

Identity as the Difference of Power and the Differing from Being

Uljana Akca
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

Abstract

From where does the frequently explored connection between identity, difference and power stem? One thinker influencing contemporary discussions on this theme is Judith Butler. To her, the primary difference constituting identity is the difference between the subject and the historical power constructing it. Although they belong together, power can still be said to subjugate the subject. However, within this system, the origin of power cannot be accounted for. I will therefore attempt to examine this origin on the basis of Martin Heidegger's *The History of Being (Die Geschichte des Seyns)* (hereafter *GS*), written 1938-1940). According to him, power is something intrinsically dependent on subject metaphysics. The latter stems from what he calls the oblivion of being, which can also be expressed as the forgetting of the difference between beings and being. The abiding in this difference opens the way into that which Heidegger calls *enowning (Ereignis)*, in which the human being can reach identity in a qualified respect, as a nearness to his own being. Only on this way can the regime of power, permeating identity construction, be overcome.

Keywords: Heidegger, Butler, identity, difference, ontological difference, power, *enowning*, being-historical

When the question of identity and difference is addressed in contemporary philosophical and political discussions, it is often implicated that social identity involves power, and that this involves difference in one or the other way – either as its foundation, or as its consequence.

The locus of this constitution of identity is the human subject. According to two thinkers strongly associated with this trope, namely Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the subject is not only considered to be externally affected by power, as if

being intact prior to it, but is regarded to be created and shaped by the same. Following Butler's account, an identity in a qualified sense, as abiding in one's most own, is accomplished or reached when power coincides with the subject itself; when it loses its character of foreignness and is appropriated as own (Butler 1997, 12). The word "power structure" in Butler's and Foucault's thinking in itself connotes the ambiguity of foreignness and ownness: power is coming from a distance from the subject, but is at the same time only sustained by and operative through it. The difference between subject and power could thus be said to be the opaque knot around which identity formation revolves.

But what is the origin of this difference? Is it ontological or historico-political? What is the source of this creative-subjugating power, and how is it related to the subject? Could there be a way to overcome or reconcile with this difference, and would this change the very conception of identity? Those are the questions that I will pose in this paper.

I will begin this essay with a survey of how Butler has formulated this issue influenced by Foucault, on the basis of her *Subjects of Desire* (hereafter *SD*) and *The Psychich Life of Power* (hereafter *PLP*). The first work renders the background of the conception of power and subjectivity that she employs throughout her production. It shows how this conception originally is an appropriation of Foucault's rereading of the Hegelian subject. The second book is her main work on the theme of power and deals with the aspect of this theme that she considers Foucault to be leaving out, namely the *ambiguity* of the power mechanisms shaping the subject as such, forming any of its identities (Butler 1997, 2). I will concentrate on the dense introduction to this work, where her standpoint in this matter is most articulate. Taken together, it is the early Butler that will be the focus of this paper.

I will thereafter proceed to Martin Heidegger, who is acknowledged as a radical critic of subject metaphysics and the idea of the human being as a stable, isolated entity unaffected by its world and history. In the first part of his *GS* we find a condensed account of power, showing that it is a manner in which being manifests itself in subject metaphysics. Therefore,

I will argue, the difference-creating regime of discursive power is neither an a-historical, nor a political or historical matter (historical in the meaning of *Historie*, that is, chronological history). It is a being-historical situation, a way in which we historically enact our relationship to being. According to him, this situation can only be confronted through a new experience and understanding of both the human being and being, with regard to the constituting difference between them; the so called ontological difference.

From this claim, I will go on showing how the appropriation of the ontological difference entails an experience of the *Ereignis* between being and the human being, and how this changes the very concept of identity, the latter treated in Heidegger's *Identity and Difference (Identität und Differenz)* (hereafter *ID*). The German word *Ereignis* can be translated as "bringing something into its "own", its "proper"; often it is rendered as "enowning". What is brought into its own is, I will argue, both being and the human being, as they cannot be what they are without each other. This brings us to an identity as a belonging-together of both, an identity beyond the ambiguity of power.

1. The Difference of Power, the Power of Difference: Judith Butler

Butler's investigation of the constitution of the subject through power is grounded in the legacy of several thinkers, but perhaps most importantly Hegel and Foucault. Her understanding of the subject is to a large extent formed in the joint between these two philosophers. It stands in the tension between an open, "ek-static" subject struggling for identity through the recognition of the other subject (Butler 2004, 150-151), and a subject for which identity is impossible due to history's character of power. The subject strives for an identity, and because it exists historically and intersubjectively, this identity will depend on historical structures which the subject has not itself created. It is through these that other subjects can recognize it as having a specific identity. But these structures do also *limit* its identity. As they are already there, they decide what can be regarded as a recognizable identity, and what

cannot. The subject, then, does not own its identity, but is disintegrated through and by it. In this respect, history is power (Butler 1997, 84-85).

The background to this stance is found in *SD*, where she renders Foucault's re-shaping of the Hegelian subject through the former's theory of power. Through Foucault, she writes, the criticism of the Hegelian, self-legislative subject was strengthened, but so, too, were the modern grounds of Hegel's account of historical alteration. The outcome was a dialectic "unmoored from both the subject and its teleological conclusion". (Butler 1999, 222) Through this, and on the basis of an appropriation of Nietzsche's theory of the will to power, Foucault creates the theory of "discursive *power*, historically constituted", a power the presupposition of which is modern wars and the collapse of monarchies (Butler 1999, 219-220). This kind of power was not to be understood according to the binary form of either oppression or liberation, but as multiple, productive and creative (Butler 1999, 219). It had no original meaning or unity, it did not belong to an agent, but as Foucault himself says in a lecture from 1976, "must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain" (Foucault 1980, 98). Because the discursive nexuses of power do not rest upon a unitary system – "they are indications of the incessant dispersal of the subject" – and the impracticability of a recovery of a pre-given unity behind dialectics. The subject involved in the movement of oppositions cannot reach enlightenment or lucidity. So, while the Hegelian subject confronts the oppositions through a relocation of the definition and borders of identity, Foucault's subject becomes aware of its increased loss of agency (Butler 1999, 224).

Butler both appropriates and criticizes this Foucauldian stance throughout her works. Here, I will emphasize one of her leading philosophical questions inspired from this account of him. In *PLP*, she states the following:

Subjection signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject. Whether by interpellation, in Althusser's sense, or by discursive productivity, in Foucault's, the subject is initiated through a primary submission to power. Although Foucault identifies the ambivalence in this formulation, he does not elaborate on the specific mechanisms of how the subject is formed in submission. (Butler 1997, 2)

With these lines, Butler acknowledges her concern for the dynamics behind the circumstance that historical, discursive power not only is a form of domination, “subjecting” an already existing subject, but what creates and forms this subject, brings it into being and gives it an identity in the first place, in and through the belonging to norms or discourses. Accordingly, Foucault writes in “The Subject and Power”: “Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. (...) Slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains” (Foucault 1982, 790). Therefore, a certain ambivalence pertains to subject formation. There is no subjectivity, and thus no agency or freedom, without the subordination of subjectivity (Butler 1997, 7). It is a paradox consisting of the fact that the “I” that is weakened by power, also is conditioned by the latter in its very existence (Butler 1997, 2).

In this conception of power, the decisive concern is the reversal through which the power confronting the subject changes to a power which constitutes the agency of this subject; the process through which power becomes the subject's “own” (Butler 1997, 12). It is on the basis of this “turn” from the subjugating external character of power, to its identity-constituting quality, that the subject obtains an unclear ontological status, making it impossible to say whether power or subject comes first (Butler 1997, 3-4).

Following Butler, the identity of the subject can thus be said to be conditioned by difference, as the difference between the subject and the power constituting it. Power is not “one's own”, it does not coincide immediately with the subject (Butler 1997, 9, 16, 28). This difference is also the essence of the divergence between the subject and the other, and the differences within the subject, as it is through power structures that the subject is exposed to the presence and (historical) influence of others, in the form of norms and structures (Butler 1997, 19). However, it is, as we shall see, by no means clear what the precise relationship between the own subject, the other, and power is.

As shown, for Butler, as for Foucault, the effect of power is a de-centering of the subject. After Foucault and

the re-figuration of the Hegelian self, this self can no longer be understood as rational, substantial and self-legislating. Rather, it obtains its subjectivity from the power of an already existing world and history, opaque to it. In this respect, we could call the main characteristic of power in Butler *remoteness*; Although used by the subject, it is never equal to it, never primarily brought forth by it.

The paradox of Butler's theory is that power involved in identity constitution at the same time appears to be a force which blends into, or is something equivalent to the *will* of the subject, and so after all bares a trace of *closeness*. In other words, the difference between the subject and power is ambiguous, as it also suggests the possibility of grasping the relationship between them as a configuration where the subject's agency *produces* power, as something it wields and effects (Butler 1997, 13). In this respect, the subject would be the root of power, rather than the opposite. The expression "a subject *of* power", Butler holds, suggests "both 'belonging to' and 'wielding' power" (Butler 1997, 14).

But what is the root of this paradox? Following Butler's suggestion that subjection, something implying a problematic, political relationship to other subjects, is an original condition, this question is, I argue, the most important one that we could ask this account. The task for Butler is not merely to theorize about power, but to form an opposition to it (Butler 1997, 17), to its "abuses" (Butler 1997, 20). The project undertaken is to resist and invert dominating norms.

Yet how could this be possible, and what would be the "measure" deciding which form of power that would be abusive and which not, if this situation is a "primary submission" which cannot be overcome? For with "primary", Butler suggests not merely a psychological origin, as in the readings of Freud, but an *ontological*. Accordingly, in *Undoing Gender* Butler argues that the self in this respect is defined by an "ontological ek-stasis", an expression created on the basis of her critical reading of Hegel and his dialectical, historical subject (Butler 2004, 150-151). At the same time though, the notion of power in Butler is in itself something refusing ontology, since it in a Foucauldian way carries with the dissolving of all kinds of

essences or grounds. It is something so interwoven with a particular, historical context, that it can only be challenged and reworked marginally and concretely, in view of this context. Although not referring to sovereign state power, it is doubtlessly a political matter to her.

However, if it can only be dealt with politically, what would the status of this politics be? Since power does not belong to a spatiotemporal agent, “political” according to this definition implies an alteration in thought and language, rather than law and constitution. It is not to be found in the interests of concrete groups of subjects, which could thus be challenged *as* particular groups or subjects. Power is not in their hands exactly because power is not owned by the subject.

But what cannot be changed within this political sphere, is the very character of everything as power: “Emancipation cannot consist in ascending to a power-free discourse because, for Foucault, power and discourse have become coextensive. If there is to be an emancipatory potential in discourse, it must consist of the transformation rather than the transcendence of power” (Butler 1999, 219). Resistance, once again, is an “effect” of power, its “self-subversion”, thus leaving the power-burdened character of everything untouched (Butler 1997, 93). She keeps this important standpoint throughout her whole production. *Because* primary, Butler does not localize a historic-political origin of power. Accordingly, Robert Strozier argues that for Butler, there is “no difference between the ontological and the historical real” (Strozier 2002, 103). The denial of a historical origin, Strozier writes, makes it impossible for her to show the arising of the connection between patriarchy, gender and heterosexuality (Strozier 2002, 102). The “political”, then, refers to the ontological. This is particularly clear in *PLP*, where she merges accounts of the psychic dimensions of subjectivity with sociopolitical dimensions, thereby, as David R. Howarth remarks, creating a tension between historicizing and universalizing analyses (Howarth 2013, 171-172).

Yet, the very call for alteration on this point necessarily suggests an underlying view of power “as such” as a historical occurrence, foreclosing precisely the openness and multiplicity of identity that political resistance in her view aims at

enabling. This call, I argue, ultimately proposes a historical otherness to power, a historical challenge of power as a whole.

Power therefore seems to hide its own origin and location. The only thing we can say about it within this model, is that it is characterized by a difference and distance, however a distance which is “already here” as a closeness when we identify ourselves as subjects. Its origin is and cannot be one's own subject, as the subject is not responsible for the creation of its own, historical world. Would the origin therefore be other subjects, ultimately expressing themselves as the historical voices grounding our world? Occasionally, Butler formulates the condition of the constitution of the subject as a “passionate attachment to those by whom she or he is subordinated” (Butler 1997, 7). This suggests that power is exercised *by* subjects. But would their voices, again, be an overlapping of even previous voices? This question is not answered clearly by Butler or Foucault, and so the ambiguity of their accounts remains. Power in this respect does not belong to any causal executor at all, as it seems to be something transcending human agency altogether. The fact that both Butler and Foucault say that power only is to be understood as concrete “relations” is ultimately only another formulation of the paradox of power, rather than its explanation (Foucault 1980, 198; Butler 1987, 225).

What interests me here is exactly the unclear merging of the universal and the historic-political aspect, implying the need to question both the supposedly universal, as well as the historical mechanisms of power. But within this framework, power seems to be locked away from itself. In other words, the question of the “power of power” is unavailable to the subject.

How should we understand this? My argument is that the answer could be found if we look more closely at both the essence of power and of subjectivity. Seemingly, this would be a contradiction: does Butler not refuse the notion of essence? While this is indeed the case, the view on power in terms of omnipresence and permanence necessitates this specific question. In fact, there is no way to speak of a phenomenon without interrogating what is *essential* to it. What must be interrogated are the roots of the tension of the difference of

power within identity formation today. What would the opposite of power be, only inconsistently and implicitly suggested as a possibility in Butler's understanding of politics?

2. Heidegger on Power and Subjectivity

On this issue, I turn to Heidegger. He was an inspiration to both Butler and Foucault in their critique of the Cartesian, substantial subject and its mind-body-dualism, and in their situating of the human being in history and the world. The human is to be understood as a being-in-the-world, and as the relation to this very ontological situation, rather than a static entity subsequently confronting this fact. The subject is however not merely contextualized and opened up, but replaced with the notion of *Dasein*, in the quest for a neutral definition of this self-relating location. Is this conceptual transformation of importance here? This question will be investigated on the basis of the question of power in Heidegger.

The most extended account of power in Heidegger is found in *GS*, and particularly part VI of the first part of the work¹. The greatest important deviation between this account, and Butler's or Foucault's, is that it is written in the context of the second world war, and is an implicit and explicit critical reflection on the destructive power of the Nazi regime, but also the totalitarianism of communism. In many ways, his analysis of power stays within this context, for instance by claiming that the consequence of the essence of power would be the struggle of "life and death", (thus referring to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) (Heidegger 1998, 71).

At the same time though, Heidegger seems to prepare for the discursive power that Foucault and Butler account for, which is not tied to an agent in any self-evident way. This interpretation is contended by Krzysytof Ziarek, who stresses that Heidegger, with the texts of *Besinnung* and *Die Geschichte* "anticipates and, in some aspects, even goes beyond Foucault's later formulation of power in *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality*." (Ziarek 2002, 177) Ziarek acknowledges that power in these volumes is analyzed as something having the character of not only negative, but *positive* and creative freedom: "Die Macht ist als Übermächtigung stets vorausbauend –

(»konstruktiv«) (Heidegger 1998, 64). On this, Ziarek comments: “Rather than being external to other relations, power flows through all relations and, in fact, determines the very shape, modality, and valency of relating; in other words, power unfolds tunes (*stimmt*) and determines (*bestimmt*)” and yet operates “in terms of calculability” (Ziarek 2002, 177).

Power in this respect, Heidegger holds, is something other than the exercise of force, and something more essential than violence. It will ultimately reign through permeating all that is in being, also spheres and aspects which are usually not thought to be affected by it, and the difference between having power, and powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*) will become relative (Heidegger 1998, 66-67). What Heidegger tries to articulate, is how power becomes a name for being. Power is the mode in which being yields itself in modernity (Heidegger 1998, 64). With these words, we are approaching a view on power that neither is historical in the usual respect, as an outcome of the actions of subjects, but also not metaphysical in the sense of an eternally ontological “fact”, unavailable to transformation on the part of the human being. For this reason, I believe that Heidegger's comprehension of power can explain the base of the tension of Butler's account.

If power is a way in which being reigns, then power will not be in need of somebody to bear it, he continues. When we see power in the hands of an individual or a group, it is not power that is been carried, but *power carrying* those individuals, forcing them. Power can never be owned by us, but we are the ones being owned by *it* (Heidegger 1998, 63-64). Drawing on this, it could therefore be characterized as a turn against the human being, its defiance of him. Only as a consequence is power then something that a person can exercise over a person not in possession of power. So far, Heidegger's depiction is still similar to Butler's.

But thought in this way, as an appearance of being, Heidegger continues, power must be “brought out of the frame of political observations and standpoints and parties” and be understood as a metaphysical matter (Heidegger 1998, 66). It is so essentially belonging to modernity that the world wars

cannot be regarded as its condition, and neither would their end bring forth its demise. Power is nothing that can be altered by political means. It must rather be thought on the basis of a more thoroughgoing turn in being, characterized by its turning against itself through the human being. Somehow, power is being “bending” of itself, bending back on itself, visible as and in the subjection of the human being. This status of being refuses humanity to “come to itself” (Heidegger 1998, 71). It is a refusal of a dwelling of the human being, in the sense of a presence in time and space on the basis of which it is allowed to reach into its own being. Thus, it is a denial of identity in the more specific, enhanced sense of belonging to something, and in this belonging belong to oneself. This condition is called metaphysical because it is a manifestation of a metaphysical conception of and relationship to being, a relationship that involves the human being.

Therefore, we can ask: what is the mode of being of the human being in the epoch of power? The answer is found in the following quote: “Power can never be captured (be possessed), because we can only be possessed by it, since it is *unconditioned subjectivity*” (Heidegger 1998, 63-64). The quote, which is also a reference to Ernst Jünger, is more enigmatic than it first appears. In the mode of unconditioned subjectivity, we are told to be possessed by power. Power, then, *is an expression of the regime of total subjectivity*, if subjectivity is understood not as a “metaphysical determination of the I, but of the whole essence of the human being in its relation to beings *and* itself” (Heidegger 1998, 63-64). When the I is grasped and lived as a subject, it is understood and enacted metaphysically. Heidegger's conception of power on this point departs from Butler's, as she regards the prevalence of power as synonymous with the *dissolution* of the subject. Ziarek similarly argues that the decisive difference between Foucault and Heidegger is that Foucault holds his re-invention of the notion of power to be an overcoming of metaphysics, because power no longer is what can be owned or yielded. But although a similar analysis is carried out by Heidegger, for him, “power in terms of fluid, often productive relations among forces does not amount to a non- or post-metaphysical perspective; it only allows us to see

the operation of the still ‘metaphysical’ disposition of being as power” (Ziarek 2002, 178). Thus, Ziarek continues, “It is the occurring of being into and as power that constitutes history as metaphysical; or, to put it differently, as long as being occurs in terms of power, there is metaphysics” (Ziarek 2002, 178). Heidegger’s understanding of power should in other words not only be viewed as a parallel account to Butler’s, but as an illumination of the latter, explaining the origin of an ambiguity characterizing our time. Power is a sign that the human being has completed the position of subject.

With subjectivity, however, Heidegger does not have the arbitrary perspective of a private subject in mind, as subjectivism opposed to a reality of objectivity. Rather, what we call objectivity is merely the other pole of subjectivity, the dichotomy as such rooted in the realm of subject metaphysics. Subjectivity is to grasp reality in the form of objects and objectivity, and assume the role of the one who decides what is objective. The word subject is a translation of the Greek word *Hypokeimenon*, meaning “that which underlies”. The distinction between subjective and objective is therefore “relative and shifting” (Inwood 1999, 204). The insight that everything objective also is subjective, is an occurrence *within* this paradigm. To Heidegger, this insight pertains to the end of metaphysics, where being is thought as the reason or capacity of the human being. When the subject and its force are all that is, the thought and experience of being itself is left unacknowledged, and ultimately made unavailable. When being is obscured in this respect, it will turn itself against the subject, in the form of power.

The epoch of power is therefore to be understood on the basis of the history of being (Heidegger 1998, 73)². It is a way in which being yields itself historically, the manner in which it discloses and encloses itself at the same time. History is for Heidegger not something preceding being, within which being subsequently appears, but the epochal character of history *is* a way in which being reveals itself. In the being-historical epoch of power, being will be experienced as “haunting” man from an oblique distance, and thus as possible to respond to only with a more or less provisional strengthening of the subject – exactly

because this is experienced as the *target* of the threat³. Nevertheless, this logic cannot be grasped by the same subject itself. The source of power will be understood as the echo of the distance of history, history in turn understood as the indirect property of other subjects – that is, for the most part not a defined group of subjects, but the necessary otherness coming from the fact that human beings are individuated and spatiotemporally different from one another. Identity today is thus constituted, transcended and lost on the basis of this difference.

3. Heidegger on the Ontological Difference

How, then, could being give itself as something other than power? According to Heidegger, the task for the human being in modernity is to experience that power never was the property of the subject, not grounded in it, but something showing itself on the basis of a certain human relationship to being, a relationship that Heidegger names subjectivity. Obscured in this mode of being is with another terminology the *difference between being and beings*, the so-called ontological difference – the distinction between the entities which are, and the enigmatic fact *that* they are. Following Heidegger, the ontological difference remains foreclosed throughout the whole of metaphysics, but it is in the epoch of subject metaphysics that this forgetfulness assumes the character of power directed against the subject, exactly as being is understood to be the power of the subject. Therefore, it is this difference that man must take responsibility for if he is to regard being as something other than power, as “that in no need of power” (“Macht-unbedürftigte”) (Heidegger 1998, 70). In *GS*, it is thus said that “decisive the differentiation between being and beings” (“Entscheidend die Unterscheidung von Sein und Seiendem”) (Heidegger 1998, 57). With “decisive” Heidegger is most likely referring to the concept of resolution or resoluteness in *Being and Time/Sein und Zeit*, meaning the comportment or mode in which the human being actively opens himself up to being. What is now emphasized, is that this decision leads into the differentiation between the human being and being, as the experience of being’s radical otherness. The decision must be

understood as the act of letting being come forward in its foreignness, to let it appear as something other than *a* being: to let it appear as a facticity that beings must uphold. In the upsurge of the facticity of existence, this existence manifests itself as something of non-human origin; as something which the human cannot own, yet nevertheless must bear.

In *Contributions*, Heidegger explicates that this differentiation demands that the human being assumes the mode of Dasein. In comparison to *BT*, Dasein here obtains a new, qualified sense, and no longer refers to the existence of every man. Rather, it denotes a *possibility* for every existence, the possibility to address being, rather than the own self. The *Da* in the word – “there” – is to be understood as the clearing of being, and Dasein thus as a “middle” (*Zwischen*) between being and beings (Heidegger 1999/1989, 211/299). Being can only reach and illuminate other beings anew through the openness of this middle. To be Dasein is therefore the opposite of the status of being a subject – in fact, it is to “overcome all subjectivity” (Heidegger 1999/1989, 178/252).

Heidegger holds that this should not be pictured as a bridge between beings and being – it cannot be pictured at all. It is only available as a transformation of both into their respective essence (Heidegger 1999/1989, 11/14). This transformation is the enactment of both the human and being, not because being is thereby “humanized” anew, but because it can only assume its independent essence through the human being. This enigmatic occurrence is what Heidegger names the enowning.

To be able to approach the enowning and not merely envisage it as a harmonious ending of strife in human life, however, we must remain by the ontological difference, enduring it as a differing. We cannot approach it as a rational challenge or question, but only through living it ourselves, in carrying the weight of existence as an *inner* polemic or strife. Dasein must become aware of its being as a matter that defines it, and yet is a fundamentally unfamiliar burden. The mode of Dasein reveals the fact that the human is not just a being, but *in* being, that its existence is a force which at the same time carries and reigns over the individual, bringing forth the fact that its “is” as more important than *what* it is.

This must be understood as a leap (*Sprung*), rather than a seamless, gradual and organic joint (Heidegger 1999/1989, 11/14). It is in this respect that it is a matter of decision, something dependent on a certain strength and conscious enactment on the part of the human being. With strength however, it is not meant power, but rather the strength *not* to act in power. It is the strength not to resist the burden of being, but to let oneself be overwhelmed by it.

But is the case, then, the opposite: is being its own power over man? Can it simply be thought as an inverse? Occasionally, in *Contributions* Heidegger speaks of being as a kind of pure power (Cf. Heidegger 1999/1989, 15/21, 16/22, 55/79). In a work such as *Mindfulness* though, he is eager to understand it as “The *powerless – beyond power and lack of power*” (*Das Machtlose, jenseits von Macht und Unmacht*), in order not to let it be confused with the power of the human being (Heidegger 1997, 166/187). In any case, we cannot obtain an access to being through power. Rather, the variations in the naming of Being indicates Heidegger's struggle to name that which in truth cannot be named, exactly because it is not the property of the human being, but altogether what differs from it.

4. Identity as Belonging-together and as Being in History

With the appropriation of the ontological difference, the meaning of the phenomenon of identity must change. The word enowning means “bringing something into its own”. What is brought into its own, is the human being, but only insofar as it is the simultaneous enowning of being, bringing *itself* into its own. It is the event where both reach into their respective essence. In *ID*, this is also called the belonging-together as such (Heidegger 2002/2006, 28-29/37-38).

Heidegger shows in this work that an identity demands a relating of something to something, if the word should not remain an empty tautology. Identity entails some kind of belonging. Although Heidegger only once in this work refers to the belonging-together as identity, and this only to contrast it with logical and metaphysical identity, it is nevertheless the origin of identity that is meant by this occurrence. It means a

belonging so original that it refers to nothing less than the human being's abiding in being, as an abiding in himself. In other words, it is only in and through the non-human that the human can be itself. The human and being belong together, at the same time as they differ.

With this approach, Heidegger attempts to understand this relationship as non-metaphysical: neither the human, nor being appear as independent entities, which can be brought together in retrospect, as an intertwining. None is more original than the other: "Be-ing needs man in order to hold sway; and man belongs to be-ing so that he can accomplish his utmost destiny as Da-sein" ("Das Sein braucht den Menschen, damit es wese, und der Mensch gehört dem Seyn, auf dass er seine äusserste Bestimmung als Da-sein vollbringe") (Heidegger 1999/1989, 177/251). As shown, the relationship is not a matter of indifference, but of enduring the difference, bearing it as a hardship.

Heidegger's lack of an anthropological perspective is thus not a sign that the question of the human being is left out. On the contrary, it is a re-figuration of what it means to have a human identity at all, of what the most own of the human being is. It is not something that it owns, but rather something that it is being owned by. Identity is in other words no longer understood as the one or the other thing that the human being can be, but as the belonging to the very "is" of such statements of identity, binding the human being to the world and to itself.

But as being no longer is appropriated as the property of man, the understanding of one's historicity must change as well. On the basis of the difference between the subject and power, history is understood as belonging to man as a subject, and its essence, consequently, to be the strife of power between particular subjects. It is in this epoch, in this relation to being, that every interaction, and every identity will be marked by power. But identity as enowning is a presence where the very phenomenon of history changes. The "mediating" role of Dasein, as the middle between being and beings, was not to be understood as a link between the two. Rather, enowning means "simultaneously transforming be-ing and beings in their simultaneity" ("das Seyn und das Seiende zugleich in ihre

Gleichzeitigkeit verwandelt”) (Heidegger 1999/1989, 11/14). Enowning is thus given a temporal dimension, which is perhaps made more clear in the German expression *Gleichzeitigkeit*. In other sections, Heidegger repeats that Dasein is not merely located in a determined space-time, but that it is the *grounding* of the time-space itself (Heidegger 1999/1989, 13/17). The same is said in *GS*: “being as 'that within which' is not 'ours', the being of man, but the enowning of the between as the origin of time-space” (“Das Sein als “Worinnen” ist nicht 'unser', der Menschen 'Sein', sondern das Ereignis des Inzwischen als Ursprung des Zeit-Raumes”) (Heidegger 1998, 55). The occurrence in which being yields itself as enowning is a historical event, dependent on the spatiotemporality of Dasein. Being can only clear itself in an existence located in a particular time and space. On the other hand, Dasein is endowed with a history, as the realm in which it exists as temporal and spatial, only because it can be appropriated by being. History in an original sense, as the opening up of a specific realm in which human beings reside and interact according to a shared horizon of meaning, happens as a response to the self-giving temporality of being. In this, the spatiotemporality of the individual Dasein becomes a locus for the event of being, thereby inaugurating original history. With the word simultaneity, Heidegger seeks a way to express the reciprocity of the particular moment – (*Augenblick*) (Heidegger 1999/1989, 15/20) – in which being's remoteness approaches, reveals itself in the human temporality, and gives it a present tied to the past and pregnant with a future. To win a historical identity in which the human can reconcile with history itself, to win a present which is not cut off from and haunted by the past and the future, but instead is the locality where both are gathered, the human must withdraw as the subject of history.

Neither is history therefore an “objective” matter which Dasein finds somewhere outside of itself. In the *Augenblick*, Dasein first *opens up* the historicity of the voices of other Daseins, previous and present, and responds to these. History reveals itself as a phenomenon which is only to be found in this response. Hence, history does not manifest the distant voices of other subjects defying us and our present, but is a simultaneous

disclosing-revealing of being, in and through which other human beings act and address us.

It is therefore through standing in the ontological difference that the present and the distance of history can reconcile. This historicity, to Heidegger, is never to be sighted as regular history in the sense of historical knowing (*Historie*) (Heidegger 1999/1989, 13/17) but can only be reached and perceived in the collision between the contingency of the own temporality, and the incontingency of being's.

5. Conclusion

This conception of difference and identity in Heidegger casts new light on our contemporary predicament of identity. The situation of discursive power, yielding a problematic difference in the identity of the subject, is being-historical, a certain way in which the relationship between the human being and being establishes itself in time and space. When man defines his identity on the basis of subjectivity, he will find an obstacle in discursive power. In contrast to Butler's claim, the prevailing of power according to Heidegger indicates completed subjectivity.

In Butler, power is implicitly regarded as the *indirect* approach of *other* subjects, through the phenomenon of history. Power is deferred in time and space, as a "there", ultimately stemming from others. But at the same time, it can be "there" only because it is already "here", in the subject, creating its identity. Reading Heidegger, this situation stems not from ontic subjects, not from another location in history, and not originally from the human being as such, but from the way the human being interprets and acts out himself as the ground of being, as the entity that being stems from. Butler herself declares that the subject cannot be equal to "the person" or "the individual", but rather is a "linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation". At the same time though, she insists on the impossibility of existing as an individual if not referred to as a subject (Butler 1997, 11). Butler thus problematizes the subject status of the human being, but does not consider the origin of its necessity, and with this its possible alternative.

The ontological difference in Heidegger is the experience of the impossibility of taking control over being, or positively expressed: being's overwhelming and sheltering supremacy over man. It is a supremacy which is also a dependency, calling for a responsibility of the human. In this dependency, the identity of the human is exhibited as Dasein; only here is proper selfhood to be found. As Dasein, the finite human learns to be defined by incontinent being, as the opposite of being burdened by power.

NOTES

¹ Of course, Heidegger has devoted many texts to the Nietzschean concept of “the will to power”. But although Heidegger sees power as an outcome of the metaphysics of the will to power, there is a vast difference between the two. While the will to power for Heidegger constitutes the last attempt to denote the manifest openness of Being within the metaphysical paradigm, power is a manifestation of the complete withdrawal of this openness. For this reason, Nietzsche's concept will not be elaborated on here.

² In “Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault” Hubert L. Dreyfus carries out a comparative survey of the concept of being in Heidegger and the concept of power in Foucault, suggesting that the history of being in the former corresponds to the analysis of the regimes of power in the latter (Dreyfus 1996, 3). While Heidegger strives towards an overcoming of being's specific manifestation as technicity, Dreyfus argues, Foucault strives towards an overcoming of disciplinary bio-power (Dreyfus 1996, 7-12). The difference between them is found in the fact that Foucault ultimately cannot account for the necessity of this overcoming (Dreyfus 1996, 14). It is exactly on this point, I add, that the essence of the ambiguity of this account of power is exposed: for Foucault, everything is power, yet at the same time, disciplinary power and bio-power constitute a problematic epoch in history. What lacks in Foucault is a being-historical interpretation of power. Thus, Heidegger and Foucault cannot be compared in this respect; the very notion of power would for Heidegger in itself represent a certain respect in which the human being approaches and understands being.

³ In “The question Concerning Technology” (“Die Frage nach der Technik”, 2000) Heidegger holds that in the epoch of enframing both subjects and objects seemingly will disappear, and thereby this very relation. Instead, they will both become “standing-reserves”. (26-27/27-28). This is discussed by Federico José Lagdameo (2014, 15-17, Michel Haar (2002, 158) and Samuel Ijseeling (1992, 386). But in what way do they disappear? In “Science and Reflection” (“Wissenschaft and Besinnung”), published the same year, Heidegger makes it clear that the subject-object relation hereby does not end, but reaches into its essence, its “most extreme dominance”. (173/55). Exactly here, in this ambiguity, is the concept of power of importance.

REFERENCES

- Butler, Judith. 1999. *Subjects of desire: Hegelian reflections in twentieth-century France*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- _____. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press.
- _____. 2000. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. 1996. "Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 4 (1): 1-16.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordin. Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper. New York: Vintage Books.
- _____. 1982. "The Subject and Power". *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 777-795.
- Haar, Michel. 2002. "Attunement and Thinking". In *Heidegger Reexamined*, Vol. 3: *Art, Poetry and Technology*. Edited by Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall. New York: Routledge.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row. [*Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. 2: *Sein und Zeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann. 1977/1927].
- _____. 1999. *Contributions to Philosophy*. Translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. [*Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann. 1989].
- _____. 1998. *Die Geschichte des Seyns*. In *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 69. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- _____. 2002. *Identity and Difference*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. [*Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. 11: *Identität und Differenz*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2006/1957].
- _____. 2006. *Mindfulness*. Translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. London: Continuum. [*Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. 66: *Besinnung*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann. 1997].

_____. 1977. “Science and Reflection”. In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row. [“Wissenschaft und Besinnung”, in *Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000/1954].

_____. 1977. “The Question Concerning Technology”. In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row. [“Die Frage nach der Technik”, in *Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann. 2000/1954].

Howarth, David R. 2013. *Poststructuralism and after: structure, subjectivity and power*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ijselesing, Samuel. 1992. “The End of Philosophy as the Beginning of Thinking”. In *Martin Heidegger – Critical Assessments*, Vol. 1: *Philosophy*, edited by Christopher Macann. London: Routledge.

Inwood, Michael J. 1999. *A Heidegger Dictionary*. Malden (Mass.): Blackwell Publishers.

Lagdameo, Federico José T. 2014. “From *Machenschaft* to *Gestell*: Heidegger's Critique of Modernity”. *Filocracia* 1 (1): 1-23.

Strozier, Robert M. 2002. *Foucault, subjectivity, and identity: historical constructions of subject and self*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Ziarek, Krzysztof. 2002. „Art, Power, and Politics: Heidegger on *Machenschaft* and *Poiêsis*“. *Contretemps* 3: 175-186.

Uljana Akca is PhD student at the Department of Philosophy, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. Research interests: Identity and Difference, Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, German idealism, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, G.W.F. Hegel.