Butler merely proposes the inclusion of new structures within the current status quo.

Conclusion

The notion of identity as a process of becoming highlights the malleability and continuous development of a person's sense of self. This view allows individuals to have a greater capacity to adapt to new circumstances, obstacles, and stages in life. Viewing identity as a process, it recognizes that change is a continuous and typical part of life, providing psychological adaptability; thus, individuals are more inclined to embrace new experiences, perspectives, and information that might otherwise be ignored due to a rigid self-perception. This level of openness has the potential to cultivate a more diverse and fulfilling life experience while promoting continuous learning and individual growth.

Fixed identities frequently depend on classifications associated with race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and so on. By conceptualizing identity as a developmental process, there is greater potential to transcend simplistic classifications and embrace instead complex and nuanced understandings of self and others. This can foster the development of equitable societies. The concept of identity as a process of becoming challenges the constraints imposed by social categorizations and preconceived

³⁸ Boucher, Geoff. "The politics of performativity: A critique of Judith Butler." *Parrhesia* 1, no. 1 (2006): 112-141.

notions, which can limit individuals to oversimplified roles or predetermined expectations. Seeing identity as a flexible concept renounces the reinforcement of stereotypes and prejudices, allowing individuals to constantly redefine themselves.

Finally, seeing identity as a transformative process promotes a more flexible, receptive, and understanding mindset towards life and interpersonal connections. This corresponds to today's perception of the dynamic characteristics of modern life, in which conventional roles and boundaries are becoming increasingly indistinct and individual life trajectories are diverse and non-selective. This view promotes both resilience and individual development while serving as the basis for progressive social norms that prioritise inclusion and continuous personal and collective progress.

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