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Reading Butler as a Dialectical Thinker: Juxtaposing Butler with Adorno

Abstract

In *Gender Trouble* (1999[1990]) Butler echoes a 'Derridian' critique of dialectics which reproaches it for being 'phallogocentric'. The first part of my presentation aims to show how this criticism is at odds with Butler's earlier engagement with dialectics in *Subjects of Desire* (2012[1987]). To show this, I rely on both Stoetzler's (2005) suggestion of reading Butler *retrochronological*, and on an earlier proposition made by Hull (1997) of reading Butler as a dialectically inclined thinker as a corrective measure of Butler's 'implicit' linguistic idealism (that everything is language). The second part of the presentation then seeks to locate a hidden dialectical kernel within Butler's writings, as a way to correct Butler's 'linguistic idealism' by redialectalizing Butler's anti-dialectical stance. This correction plays a central role in my presentation as it is a remedy of Butler's criticism of dialectical idealism which reverts to linguistic idealism. To provide textual examples of this, I will devote a substantial portion of my time to elaborating Butler's changing interpretation of Foucault in *Subjects of Desire* and *Gender Trouble*. The last part of the presentation is devoted to both a specific critique of Hull's (mis)treatment of Butler and various contemplations on the relationship between Butler's and Adorno's criticisms of idealism. Contemplations which, at present, constitute the horizon of my argument.

Bibliography

- Adorno, T. W. 1990[1966]. *Negative Dialectics*. trans. E.B. Ashton. Routledge.
- Butler, J. 1999[1990]. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge.
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- Hull, C. L. 1997. 'The Need in Thinking Materiality in Theodor W. Adorno and Judith Butler'. *Radical Philosophy*, no. 84: 22–35.
- Stoetzler, M. 2005. 'Subject Trouble Judith Butler and Dialectics'. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, no. 31: 343–68.