Abstract

This essay analyzes the notions of subject and agency within the writings of Judith Butler and the relevance of her contribution to social theory. The subject appears to be partially constituted through a process of ritual reiteration of rules. Within power dynamics, power is found to be the condition of the agency, understood as resistance and capacity for political action. The agency, motivated by desire, manifests itself as a driving innovation for force and change because it activates reflexive awareness about the limits power imposes on the subject, generating resistance/agency. Butler’s thoughts contribute a new thesis to social theory by furthering our understanding of the processes of resistance and agency that emerge from the “social margins” of subjects historically invisible or considered “subordinate” or unintelligible within a given social order. The agency disrupts hegemonic logic and redefines the meaning of social practices and subjectivities, thereby initiating new reiterative links that produce the conditions for socio-cultural changes to take place.

Keywords

Subject, agency, power, social theory.