DISCUSSION PAPER

Socio-political recognition of the Self. Remarks on Butler's Force of Non-violence with regards to Benhabib's critique[1]

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Abstract

In her latest book *Force of Non-violence*, Judith Butler lays out an updated model of gender performativity. This model relies on rapprochement of a recent criticism of her social ontology published in Seyla Benhabib's book *Exile, Statelessness, and Migration*. Although Butler does not address Benhabib directly, the aim of this article is to show Butler's possible arguments that can be seen as defence and further development of her concept of the Self. Thus, the necessary comparison of both authors is provided and with it also a discussion of their possible common ground.

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1. Introduction. Benhabib's critique of Butler's social ontology

The year 2020 has been marked by many events, some of which are still ongoing, and the consequences of others will be felt for decades to come. Despite the worldwide collapse in the field of physical and mental health, a book has been published that addresses many of the problems we face every day. *Force of Nonviolence* by Judith Butler, who needs no introduction, focuses centrally on the topic of the legitimacy of violence and the ways to define those who will be exposed to violence. The book is interesting and inspiring for many reasons, but it is more important for the purpose of this paper to focus on one of the possible reasons why it was written in the first place and why Butler deals with the topics mentioned in it so specifically. This reason is the defence against Seyla Benhabib's critique. Although Butler does not explicitly mention Benhabib, the concepts she presents as new, or those she specifies as previously outlined, may be an implicit response to Benhabib's critique of Butler in her 2018 book *Exile, Statelessness, and Migration*. Although the intent of the entire publication was similar to that of Butler's *Force of Nonviolence*, the Fifth Chapter (Ethics without Normativity and Politics without Historicity: On Judith Butler's *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*) critically turns against the 2012 book, on which Benhabib wants to illustrate one of the central problems she sees in Butler's conceptualization of the Other.

In *Parting Ways*, Butler presents several topics which also address matters related to the legitimacy and justification of violence in the works of Said, Benjamin and Levinas. And it is the latter that is the reason why Benhabib goes through Butler's position thoroughly and discusses the arguments that Butler addresses to Levinas's concept of the other. This concept is connected with the whole of Levinas's ethics. And it is this connection that Benhabib critically points out when she emphasizes that ethics is not the same as social ontology. Benhabib admits that the social ontology that Butler presents in *Parting Ways* is also psychoanalytically sufficient to "disclose the permutations of self-other relations as well as uncover the necessary bases for the formation of receptivity so as to enable the self to become an ethical person" Benhabib (2018). However, she still does not consider such an approach sufficient to achieve "normativity".

The reason why Benhabib sees Butler's method in her socially ontological approach as insufficient is the lack of clarification of the difference between what Benhabib herself calls "the concrete other" and "the generalized other". Benhabib (2018) These two terms are Benhabib's main criteria for assessing the "appropriateness" of Butler's efforts to combine ethics and social ontology, because only by clearly defining both each of them and the relationships between them will it be possible to more precisely understand where the causes of violence against some people (minority) can arise in the society without being seen by others (majority) as wrong. "Indeed, a good

ethical theory or a good account of the ethical must be able to do justice to the singular as well as the universal, or in my terms, to the standpoint of the concrete as well as generalized other. Yet Butler does not tell us how." Benhabib (2018)

Force of Nonviolence is not addressed to Benhabib, but some of the central ideas and some of the main concepts could easily carry the supplementary "reaction to Benhabib", because it is the problem between a clear non-definition of the relationship between the singular and the universal (Butler), or the concrete and the generalized other (Benhabib), that this book wants to solve, among other things. Due to the above, this article will focus on the main arguments and points that Butler provides and develops in order to define her concept of "the self" sufficiently enough to be used to set the boundaries of "legitimacy of violence", thereby returning – although not explicitly – to her earlier works, i.e., *Parting Ways* as well as *Frames of War*. Therefore, this paper will remind the reader of the relevant passages from this book as well, putting new arguments in context with the older ones in order to see more clearly what *Force of Nonviolence* is innovative about.

2. Concept of the Self

2.1. Basic outline of the Self

One of the main starting points for the methodological approach to interpreting the phenomenon of nonviolence is Chandan Reddy's assumption that liberal modernity created "the state as a guarantee of a freedom from violence that fundamentally depends on unleashing violence against racial minorities, and against all peoples characterized as irrational and outside the national form." Butler (2020) Butler understands Reddy's interpretation as an approximation of the structural concept of "the self", the basic structural characteristic of which is violence. The self is therefore structurally defined as the violent.

An important remark that Butler inadvertently adds to this definition of the self as the violent is the embedding of this definition in a structural conceptualization, which could be simply called "person as representant of". In her addition to Reddy, Butler points out that if the liberally modernist state does not have a specific "person" before it, it extends the area of the violent to "a violent kind of person". From this, it can certainly be deduced that even the self can be a broader area, which will include everything that will be structurally conceived as meaningfully characterizing the self, in relation of which the definition of the violent can be determined in the future. Although this interpretation may sound like a tautology, there is an effort to accommodate an idea which – at least as it is believed – is considered by Butler to be key to express the intrinsic connection between the self and the violent in a liberal modernist structural context, namely the idea that a prerequisite for defining the self is the inclusion of

potential violence against this future self. In other words, the self must be semantically characterized so as to include and underline the violent by its semantic definition. Only in this way can then a liberal modernist state – at least according to Butler – be allowed to equate the self with the violent, and thus subsequently label the person as a violent kind of person.

Although this interpretation of Butler's approach to Reddy's idea may seem a purely terminological evasion, the whole of *The Force of Nonviolence* is based on deciphering the linguistic dimension the liberal modernist state works with – and it is the definition of the extent of violence in relation to whoever can be described as the violent, and therefore also with regard to what makes it possible to describe the self as the violent – which is why it is believed that such evasion is necessary to understand the deeper dimension of the whole concept of nonviolence. From a pragmatic point of view, Butler herself points this out in the *Introduction* to *The Force of Nonviolence*, where she says that "one needs to find frameworks more encompassing than those that rely on two figures, one striking and the other struck." Butler (2020)

2.2. The Self and Social Relations

Butler seems to state, as if in passing, that the self is constituted "through its social relations with others". Butler (2020) This statement, although seeming to be in passing, is very closely connected with the conceptualization of the very concept of the self at a more subtle level. As explained above, the understanding of the self is given by social conditionality, a social structure that Butler currently grasps, in terms of terminology, as liberal modernism. Therefore, even if it is stated that the self is constituted through its social relations with others, it must be borne in mind that the sociality[3] that characterizes these relations between individuals has a liberal modernist character in its own right. There is a double dimension here, which affects the determination of the individual in their approach to themselves, or more precisely to their "the self". On the one hand, it is a question of deriving a relationship with the self from relationships with others, and on the other hand, it is the nature of those others themselves.[4] Any effort to preserve social relations, understood as "social ties", is always an effort to strengthen

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[3] Here, it would be possible to use concepts from other movements, such as the phenomenological sociology of A. Schütz, who deals with this dimension of intersubjectivity in connection with Husserl's Lebenswelt and Weber's social typology.

[4] Butler does not use the philosophical potential provided by the approach to the creation of the identity of the individual through their relationships with others and to the formation of the social grounding regarding the very possibility of establishing a relationship. This philosophical potential can be developed in the context of the 20th-century French concept of l´Autre (e.g. Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Foucault and many others).

the connection of individuals, if not directly bind them. This, in turn, gives great social power to the source on which the structuring of the form of the sociality is based.

2.3. Equal Treatment and "Livability"

Butler rejects the idea that equality could be easily reduced to assigning the same value to each person. The main reason is the terminological uncertainty of the term "person", where Butler points out that, in cases of similar egalitarian considerations, person is meant as an "abstract person". Such abstractness does not correspond to the concept of social interconnectedness and mutual interdependence, or more precisely social interdependency. "… equal treatment is not possible outside of a social organization of life in which resources, food distribution, housing, work, and infrastructure seek to achieve equal conditions of livability." Butler (2020) The specification of these characteristic manifestations of the life of a person is on the one hand – and quite obviously – to underline the necessity to avoid abstractness, but on the other hand also to support another concept that Butler works with, when she subsequently evaluates the relationship of the liberal modernist approach compared to the relationship between the equality of the individual person, and, in a figurative sense, also the relationship between the self and the violent, which is the concept of livability.

Livability is a concept that is not clearly defined in *The Force of Nonviolence*. In addition to what has already been said about it in connection with Butler's descriptions in the book, its connection with the conditions of life can be found as one of the other helpful means to determine the meaning and scope of this concept. Livability and conditions of life have a "relative difference" regarding each other, which suggests that although Butler distinguishes them, it is not possible to regard this distinction as borderline. Conditions of life affect the self by what conditions for establishing and strengthening social bonds the self is given. And such established conditions, in turn, affect how a particular person will regard themselves, i.e., how they will understand their own self. For this reason alone, it is regarded possible to conclude that livability cannot be reduced to just "living in", but that it must also include "living through", "living from", "living to" and "living for". Butler (2020) This play on words is not just a semantic matter – on the contrary, understanding what is believed to be meant by the term "livability", given the contexts in which Butler herself places the term, sets not only semantic and syntactic limits, but also limits existential, political, social, cultural, ethnic and many more. At the same time, it should be mentioned that these are porous, permeable boundaries, which is indicated by the specification of all aspects of social interconnectedness and mutual interdependence, or more precisely social interdependency from *The Force of Nonviolence* above.

3. Concept of Grievability

3.1. Livability and Grievability

Again, Butler does not give clear definition of grievability. The introductory contemplations in *The Force of Nonviolence* mention this term with some certainty. This can be partly explained by its use in the earlier work *Frames of War*. In the context of contemplations about the self and the conditions of life, or more precisely livability, Butler, among other things, points to the presence of this attribute in living creatures, and this presence should be a proof of their "… value within a differential scheme of values…". Butler (2020) It should be added that it is this dimension of value within the scheme of values that should make it possible to assess whether these living creatures are treated "equally and in a just way". Butler (2020) Two aspects that grievability exhibits in the context of livability will be terminologically distinguished as the "schematic valuability" and "just equality". While the former is understood to be fixed by the system and its social structure, within which the value is automatically assigned to each segment, the latter depends on an active reflection on the "value" of such a systematic and structural allocation of value. This distinction serves to get to the heart of the intention that is believed to be meant by Butler's inadvertently made remark that "to be grievable is to be interpellated in such a way that you know your life matters, that the loss of your life would matter…" Butler (2020)

The rationale or incentive for the above distinction between schematic valuability and just equality, described as the distinction between systematic and structural attribution of value and the knowledge of this attribution, is then found in Butler's emphasis on the social organization of what was above called equal treatment in social interdependency. Butler understands equal grievability as "…a principle that organizes the social organization of health, food, shelter, employment, sexual life, and civic life". Butler (2020)

3.2. Precariousness and Epistemological Framing

In order to more precisely grasp and better understand the context which meaning the term "precarity" has for Butler, it is necessary to recall how she thinks about it in *Frames of War*. In the introduction, where she wants to show how she will relate precarious life and grievable life, she notes that she will proceed in accordance with her interpretation of the 2004 work, *Precarious Life*. What she subsequently presents is the statement that "… specific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living". Butler (2009) According to this Butler's statement, the determination of whether a particular life qualifies as "living" depends purely on the "epistemological frames" through which it is viewed, formulated and interpreted. The

whole perspective of evaluating the level of "lifespan" of an individual's life (or group, community, ethnicity, etc.) is given by the frame in which it is embedded. This embedding itself then lies in the hands of a decisive social instance, which, of course, is represented by the state apparatus, the legislative system and specific laws in which the rights of these target individuals are formulated and fixed. Formulation and fixation are thus the framing that Butler speaks of as a decisive measure of life evaluation.

For Butler, epistemological framing is partly determined by what she calls "historically contingent ontology" in *Frames of War* and what she connects with Hegel and Klein to explain to the reader. If a life is to be evaluated as "living", it must first be apprehended so. However, this requires that it is first fixed by a specific norm: "Subjects are constituted through norms which, in their reiteration, produce and shift the terms through which subjects are recognized." Butler (2009) In this line of reasoning of the relationship between epistemology and ontology, the reader can see the use of Hegel's concept of "recognition" (*Anerkennung*) from *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. If this is developed more than Butler did, it can be said that, like other authors, Butler uses the relationship between state norms (*Sittlichkeit*) and personal values (*Moralität*), when – according to Hegel's *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* – an individual must set aside their individuality if it were to substantially differ from the normative requirements of the state. Such a development would deserve more attention, but given the interpretation that Butler herself makes, it is necessary to move in the direction of her line of thought.

Butler interprets the relationship between recognition and apprehension that, in terms of meaning, the former is a "stronger term" than the latter. Apprehension is a "form of knowing", but it is more intuitive to some extent, because "… it is bound up with sensing and perceiving, but in ways that are not always – or not yet – conceptual forms of knowledge." Butler (2009) It is presumed that what Butler is trying to say here is that apprehension is, in a sense, intuitive, say, abnormal knowledge. As a result, it does not depend on normativity, and therefore not even on the recognition that is associated with this normativity. One of the arguments that Butler makes for this view of hers is the ability to critically reflect insufficient or even completely absent recognition towards certain individuals (groups, communities, ethnicities, etc.). Simply put, if the view of the standard of living of the others would depend only on norms and the recognition that is given in the normativity of these norms, then a possible inadequacy in the recognition of this normativity could not be evident on closer inspection.

Because of the overlap and non-strictness of apprehension in relation to recognition, Butler claims that the advantage over normativity of recognition is the connection of apprehension with intelligibility. Butler borrows this strongly ontological

(or epistemological) term from Foucault.[5] Intelligibility means that "... a life has to be intelligible *as a life*, has to conform to certain conceptions of what life is, in order to become recognizable". Butler (2009) According to Butler, the conceptions of what life is are supposed to be characterized by schemas of intelligibility, on which all the norms of recognizability are based. Combining apprehension with intelligibility should help critically reflect on the adequacy of normativity, and thus verify all norms of recognizability.

What is the point of differentiating between apprehension and recognition? In addition to the obvious, the aim is also to support another of Butler's arguments, this time concerning the independence of an individual and the need to take this independence as a reason for recognizing the "right to individuality", i.e., to differ from state norms. Butler herself does not develop this argument much. She merely notes, using another term, that each person has a certain "personhood" and that this has been determined by normativity in terms of epistemological framing. "... a living figure outside the norms of life not only becomes the problem to be managed by normativity, but seems to be that which normativity is bound to reproduce: it is living, but not a life." Butler (2009) Simply put, if a person lives outside the state norms, i.e., they do not accept normativity for their way of living, their life is not recognized as life, they are not granted personhood, however, they are still perceived as a living figure. The recognition of a certain "livability" is given by apprehension, through which a living figure is given and perceived as living, and thus having a certain standard of life. For this reason, it is not possible to take the epistemological character of each frame as definitively (let alone sufficiently) determining the adequacy of recognition. "The frame never quite determined precisely what it is we see, think, recognize, and apprehend. Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality (...) something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things." Butler (2009) Our apprehension extends beyond every frame, so any recognition of personhood by frame that derives from normativity is always questionable. The reason for this extension is everyday reality, "dimension of sociality", the dynamics of which itself demonstrates the inadequacy of absolutism, to which normativity lays claim. Adequacy of recognition is always tested by confrontation with such dynamics of social relations.

The dynamics of social relations serve to get closer to what Butler calls the conditions of reproducibility. These conditions should be what each frame tries to formulate and thus fix in the norm. The problem is that these conditions are also dynamic, variable, and depending on the dynamics of relationships between individuals. Normativity can always intervene in such dynamics, but social reality, or more precisely the sociality transcends every clearly defined boundary – as Butler tried to point out by

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[5] M. Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, or The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.

the term apprehension. The frame is thus purely dependent on the context in which it is used and is valid only with respect to the target group/area to which it is applied and with respect to which it is formulated. Its application to another group/area disrupts its semantic contingency, which proves it to be limited and not valid in all circumstances and all cases. In other words: it turns out to be inequality. Therefore, it makes sense why Butler describes a framed individual as follows: "... one is framed, which means accused, but also judged in advance, without valid evidence and without any obvious means of redress." Butler (2009)

3.3. Grievability and Precariousness

Butler develops the term precarity with respect to the term grievability. Her starting point is the statement that "to say that a life is precarious requires not only that a life be apprehended as a life, but also that precariousness be an aspect of what is apprehended in what is living". Butler (2009) Precariousness is connected with apprehension, and is even directly dependent on it. Whatever is characterized as living is automatically perceived to have precariousness. Everything that shows at least an elementary level of life also has a certain precariousness. Butler points out to the need to recognize precariousness in a more inclusive and egalitarian way – ideally through a social policy that targets "shelter, work, food, medical care, and legal status." Butler (2009) Aspects of life can also be seen under these aspects of precarity. Character living belongs to what needs to be provided through shelter, work, food, medical care and legal status. Any social policy, by focusing primarily on these aspects of life, demonstrates to recognize the precariousness of living. And because individuals must be targeted through these aspects, which are general and shared by each and everyone, it will be ensured that each individual is recognized in his/her individuality.

Despite what has been said, Butler points out that the precariousness cannot be properly recognized. Butler herself is aware that her statement may seem paradoxical, but when taking a closer look at her subsequent line of reasoning, there is a clear grasp of the subtleties she uses to render and underline why apprehension is so important and to what extent it is a foundation on which some recognition can then be built – not to mention that it is the foundation enabling a more inclusive and egalitarian way of recognition.

"Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one´s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other." Butler (2009) Having one's own life in the hands of others means that there are, at all times and under all circumstances, social relations between individuals that unite them. These social relations can thus be perceived as social bonds, because of which there is a constant interconnectedness with others and a certain dependence on others. And because this connection is mutual, these others are

also dependent on me.[6] To emphasize the specific meaning of the term precariousness, Butler adds that it "… underscores our radical substitutability and anonymity in relation both to certain socially facilitated modes of dying and death and to other socially conditioned modes of persisting and flourishing". Butler (2009) This social context, in which Butler puts the term precariousness, specifies its meaning – it is what is coextensive with birth, which is why it must be socially taken care of. "Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear." Butler (2009) And this is where the connection between precariousness and grievability appears – the former is a side effect of the latter. More specifically, "… grievability is a condition of a life's emergence and sustenance". Butler (2009) That is why Butler concludes by pointing out and emphasizing that "grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of the living being as living, exposed to non-li from the start". Butler (2009)

3.4. Livability and Recognition

The interpretation of the relationship between epistemological frames, norms and grievability leads to the need to explain the relationship Butler finds between livability and recognition. Simply put, what the reader sees in the author's thought process and line of reasoning is the need to relate the recognition to the generalized level, valid for all levels of living. However, if the character of apprehension is taken into account, which, while it precedes all normativity, is what is side-lined through epistemological frames during the life of an individual, it is necessary to take into consideration the complexity of the conditionality of life by the very frames within which the character of life and the standard of living that determine livability is most explicitly formulated. Recognition of livability thus requires an examination of each norm in its formulation, because it is in this formulation that the way in which the conditions under which it is possible to "perceive" one's life exactly as life, or more precisely as equal life and equally living. It is assumed that at least as much can be deduced from Butler's thesis about the relationship between frames and conditions of life: "We cannot easily recognize life outside the frames in which it is given, and those frames not only structure how we come to know and identify life but constitute sustaining conditions for those very life." Butler (2009) Butler's emphasis on linking identifying and sustaining of conditions shows a degree of flexibility in these frames. As evident from the above, Butler sees that all epistemological frames are given by historical development associated with ontology, which changes the epistemology itself, including the approach to perception, articulation

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[6] It is evident that Butler follows in the footsteps of Hegel, Sartre and, to some extent, Husserl. However, she does not admit this obvious connection. Who she briefly refers to is Levinas – another of the French authors who explicitly develops (not only) Hegel's ideas and even more explicitly criticizes Sartre in this development. The reader could therefore expect Butler to refer to other relevant authors in this regard.

and formulation of each frame – and because of that also of each norm. Emphasis on identifying and sustaining living conditions, or more precisely livability then logically includes emphasizing the variability of this identification and the way of maintaining the given conditions (not to mention the change of these conditions). For Butler, these conditions are not "static entities"; on the contrary, she interprets them and finds them as "a reproducible social institutions and relations". Butler (2009) By connecting perception, articulation and formulation with reproduction, the frames are linked to us not only as those who receive them and follow them, but also who is responsible for them. Although Butler does not sufficiently substantiate this, if seen from the perspective of the above, the responsibility in question is given by our own individual apprehension, which leads each individual to the possibility to perceive each frame and each norm from a wider context and in more specific perspective, which in turn is based on our individual situatedness, or more precisely on our individual experience of the net of social relations and bonds, that is in the sociality.

By returning to the precariousness in the outlined context, then the concept of precarity, which is an integral part of it, can be grasped as politically induced conditionality in the given context: "Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death." Butler (2009) List of all networks the failure of which can cause suffering or even death of individuals/groups/communities etc. could be lengthy if illustrated by concrete examples, of which there are currently a huge number across all continents. All this underlines the dependence of these individuals/groups/communities etc. on the state as a politically organized area of social relations and social bonds. And it is precisely this arrangement that influences the standard of living the most, and thus also foreshadows what is – from the point of view of this arrangement – a sufficient standard of living. This results in a second, somewhat paradoxical phenomenon, which, in terms of the above-mentioned context, Butler tries to shed light on in terms of precarity: "Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized precariousness for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence who often have no other option than to appeal to the very state from which they need protection." Butler (2009) Thus, while it is the state, with its political organization of all networks, i.e., all social relations and social bonds, who determines the conditions in and through which the life of an individual/group/community will be evaluated, it is also this state to which it should be able to appeal in cases where the conditions are not sufficient to meet the needs corresponding to the equal level of living of all participants in the network. In this respect, too, the role of epistemological frames is inseparable, because mainly and most often through them it is possible to support the right to equal level of living of those individuals/groups/communities who lack it or who are even denied it. The problem that Butler points out in this respect as paradoxical can be understood as a matter of the

adequacy of identification, or even as a matter of the very possibility of identifying the validity of these epistemological frames, when the evaluation of each level of living is based on them. Any recognition of inadequacy or even complete absence of equality in living cannot be based primarily on everyday conscious experience with social relations and social bonds, because their perception is always preferentially mediated through epistemological frames. Livability can be sufficiently assessed and evaluated, and thanks to this, inequal levels of living can be adequately recognized only if the perception of the social stratification of the networks is guided by apprehension, because only through it is it possible to perceive each person in his/her individual situation with regards to general and universal situation of simply "being alive" – that is with regards to what equally conditions all that lives in its livability, and that can be only one thing: precariousness. This interpretation will be concluded with the Butler's words: "For populations to become grievable... policy needs to understand precariousness as a shared condition, and precarity as the politically induced condition that would deny equal exposure through the radically unequal distribution..." Butler (2009)

4. Discussion

The critical points identified in the introduction and aimed at by Benhabib in the book can now be discussed. First of all, the criticism for Insufficiency in achieving "normativity" is now shown to be no longer valid, given Butler's embrace of Levinas's ethics in Parting Ways. The distinction between "the concrete other" and "the generalized other" is addressed in Force of Nonviolence at the level of the structure of society, which is always present in relations between individuals. According to Butler, this structure always takes the form of a specific "epistemological framing", i.e., a means of perceiving and looking at the other (and the other at me). Simply put, society is characterized by a certain, so to say, "framework of thought" that constantly influences interpersonal relationships between individuals. This "framework of thought" also includes the idea of "the general identity" of the individual, which, however, is not possible to achieve in practice or in reality, given the individual socioeconomic conditions inherent in each individual. This individual background, including the ethnic and religious dimension, directly interferes with the constitution and constant reconstitution of identity, thus concretising it – and therefore distancing it from "the general identity".

Another critical point is the "legitimacy of violence", which can be thematized based on Benhabib's critique. Focusing on the form and structure Butler gives above, and in which she situates the relationship between "the concrete other" and "the generalized other", the question of legitimacy in relation to violence is only resolvable from the perspective of Force of Nonviolence by clarifying the structural embeddedness of the individual's "the self". This structural embeddedness, accompanied by

"epistemological framing", takes explicit form in the "social ties" in which the individual is constantly found. The life of a particular individual must therefore be perceived not only through "the general identity", but also through individual conditions and specific circumstances, i.e., in "the concrete identity". However, in order to ensure that every individual, regardless of their "concrete identity", has the same rights and their identity has the same value both from the society-wide and the structural point of view, Butler stresses the necessity of focusing on the very fact that the individual is "alive". For this reason, it is also necessary to take into account the "livability" and the possibility of "grievability" based on it, concerning all individuals regardless of their individual specificities and concrete differences. Any violence against an individual cannot and must not be a violation of their "equal social value" tied to the most general value character that belongs to them, i.e., the fact that they are alive and therefore "grievable".

The latent critique of the ambiguity of the relationship between "the generalized other" and "the concrete other" in Parting Ways, which can be uncovered in the Benhabib's book, now seems to be clarified in terms of Butler's approach in Force of Nonviolence. Only when viewing the perception of the constitution and reconstitution of an individual's identity in the broader context given by their structural embeddedness, i.e., from the perspective of Frames of War, is it possible to understand the coping with the justification of the need to protect the non-violent resolution of interpersonal conflicts in society.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to introduce the concept of the Self, which Judith Butler uses to defend the need for a non-violent approach to all people regardless of their affiliation. As pointed out in the introduction, this concept is seen as a response to Seyla Benhabib's critique, the central focus of which was the ambiguity of the relationship between the concrete other and the generalized other. In the authors' opinion, the concept of the Self, which Butler uses in Force of Nonviolence and which – as this article tried to show – is a follow-up of her earlier interpretations, especially in Frames of War, adequately addresses the ambiguity and avoids the problems Benhabib pointed out in Exile, Statelessness, and Migration. This is also greatly aided by the clarification of some terms that Butler used in earlier works, but which she did not explicitly define there (grievability, livability, precarity, precariousness, etc.). Only now, by linking them to the concept of the Self in Force of Nonviolence, does the intrinsic connection between these terms and between ethics and social ontology become apparent. This again illustrates how Butler tried to constructively counter Benhabib's demur.

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