

Las preguntas a Judith Butler fueron planteadas por la Dra. Ana María Martínez de la Escalera, dentro del trabajo del seminario transdisciplinario "Alteridad y exclusiones" del Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género, UNAM.

For Professor Judith Butler

1. En su último libro, *Precarious Life*, parece plantearse una crítica (Critique) de la violencia antes que una teoría. Ahora bien, la práctica o el trabajo de esta crítica de la violencia (contra ciertos ejercicios de violencia y a favor de la misma fuerza violenta - desviante o de desplazamiento- de la crítica) puede considerar recurrir a un análisis retórico del discurso violento y quizás a una genealogía de esa particular experiencia de violencia, pero ¿no requiere también de una política para administrar la misma crítica hacia la violencia? Si así fuera, ¿cómo se redefiniría o reconfiguraría la noción de política y su ejercicio?.

1. In your last book, *Precarious Life: the powers of mourning and violence*, a critique of violence seems to be put forward, before so than a theory. The practice of the critique of this type of violence (against certain types of violence and in favour of the force of violence itself- either of deviation or displacement- of the critique) may consider turning to a rhetorical analysis of the violent discourse and maybe even to a genealogy of that particular experience of violence, but does it not also need of a politics to administer the same critique towards violence? if this were so, how would the notion of politics and its exercise be reconsidered or reconfigured?

*I am interested in your question because I am not sure I understand the presuppositions here. You seem to suggest that a critique of violence can take the form of a rhetorical or a genealogical analysis, but that neither of these is quite the same as a political form that "administers" the critique. I am wondering what view of politics is at work here, since it would seem to operate in a relatively sovereign, if not regulatory, position in relation to what is critical. For me, this sounds like an uncritical idea of the political, so I do not know how to answer the question without conforming to a framework that I do not accept.*

*But still, let me try to offer you something. I think that there are ways of stopping war, for instance, when funding is withdrawn or when soldiers fail to show up for work, or something happens – and it can happen through media coverage that slips out of the control of the state – to suddenly cast war as unjust and unjustifiably destructive. Then the popular support for war falls away, and it is very hard, if not impossible, to wage and sustain a war under such conditions. I would say that what happens in such instances is the political emergence of critique itself.*

2. Para iniciar una genealogía de la violencia (si fuera posible) ¿cuál sería el escenario de resignificación o refuncionalización de la noción de violencia que convendría plantearnos en nuestra crítica? Por ejemplo, pienso en la oposición aristotélica entre violencia y naturaleza, hoy difícil de entender; o el escenario de una violencia destructiva y una constructiva o conservadora a la manera quizás benjaminiana, etc.

2. If it were possible to begin a genealogy of violence ¿which would be the setting for the reconfiguration or resignification of the notion of violence that is convenient for us to consider in our critique? For example, I think of the Aristotelian opposition between violence and nature, today difficult to grasp; or the setting of a destructive and a constructive or conservative violence in a Benjaminian way, etcetera.

*I am very interested in Benjamin's critique of violence, since he makes clear that*

*"critique" is not a negation, but a way of sorting through kinds of violence, and even a way of suspending judgment about violence. His great example in that essay is, of course, the general strike. And what we see there is the refusal to act not simply on the part of the subject, but on the part of the masses, of the people in general. Such a widespread refusal to act, which takes the form of a refusal to work, might be understood as "non-violent" because it does not harm to persons or property. And yet, it is violent in the sense that it aims to destroy a regime, and sometimes does. So I am not opposed to all violence, but more interested in knowing what its uses are, and whether it can be carefully cultivated to destroy what is most destructive, and to make way for a more liveable life. I suppose this last concern could be found in Aristotle, but perhaps Adorno as well as he tried to imagine the alternative to damaged life.*

3. ¿Qué ejercicio de la crítica puede relacionar hoy la violencia como interrupción de la justicia (social) y por ende la ausencia de duelo con la fuerza justiciera de la imagen (también en el sentido de la imagen como trabajo sobre la percepción en la reelaboración y el duelo).

3. What type of critical exercise could today relate violence as the interruption of justice (social) therefore, the absence of mourning, with the avenging force of the image (thinking also of the image as a work on the perception of reelaboration and grief)

*Of course, your question is a good one, and it leads me to try and think of examples. But if I gave you examples, would I be satisfying the aim of the question? I am not sure. My point about the relation between image and grief is not that we should be more exposed to images that allow us to feel grief. Rather, we need to be exposed to a series of images, perhaps a constellation of images, that allow us to see, critically, why some lives are grievable, and others are not? It is this structuring inequality at the level of perception that is everywhere ratified by nationalist and militarist epistemes. So we would have to*

*ask how one image interrupts another in order to see, in a series of flashes, how one kind of life becomes monumental in death, and another leaves no trace. It seems to me that there is no war without media, but neither is there a resistance to war without media.*

