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THE SELF AFTER OFFICIAL DISDAIN: THE ANALYSIS OF ONTOLOGICALLY WEAK IDENTITY

– Jurga Jonutytė –

Abstract: The aim of the article is twofold: to analyze the different possible reactions of a subject to institutional humiliation, and to ground these reactions in different habits of self-ontologization, differentiating between weak and strong models of identification. In order to illustrate the analyzed theoretical distinctions, I use two cases in the article: two narratives of individuals who experienced the disdain of officials because of their non-normative bodies. Both people were confronted with the norms and concepts prevailing in society that humiliate them in the most symbolic expression of normativity. However, this encounter led to completely different attitudes towards social order and modes of self-identification. The article consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, I will discuss two basic conceptions of identification and raise a question about their forms in practice. In the second chapter, I relate one of these ways to the concept of process ontology (and particularly to the concept of the incorporeal) and discuss the different possible types of self-ontologization in situations of official disdain. The third chapter is devoted to the relationship between power and the subject: the ambiguous character of power is revealed and two different reactions (surrendering to power, and assuming resistant power) are related to the modes of self-ontologizing. I also rethink the concept of vulnerability in two different ways, revealed by the cases analyzed: vulnerability is discussed in relation to either the concept of resistance or the concept of resilience, which lead back to different conceptions of identity.

Keywords: weak ontological identity, normativity, vulnerability, resistance, resilience

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Introduction

Externally similar social structures and situations may affect a person differently, forming different social attitudes. This article is based on the claim that the reason for this difference is not solely personal traits of people or their psychological characteristics, but also, to a large extent, the prevailing ontological views that determine the status of norms and powers in a particular society. The purpose of this article is to analyze the ontological foundations that shape different reactions to normativity in situations that

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could be described as vulnerable and reflect on the difference between different types of identification: the weak and the strong. It is necessary to note that the weak identification type by no means refers to weakness of a person, and strong identification does not indicate a person's inflexibility, stagnation or other negative psychological traits. There is no inequality between these types from an ethical or social perspective (neither is better than the other): they are survival tactics based on different ontologization; these tactics can be tentatively called postures of resistance and resilience.

The concepts of norm and power are not only interrelated, but also completely dependent on the attitude towards social reality, its imaginable permanence and possible change. The conceptual basis of the philosophical discussion of norm and power consists primarily of the philosophy of Michel Foucault and his followers, especially the works of feminist philosophers, such as Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Margrit Shildrick, Alison Weir, and others. In this article, I examine different ontological grounds of the identification process, to show how surrounding normativity affects self-explanation and self-narration. For this purpose, I will fragmentarily analyze two cases of self-narration and discuss them with reference to the mentioned social philosophers. The cases which I will use for the more vivid analysis are two oral life stories, in both of which the narrators recount their experiences of injustice suffered from the representatives of the state and society. The stories, recorded by myself in previous projects devoted to the concept of disability in Lithuania, are now analyzed in the framework of recent research on norms and power in oral auto-narratives.

They were told by two people. The first is Mary,[1] who lives in a small Lithuanian town, works as a seamstress, and takes care of her family and home. She routinely resists humiliation directed towards her or her husband on grounds of their disability. She is not directly involved in activism groups, but the way she talks about herself inspires many of them. Peter, the second narrator, lives in a remote nursing home far from the big cities of Lithuania, enjoying many pleasant activities– reading books or cooking for the whole community. Peter spends most of his time alone in his small room. Particularly open and in many places even funny, Peter's story marked by a gentle self-irony was mostly directed to the future, to his new plans for livelihood and survival.

The two analyzed cases help us to distinguish between self-ontological types. The article does not include biological, physiological, or genetic perspectives that would perhaps be possible by working in a different theoretical field and using completely different methods. The research presented here is carried out in the field of the intersection of social philosophy and philosophical narratology, which allows raising questions about the interfaces between self-narration and identification processes, without diagnosing the "real" people's psychological or physiological condition. These types of self-ontologizing are not personal, but situational, even if those situations are not short-term or rapidly changing. Of course, Mary, Peter, and other people live in different social environments and are affected by different circumstances; making a comparison of these cases (and especially the persons) would be complicated and pointless. The thickness of the social

[1] By agreement, the names of narrators have been changed. The transcription and the record of this narrative are kept in the Archive of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, entry No. LTRF cd 1595/8.

medium and its unsystematic nature resists the promotion of one aspect over others and positioning it as the cause of a whole situation. In the stories of these people, I find that the different understanding of an ontological status of the self is neither a cause nor an effect, it neither begins nor ends the process of identification, but it gives a direction to a self-realization.

The focus of this article is slightly different than the experience of disability. The ways of identification that are analyzed here are not specific to people having disabilities, but to people in general when they appear in one or another interpersonal situation. Nevertheless, due to widespread ableistic attitudes, people with disabilities are more likely to fall into situations marked by vulnerability.

Modes of identity

It is useful to begin with a trivial reminder that identity as a philosophical concept does not mean and has never meant a stable, clear, and unchanging marker of a person or a group of people. We can roughly sketch two models of this concept: on the one hand, the identity described by Charles Taylor, Jean-Paul Sartre, Zygmunt Bauman, and Frank Ankersmit, as a concept determining a gap between aspiration (or memory) and reality; on the other hand, the notion of identity discussed by Michel Foucault, Gilbert Simondon, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Rein Raud and others, which can roughly be described as a constant process of adjustment and/or resistance towards the environment. It is also important to mention that there is no sharp boundary between these two kinds of concepts and theories: they both belong to the philosophical analysis of modernity, supporting or denying the modern principle of identity formation and its recognition.

Alison Weir considers the difference, or rather the transition, between the two most distinct concepts of identity, symbolically assigning the two poles of the identity scale to Charles Taylor and Michel Foucault: "While it can be argued that Taylor and Foucault are thematizing two very different aspects of identity – Taylor is focusing on first person, subjective, affirmed identity, and Foucault is focusing on third person, or ascribed, category identity – in practice, these two are very much intertwined."[2] The mode of first-person identification raises the question "Who am I?"[3] I would like to add that this question is not only aimed at the embodiment of the authentic unique self (imbued only with positive characteristics and the perception of a valuable authentic existence), but it can equally be a reason for distancing oneself from society, self-condemnation and self-withdrawal in cases when "I" is accepted as an obvious outcast – as if "naturally" existing social norms have determined the person's seemingly self-evident place in society.

And, quite the opposite, the identification with the "third person" is governed by the notion that "there is no pregiven objective truth of the self."[4] This mode can be recognized by the refusal to explain oneself in terms of reified and naturalized social norms and principles. In auto-narratives, this attitude correlates with a style in which the narrator, talking about the experienced situation, does not focus on her own feelings and

[2] Weir (2013): 15.
[3] Ibidem: 25.
[4] Ibidem.

thoughts, but instead describes and analyzes the behavior of others. Such a narrator tells her story without becoming its center and without emphasizing her own uniqueness and specificity. This is especially evident when a person describes an event that is painfully remembered or marks a turning point in their life: even in such episodes – or perhaps especially in them – the narrative focuses on observations of the whole situation rather than on one's own emotions, thoughts, or decisions. Such an auto-narrative emphasizes the nature of a situation, the actions of other people, explains why they are welcomed or condemned, and how they could have or even should have behaved differently.

At this point, let me introduce the first storyteller – Mary. Here is a brief factual summary of her story. This woman, born with a disability (she uses a wheelchair due to cerebral palsy), created a happy marriage and welcomed a son. About ten years later, after a long period of trying to get pregnant again, she found out that she had undergone additional surgeries during her caesarean section. All the medical examinations showed that she had been medically sterilized. Since this caesarean section was the only surgery Mary had in her entire life, it became clear that the sterilization had been performed without Mary's knowledge and against her will during the birth of her first child. She immediately understood that this illegal act was ordered by some of her relatives and performed by a surgeon from the local hospital in a small Lithuanian town. The case went to court and the hospital lost. The doctor who took the bribe and injured the woman did so in the state institution. Thus, as a civil servant, he demonstrated not only his own, but the state's attitude towards the woman's disability. Here is a fragment of Mary's story:

> The most important thing is that it is a severe physical injury to the whole body. After that, other illnesses appeared, and now I have to live with them. As I say, until the end of my life. God forbid, but the doctors who found this say that an oncological [disease] might develop... As the doctor say, "Those who did this must be punished."

It is important to note that Mary, who could not get pregnant and therefore began to examine her health, learned about the sterilization, and immediately realized that she wouldn't let it be passed over in silence. As she repeatedly emphasized, she received direct support from her social environment: from other doctors who diagnosed it, from society at large, from neighbors, from disability activists, but first and foremost – from her husband. This was, of course, an important factor in Mary's decision to fight for her rights, but not the main one. The main thing, as she mentioned several times in her life story, is her understanding that there are many more such cases happening nearby, but neither the victims themselves nor their relatives talk about them because of shame and fear of being stigmatized. Mary herself sees things differently, she does not care about possible stigma or humiliation: she says that she has lost much more – her whole vision of a future life:

> And I don't have to justify myself to anyone. It is my health that is crippled. And I will never have a child. Do I have to prove it to anyone? Damn it! Enough, I'm tired. I have been proving everything for 42 years. Now I'm living my life!

This direct and clear rejection of her social role (that of a disabled woman) and of the behavior understood as typical of this "social group" resulted directly from the discovery of how far the assignment of this role can go. After experiencing a radical intervention in her body caused by the prevailing biopolitics, Mary underwent quite a sudden and completely clear change of identity. This transformation gave her the motivation and strength to become an activist:

> And I tell everyone that you have to fight for your rights. Everybody has to fight for their rights, if you don't fight, nothing will happen.

Thus, Mary is not talking so much about herself as she is talking about an inappropriate, damaging medium. She begins with her problems and her choices, but she never focuses on them. "*Our case is only the first to be made public*" – both spouses keep repeating, emphasizing that this criminal practice of sterilizing disabled women without their knowledge still exists. Indeed, the case was made public in a blink of an eye: there were articles and interviews with the couple, the media showed interest in the trial, and the public was agitated. Mary's public activity is first and foremost dedicated to other women, she speaks on behalf of them and their families. Mary took on the public identity of a woman who was humiliated and injured because of her disability, the identity of an obvious and open victim.

The strength that Mary gains from humiliation and injustice is a power that comes, paradoxically, from a situation of vulnerability. The complexity of this concept, its ambiguity, is discussed primarily by Judith Butler and their followers. Leticia Sabsay observes that "vulnerability emerges from subjects' relationality, and it is constitutive of our capacity for action."[5] Vulnerability means belonging to a specific, contingently formed network of relationships that opens the possibility of suffering from unexpected, unforeseen elements of that network, which is precisely what the case of Mary reveals. However, in her diachronically extended situation, Mary experienced not only humiliation, but also support. She felt not only the injustice done to her, but also her own justice. Not only was she aware of her condemnation and scorn under the concept of disability, but she also sensed a change in that concept. Again, Subsay provides a precise explanation of how the experience of vulnerability worked in Mary's case:

> One dimension of this vulnerability is undoubtedly our vulnerability to interpellation and to the name, where the name functions as a synecdoche for the normative social world that precedes us and marks the process of subject constitution. Now, interpellation is not just about verbal speech acts; it is also about unintentional modes of touching, relating to, looking, and moving, hence the importance of affectability for understanding how bodily performativity works.[6]

Of course, the humiliation in Mary's case was not only on the physical level and arose primarily from the concept of disability that prevailed at that time in a particular

[5] Sabsay (2016): 285.
[6] Ibidem: 293.

place (the town, the town hospital, and the surroundings where Mary's relatives lived). A doctor who committed a crime believed that he was helping Mary's relatives to stop the growth of a family in which both adult members have disabilities. Both the doctor and Mary's relatives saw disability as an impersonal social evil to be controlled. The concept was put into practice and the grave injustice was done. However, by the time Mary learns of this crime committed against her, the changes in the concept of disability are well underway and the attitude exhibited by the hospital doctor is far from the norm. Disability should not be stigmatized, and Mary understood this very well. Margrit Shildrick notes that the stigmatizing situation is shaped not only by two parties – the humiliator and the humiliated – but also by the intricate complexity of other actors.

> What is at stake, then, is not some simple opposition between categorical groups with and without socio-cultural capital, but a discursive context in which a range of people – those who are disabled, those who are normatively embodied, disability scholars, and activists and allies alike – are all caught up in the interplay of barely recognized forces. (...) To put it starkly that those in the mainstream are the problem should not be taken to entirely limit the field of enquiry, given that we all share certain psychic origins. Moreover, to locate the problematic within a nexus of socio-cultural forces, rather than as a matter of personal construction, in no order undermines its psychic inflection, for what is at stake is the critical intersection of material experience, representation, and psychosomatic symbolization into which we are all differentially drawn.[7]

The situation involves many factors that collectively contribute to the changing social norms, and Mary's activism catalyzes this change. In such situations, there are not only these two figures (the positive and the negative one – the victim and the prosecutor), but a dense and quite perplexing conceptual ground formed by what Shildrick calls a "nexus of socio-cultural forces." The example of Mary refutes the simple assumption that a contingent ethical and social situation consists only of the people who are directly involved in it, their reactions and decisions. First, Mary's situation is temporally divided, split in time**:** the woman underwent the abuse unconsciously, not being aware of it for a decade. When she found out, the basic elements of the background – the conceptual context – had changed a lot, and she, as the main participant of this situation, was no longer required to be as passive as before.

Ontology of the situational identity

The concept of identity represented by Mary differs from the common understanding, where identity is viewed as something that remains in change and allows the recognition of the same. The assumptions of this conceptual change are primarily ontological: they belong to those socio-ontological theories whose development has accelerated in the last few decades. With the help of these theories, we can think about a different, fluid,

[7] Shildrick (2009): 83.

and weak (ontologically, not ethically) identity. One of the most vivid examples is the concept of identity developed by Elizabeth Grosz, which is based, among other notions, on the concept of the incorporeal, invented in Stoic texts (and later revived and renewed by Gilles Deleuze) and echoed in Gilbert Simondon's theory of individuation.

According to Grosz, identification or, more precisely, the process of individuation, takes place as the recognition of concrete and abstract (at the same time) models called incorporeals. As it is explained by Grosz, the notion of the incorporeal is part of a specific ontologically epistemological system[8], or way of seeing units of reality as not necessarily divided into situational features and eternal (conceptual) essences. In one of her interviews, Grosz says that her analysis of this concept (the incorporeal) "is specifically focused on the distinction between the material and the ideal that has pervaded philosophy."[9] Indeed, the focus on the singularity of the situation always calls into question the distinction between body and consciousness and teaches us to think about it without distinguishing between what is temporary and what is permanent. Incorporeals, according to Grosz, are "particulars, though without body,"[10] they "cannot be understood as qualities, generalities (or universals), or even as quasi objects: they neither act nor are acted upon."[11] This apophatic definition indicates a break with any conventional ontologization and raises the idea of an identity that is not divided into what remains and what changes. Previous situations participate in the appearance of incorporeals, but not in a way that separates the unchanging elements from the temporary ones.

Deleuze explains the incorporeals as situational compounds of matter and thought that are "irreducible to individual states of affairs, particular images, personal beliefs, and universal or general concepts."[12] An incorporeal is not an essence (nothing universal or transcendental), but neither is it a momentary, purely emotional, or ephemeral entity. It is a contingent[13] identity given by a dense knot of interfaces in a concrete situation, it is a dense, opaque network of relations and affiliations that points to a different kind of ontology, the different directions of which are collectively called process ontology. Summarizing the tendencies of the process ontology, Rein Raud notes their three overlapping (not mutually exclusive) types: "There are three main varieties of such approach, the process centered, the multiplicity centered, and the one based on mutual conditioning, and it is important to note that they do not rely on each other—i.e., they can all occur both separately and in conjunction with other(s)."[14] However, Raud emphasizes that there is one feature that all these three approaches have in common, it is "the privilege they grant to relations over the participants of those relations."[15] This

[8] Grosz (2018): 3.
[9] Grosz, Stirner (2016): 17.
[10] Grosz (2018): 34.
[11] Ibidem: 32.
[12] Deleuze (1990): 19.
[13] Contingency is understood here as a middle modality between necessity and accidentality, as it is interpreted in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and more or less contemporary theories of Giorgio Agamben, Ernesto Laclau and many others. Thus the use of this term in this article differs from some authors who equate contingency with accidentality.
[14] Raud (2021): 25.
[15] Ibidem: 29.

also explains the immateriality of the incorporeal: a unit of meaning, which is neither a property nor an essence, is made up of relationships between synchronic and diachronic meanings. Thus, situational identity is not instantaneous, but sustained by the overlap of meanings.

In explaining the incorporeal, Grosz reminds us that the logic of identity is changing primarily because anthropocentric attitudes are waning. This process is far from a romantic notion of the practical equality of every living being. It is rather the realization that none of the creatures is an enclosed and stable substance, including the human being. We are all permeated, influenced, supported, and frightened by other forms of life.

> In recognizing not only our connections with the things that compose our world but also the fact that we are ourselves nothing but these connections, recognizing that relations to the inhuman are what make us human internally and without resistance, we must give up something of the capacious, masterful, acquisitive, self-referential perspective and instead come to marvel at our own existence and the innumerable conditions which made it possible.[16]

Although Grosz's theory is primarily intended to rethink biological identification, it also works perfectly in the field of social relations: the idea that we are "nothing but these connections" encourages us to abandon the "capable, masterful, acquisitive, self-referential perspective."[17] This way of thinking allows us to no longer follow hierarchical pyramids of power that transform vertical relationships into horizontal ones. The belief that there are no outcasts and leaders as such changes the abstract idea of social equality – instead of demanding that the powerful understand the powerless, the ephemeral nature of power begins to be seen. It is this kind of thinking that allows Mary to see the whole action of her humiliation without being guided by the very social norms that humiliated her. Just as an infinitely dense network enables our biological existence, similarly dense networks create (and constantly recreate) each self-reflective self.

In practice, such a refusal of essentialism looks like a rejection or conscious violation of reified social norms and hierarchies, or at least, a critical attitude towards them. Understanding a human interaction is not done by separating the essences from the secondary features and observing the interactions of the essences, but by seeing the situation as composed of raw and unrefined elements retaining all ethical, social, biological, psychological, and political impurities. Similarly, the retrospective evaluation of the situation does not consist in highlighting an imaginable pure construction of it, in which all temporary and contingent elements are excluded. On the contrary, the evaluation of the situation includes all its contextual details. When we think of the incorporeal instead of essences, we do not purify and schematize the observed action, but saturate it with contingent (not accidental, but overlapping and situationally continuous) meanings. This saturation of contingency allows Mary's story to be seen as a triumph of a conceptual change over conceptual stagnation, rather than simply a story of humiliation. The change of concepts is based on a different ontology than the adherence to established

[16] Grosz, Stirner (2016): 19.
[17] Ibidem.

principles and norms. Again, recalling Raud's summary, this reality is made up of the dense networks of relations and connections, rather than of essences and accidental properties that complement them.

Grosz sees the incorporeal precisely as such – a whole of meaning composed not only of diachronic but also of synchronic relations. "It is no longer a question of what identity a life form has, what constitutes it genetically or materially, but what it does, how it acts, its modes of affecting and being affected."[18] Thus, the emphasis here is primarily on the shift from diachronic identification to synchronic relations and, through them, the re/distributions of power.

Grosz's theory is partly based on the concept of Simondon's individuation theory: the incorporeal correlates with the Simondonian concept of pre-individual – the condition of constant adaptation to multiple environments. Grosz explains: "the preindividual is both material and ideal without distinction, both identity and the undoing of identity, being only through continuous becoming."[19] The preindividual is a logical (and dialectical) possibility of becoming, but not in the sense of a gap between virtuality and reality, or potentiality and reality, not as the never-ending quest to become an ideal of the imagined self. The very principle of identification is different: the "I" becomes clear in a particular recent situation, although it correlates, yet does not coincide, with an earlier "I". There is no distinction between matter as reality and idea as virtuality: virtuality is not a point of attraction, not something to be striven for, or something lacking. The identity of becoming is no longer subject to the dictates of virtuality.

In anthropological terms, a concrete body is not a variation of an ostensibly unchanging human body; it is the only idea of a human being in this situation. Explaining Spinoza's substance, Grosz notes: "The order and connection of things *is* the order and connection of ideas."[20] In this kind of interpretation, material particularities do not hide themselves behind concepts (as they would were they considered deviations) but form the momentary grasp of their relationality (incorporeals). Ontological change leads to social and ethical change, which, according to Grosz, is "not a morality of actions but Spinozan affirmation of the powers of acting (and being acted on)."[21] The ethics, which may correlate with this ontological order, is not so much concerned with the moral rightness of an action, as with its intention, the direction of the change it brings, and the powers of its implementation.

Power of the subject: normativity and its transformations

In the philosophy of the last few centuries, the concept of power has been discussed on many levels and from many perspectives. The concept on which this article is based is rooted in Michel Foucault's philosophy, where power is clearly separated from purely external forces and is instead understood "as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate, and which constitute their own organization."[22] In

[18] Grosz (2018): 156.
[19] Ibidem: 205.
[20] Ibidem: 59 (italics in the original).
[21] Ibidem: 206.
[22] Foucault (1978): 92.

explaining power as a condition of the subject formation and a reason for its change, Judith Butler points to two aspects of power that do not coincide: "Power considered as a condition of the subject is necessarily not the same as power considered as what the subject is said to wield. The power that initiates the subject fails to remain continuous with the power that is the subject's agency."[23] However, if we consider a particular situation, for example Mary's story, the source of the social power that Mary gains here comes from the successful attempt to take away her bodily or reproductive power. In this way, power paradoxically becomes both empowering and constraining, or, in other words, power can beget its opposite power. Weir notices: "(…) our agency is enabled by the very forms of power that subject us."[24] Mary's story supports Butler's argument that "the subject is itself a site of this ambivalence in which the subject emerges both as the effect of a prior power and as the condition of possibility for a radically conditioned form of agency."[25] This ambivalence of power is primarily related to the subject's response to the normativity imposed upon it. In this case, it is necessary to talk not only about body norms, but also about behavioral norms assigned to a certain role—a woman with a disability. Mary ignores the latter and behaves as if a completely different normativity is valid in society.

According to Butler "the psychic operation of the norm is derived, though not mechanically or predictably, from prior social operations."[26] Norms emerge not only from the average of lifestyles and ways of thinking, but also from diachronic sedimentation of habits. We find an analysis of this question in the philosophy of Georges Canguilhem[27]. Foucault, explaining and developing Canguilhem's theory, says that the norm "is an element on the basis of which a certain exercise of power is founded and legitimized."[28] Norms are the limits of power-cultivating actions. A norm changes not only when the statistical average moves out of its usual place, but also when the self-evidence of the norm begins to be seen as a mistake and its legitimacy is questioned.

In this context, I would like to share the story of Peter, which shows a completely different reaction to the official disdain and relationship to the norms cultivated in society. Peter was brutally injured while serving his sentence in prison. Now he has a complex disability, developed as a result of this act of violence, and lives in a social care home. We spoke to him about ten years from his life-changing incident. Peter was beaten and tortured by five other prisoners; after which, when he was lying down, still conscious but unable to speak or move, a policeman came and asked if he wanted to seek justice for what had just happened. Before Peter could answer, the policeman "understood" his silence as a refusal and went away. Peter was left with a severe physical disability (difficulty controlling one side of his body, impaired speech), a no longer valid concept of justice (as well as the concept of the state), and a complete social vacuum that he created for himself.

[23] Butler (1997): 12.
[24] Weir (2013): 7.
[25] Butler (1997): 14–15.
[26] Ibidem: 21.
[27] Canguilhem (1991): 123, 267.
[28] Foucault (2016): 50.

Peter was disregarded by an official for whom he had respect, though not a personal one; respect for the official's authority was a universal norm. According to Alexandre Kojève, the authority of the official is a specific type of power: it contains a symbolic variety of different manifestations of authority and can be experienced as the highest unquestioned external power. When distinguishing types of authority, Kojève singles out the authority of the officer, which, as he claims, "is a good example of compound Authority. Besides his specific Authority as a Leader, which he exerts over soldiers, he also benefits from the Authority of the Master that all soldiers have over civilians; with regard to fellow soldiers, he generally possesses as well the Authority of the Father, and finally, he embodies also the Authority of the Judge."[29] In other words, the figure of the policeman in Peter's case represented the complex external power, which also had the connotation of ontological power or the unquestionable world order.

After this violent injury, Peter spent more than a year in the hospital relearning the simplest movements, such as walking and controlling his hands, as well as speaking. All of these skills, although developed to the maximum in this situation, remained very imperfect. This event plunged Peter into the world of disability, both physical and psychosocial: a man who was strong and capable before the incident had a hard time coming to terms with his disabled body. However, his reaction to the event that injured him was completely different from Mary's. In Peter's story, disability appears as a strict opposition to power, power that he imagines as something clearly dissociated from his present condition, and, moreover, both unquestionable and ontologically stable.

Interpreting Foucault's work *Discipline and Punish*, Butler notes that, in contrast to the Aristotelian explanation of human being, Foucault would associate a concept of the human soul not so much with freedom as with normativity and determination: "Foucault argues in Discipline and Punish that the soul becomes a normative and normalizing ideal according to which the body is trained, shaped, cultivated and invested; it is a historically specific imaginary ideal (*ideal speculatif*) under which the body is materialized."[30] Such an interpretation can be linked to Giorgio Agamben's analysis of the different concepts of the body in the ancient Greece, which he develops in the beginning of *The Use of Bodies*. Agamben points to the boundary between the bodies of the master and the slave: the master subordinates his body to the ideal form as much as it is possible and thus makes it minimally visible, while the slave earns his or her living by using his or her own body as an instrument and does not have the opportunity to form the body according to the idea of the righteous human soul.[31] In both interpretations (one by Butler and Foucault, the other by Agamben), the body is disciplined according to the given cultural form, the dominant conception of man— "the soul," which becomes an external regulating force that treats any contingent irregularity as accidental and irrelevant. The ancient vision of the development of body and soul is beautiful in itself, but its damage begins to be seen when unsuccessful cases, such as Peter's, are noticed—they turn this beautiful humanistic scheme upside down. The teleological self, the aspirational self, or even more so, the idea of a righteous person—serves not only as basis of personal growth and development, but

[29] Kojève (2020): 15.
[30] Butler (1997): 90.
[31] Agamben (2016): 4–6.

also as basis of the complete restriction or even disabling of a person (such as slaves or individuals with non-normative and overly visible bodies). Then the idea of the true self serves as a confirmation of one's low place in a social hierarchy and the huge distance between the individual's concept of the self and the universally imaginable correctness of human beings.

Butler suggests that in this inverted image of human body and soul exteriority becomes soul, and interiority becomes body.[32] The body is an interiority that must be demonstrated as little as possible in public. This invisibility, this minimized, inconspicuous materiality of a body is guaranteed and supported by the normativity of images and the normativity of behavior. In the case of deviation from the norm, disability, or, according to Bill Hughes, excessive corporeality,[33] the body is seen too clearly, too materially, too distinctly. If, according to the inverted scheme of body and soul, the body becomes a person's interiority, a counterpart to the authentic self, then the true state of the body, with all its materiality, becomes, in the cases of both Mary and Peter, the realm of personal freedom. The difference is that Mary actively seeks to protect this realm of interiority, while Peter's story conveys the attitude of distancing from the experienced injustice as from the completely extraneous past. Peter talks a lot about the future, about his life plans, about the household and jobs he could do using a healthy hand. All those plans are bright and calm, no longer connected with hurt and humiliation. The case of institutional humiliation just like the case of disabling trauma was mentioned only a few times in his long and sincere story – reluctantly and without pursuing his own role in this story. His newly experienced body, marked by several disabilities, in Peter's opinion, became hypervisible; and hypervisibility carries a stigma. Not only did Peter feel this stigma, but he also internalized it completely.

Several times, Peter openly says that he has no friends in the social care home where he lives. His own explanation for this is that he has no one to make friends with, because all the other residents of the home have mental or psychosocial disabilities, while his disability is purely physical. This (admittedly ableist) explanation seems to be Peter's desperate attempt to maintain his self-esteem. Twice Peter has been offered the chance to move to another care home for people with mostly physical disabilities, but both times he refused, as if to avoid any friendship, any new social environment. These refusals seem to stem from Peter's disbelief that he could still be respected and valued anywhere.

> Peter: This prison... I heard everything in prison then. I couldn't speak, or anything, I couldn't move at all. The policeman came. He says, Are you going to write a statement?" I'm lying on my back, what am I going to write?... I can't speak. Okay, he says, then that's it, bye. That's it. So, that's all. That's all. (…)
> Peter: You know, I know there was ... There were five of them. Well, it's a very simple thing. At that moment... You know, they all knew that policeman, personally. Just like that. And he won't say anything. Nobody cares. There is the police, and there is me. Two incompatible things.

[32] Butler (1997): 89.
[33] Hughes (2012): 17.

This distancing, or even opposition, to a power of state sounds almost like a declaration, but it fits perfectly with this complete social passivity which, Peter's story makes clear, was not his characteristic before the accident. A closer look at Peter's style of narration (the expressions, the tone, the intonation) reveals the primacy of the episode with the policeman. Peter talks about this episode quietly, in an almost unrecognizable voice, at the very end of a long, open and friendly conversation. The fragment quoted above was pronounced while looking at the floor, frozen, phrasing everything as if each word caused him physical pain. The reversal of the "roles" of body and soul, articulated by Foucault, Butler, Agamben, Hughes, and some others, may explain the impression that two different stories are being told simultaneously: the bodily and the verbal. Verbally, the oppositional stance toward the state order is expressed, while the body speaks rather of the desire to retreat from all possible social roles, and especially to distance oneself from those who have any kind of power. Such a composition of stories is a map of resilience as a social attitude. However, the physical disability, which Peter was still trying to come to terms with, never became a topic of conversation. But Peter shared a painful dream, as the brightest experience of his current life:

> Peter: I dream at night that I am running. And I'm running here, past the cultural center, around there, there is such a track, past the store. And I can see precisely, clearly: there is a stone, you have to run around it.
> Researcher: Those places seem exactly the way they are?
> Peter: Yeah, yeah. We are playing basketball. Basketball, I... I am dribbling, and then I see – my friend is running, I am passing him the ball...
> Researcher: There, in the dream?
> Peter: In dreams, everything in dreams.

In this fragment, you can hear not only the nostalgic memory of free movement of the body, but also the longing for friendship, for playful and joyful interactions with others. The sad summary "everything in dreams" indicates that Peter understands this lack of communication very well. However, Peter doesn't blame his abusers or anyone else for his condition; there is no room for blame in his story, because everything that happens to him is viewed as the hardships that have been given to him personally. Peter's case reveals the unconditional acceptance and the reification of social norms, but not only that. Peter's auto-narrative emphasizes his personal resilience, ultimately making it his main characteristic, which distinguishes him from other people and groups.

Summarizing the detailed dictionary meaning, Sarah Bracke states that resilience "revolves around shock absorption."[34] She disagrees with the common view that resilience is simply the result and sign of vulnerability. She argues that resilience is: "conceptually designed to overcome vulnerability—to contain and evade it, to bounce back from it, to minimize its traces, to domesticate its transformative power."[35] Bracke, who mainly analyzes the relationship between the concept of resilience and the processes of

[34] Bracke (2016): 54.
[35] Ibidem: 69.

political activism, argues that vulnerability and resilience form a strange disharmony in practical situations: "Vulnerability and resilience are not precisely semantic opposites, but operate as political opponents: vulnerability here brings us to the question of social transformation, while resilience further separates us from it, even though transformation might be part of its cruel promise."[36] To grasp this strange interface between vulnerability and resilience that Bracke speaks of, it is necessary to take a closer look at the concept of vulnerability. It is explained in detail in one of Butler's recent books which emphasizes several misunderstandings of this concept. It is important for us to understand that vulnerability is not a characteristic of a particular person. Rather, it is a specific feature of social relations that emerges in certain situations. Interpersonal situations are a medium of vulnerability, and this is common to all of them, not just to those involving certain groups or their representatives: "To avow vulnerability not as an attribute of the subject, but as a feature of social relations, does not imply vulnerability as an identity, a category, or a ground for political action."[37] On the other hand, in many practical situations we notice that vulnerability is seen as an own personal trait and an indelible characteristic of the "I"; then it is no longer a source of strength, but a reason for resignation, as in the case of Peter.

Mary's strength should be linked to another principle of identification: situational identity, acquired from the intersections of relationships and connections, points not only to the knowledge of "who I am", but also to the direction of my possible change despite previous humiliations; it is the self-formation oriented towards the future instead of an identity tied to the past. Moreover, such situational and acknowledged non-personal vulnerability binds the social group together: "(...) acting in concert can be an embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political."[38] Unified action occurs not because group members are vulnerable in the same aspect and form a "vulnerable group." This focus on collective action stems from the recognition that vulnerability cannot be personalized, that it is the result of unconscious power habits practiced in situations.

The two stories discussed do not point to the psychological or other differences of the concrete people. They illustrate different experiences of "I", different modes of identification. Modern or, to return to Weir, first-person identity is ontologically strong: it is the case of Peter. Paradoxically this ontological stability can produce great existential resignation. Mary does not identify herself with the social place assigned to her and questions such positioning of other women as well. This is possible due to the ontologically weak identity – the indefinite, changing, and responsive to vulnerable interactions. This is the type of identity with the minimum diachronicity, but with the perceived change in the thick context, observing it as an ongoing process and anticipating its trajectory. When no concept that "describes" me has the power to define me, when the "I" has not the limits, but a temporary direction, then the ontologically weak identity becomes socially strong.

[36] Ibidem: 70.
[37] Butler (2021): 201.
[38] Butler (2018): 9.

In both described cases, people with non-normative bodies were denigrated by those whose duties were to help and defend them. In this way, the prevailing social habits, or simply the disdain for disability, were expressed particularly clearly. Again, this disdain was expressed with the voice of the state: in both cases, it was done by the representatives of the state. In Peter's story, this power is viewed as immovable, as justified by the eternal principles of the world: "*There is the police, and there is me.*" This expressive sentence, slightly reminding of the ostensive definition, clearly indicates a stable, as if locally situated different realms of being: one for those with power and another for Peter himself. His relationship with the institutions of power is shown as constant and complete. Peter lives on, makes plans and settles into a new lifestyle. His pattern of identification is a pattern of strong, stable identity that helps him survive without falling into despair and sadness. Just like Mary's principle of resistance and fight, Peter's resilient distancing helps to survive and live with dignity.

Conclusion

Officials who represent the most impersonal social order, such as the state, a society, or a health care system, are the most abstract and therefore the most precise voice of normativity. Therefore, their disdain seems to be the most effective, but, the most effective in two directions: one direction is unconditional support of the prevailing normativity, the other is a rejection of the hurtful normativity and a contribution to the emergence of the new normative context.

Both cases eloquently show that the obvious contempt of an "impartial" person performing a professional duty most painfully confirms society's negative attitude towards non-normativity. The policeman who "did not notice" the newly acquired disability and thus sided with the perpetrators who were stronger and more dangerous, and the doctor who supported the relatives who ordered the crime, both doubled the harm done to the victims. And yet, Mary's mode of narration is completely different from that of Peter. Mary transformed this double injustice into a power of resistance, while Peter converted this harm into an unspoken contempt for the existing order, forcing him to withdraw from almost all social relations, but primarily from those which express any kind of power. This detachment, in Peter's story, is a quiet establishment of an invulnerable distance and finding one's place beyond any representatives of political or social power. In the article, I call this posture a strong identity primarily because of specific ontology of such a view: ontology of reified realms instead of interchanging processes and situations. Mary's story, in contrast, demonstrates a pattern of weak ontological identification consistent with the theoretical propositions of process ontology. This identification has led her to a posture of social activism: instead of finding a place for herself in the imagined stable social order, she sets out to actively change it (specifically, to transform the prevailing concepts).

The reorientation towards the process ontology directs our attention to the density of situational ties (including the interhuman relations in all their complexity). Thus, it changes the mode of identification, and, at the same time, provides the power of transformation. This is because there are no longer any immutable models, and matter

is not formed according to some abstraction; on the contrary: the incorporeal that replaces abstractions or essences consists of the multiplicity of links and ties of a particular situation. This mode of identity is carried (as an incorporeal) into another situation and is transformed by it, by its slightly different overlaps, relations, and connections. No singularity is perceived without all the ties of a situation in which it appears: without an emotional reaction to it, without the sediments left from previous similar encounters, without the side meanings of every word said or movement made in that interaction. There is no semantic constant that can be carried over from one interaction to another, from one story to another. Also, the body of the same person remains the same and at the same time takes on very different meanings in different environments, events, and relationships. The body can always carry with it its fossilized meanings from previous interactions (this happens in cases of strong identification), or it can generate new ones that match other environments, other questions, and other relationships. In these latter cases, the person is more oriented not towards maintaining their previous characteristics (which are based on previously articulated identities), but rather towards transforming the impact of the vulnerable situation into a concern with the general context, primarily with the prevailing concepts and principles of communication. This is made possible by a different way of self-ontologization. On the other hand, this difference never depends only on a person's decisions or his/her characteristics, but is a result of the dense medium of social interactions. The ontological attitudes described (which, of course, are intrinsic to Peter and Mary not personally, but situationally) do not compete in any terms – terms of justice, of ethics, or wisdom. They are different survival tactics, but, despite this, the second of them, the weak identification, still remains undeservedly overlooked not only among social philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists of the contemporary world. This inattention is primarily characteristic of environments where there is an unshakable belief in the stability of social roles and where the assignment of a person to one or another social group is carried out according to images of a stable social structure, which, in turn, is seen as metaphysical or quasi-metaphysical.

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