



Research Paper

# Framing Life Otherwise: Judith Butler's Vision Toward a More Livable World

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## Abstract

Judith Butler's theories on existence, vulnerability, and recognition have become crucial in contemporary political and ethical thought. By building upon and extending the traditions of phenomenology, poststructuralism, and critical theory, Butler investigates the societal and discursive norms that render certain lives visible, valued, and mourned, while relegating others to the realm of the unacknowledged or unlivable. Central to this paper is the claim that life is not merely biological, but moulded by social frameworks that affect its recognition and sustain its material presence. Consequently, precarity, grievability, and the politics of framing emerge as vital analytical tools through which Butler assesses the unequal distribution of livability within global and national power structures. This paper explores into Butler's notion of "framing life differently," underscoring how an ethics based on collective vulnerability and interdependence can lay the normative groundwork for imagining a more just and sustainable world. This highlights Butler's influence in rethinking the conditions that make life comprehensible, protected, and meaningful in a political context.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The central premise in Butler's work is that life becomes recognizable and politically valuable only through socially mediated norms. Lives do not automatically command equal concern; rather, they are apprehended through "frames" that determine which bodies appear as subjects worthy of protection. Butler notes that the intelligibility of a life is a function of prevailing cultural, political and media narratives that mark certain population as legitimate members of the human community while casting others outside its protective boundaries. This disparity in recognition produces vast differences, how societies distribute care, resources and rights. For Butler, any project aimed at enhancing livability must begin with interrogating and widening these frames of recognition. So that, historically marginalized and devalued populations can emerge as grievable and politically significant.

### Precarity and the Uneven Distribution of Vulnerability

In *Precarious Life and Frames of War*, Judith Butler argues that while precariousness is a universal human condition, Precarity is a "Politically induced condition", which is distributed unevenly across populations. Here certain populations suffer from social and economic networks of support and becomes exposed to injury, violence etc. Butler writes, "Lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is in no sense guaranteed"(Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence). This unequal distribution of precariousness is not by chance, but shows how these rules and policies favour some people while putting others at risk. Emphasising this difference, Butler reframes political responsibility. The goal is not to remove vulnerability completely, but to make sure that no group is rendered disproportionately precarious by structural conditions that undermine their capacity for a livable life (*Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*).

### Politics of Grievability

Judith Butler's concept on frames and politics of grievability mention the way society and politics are constituted and it decides which lives are seen as important and which lives are considered less valuable. It also

shows how the role of media, politics and societal rules take part in this. She asserts, "Without grievability, there is no life, or, rather, there is something living that is other than life. Instead, 'there is a life that will never have been lived,' ... sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost" (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*). By demonstrating how frames naturalize such hierarchies of value, Butler reveals the deep entanglement between representation, affect, and political violence. To "frame life otherwise" is to challenge these limiting structures and expand the horizon of who can be seen and valued as fully human (*Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*). Instead of basing ethics on autonomy or rational self-sufficiency, Butler promotes an ethic grounded in shared vulnerability and interdependence. As she remarks, "Life cannot exist without the varying conditions that support it ... these conditions are inherently social, creating ... the interconnectedness of individuals" (*Undoing Gender*). Human beings are essentially defined by their connections to others; our ability to thrive and survive relies on forms of care, assistance, and shared living that surpass individual efforts. This relational ontology carries important ethical consequences. It implies that the duty to foster the conditions for the lives of others is not merely a discretionary moral position but an essential requirement stemming from the nature of human life. This ethic challenges political exclusion and emphasizes the importance of social collaboration, nonviolence, and mutual acknowledgment in creating a viable world

#### Collective Actions and Politics of Assembly

In subsequent works, Butler expands their examination to include the political importance of public gatherings. Group gatherings, like, protests, vigils or occupations here serve as physical expressions of political discourse that emphasize a sort of sustainable living conditions. When individuals assemble in public areas, they reveal both their vulnerability and their shared ability to resist. Butler challenged conventional politics- her work transcends typical perspectives that define politics only through formal institutions or declared policies. She argues that public assemblies can establish the environment for new political forms to arise, even if such an environment is not yet part of the legal system. Thus consequently assemblies contest the standard framework that restrict recognition by illustrating interdependence in practice. By harnessing the powerful impact of collective presence, marginalized groups can challenge the circumstances that make their lives unstable while expressing different ideas of social and political inclusions (*Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*).

## II. Conclusion

Judith Butler's perspective on a more habitable world represents a thorough rearrangement of political ideas based on the fundamental conditions of existence and the interconnected frameworks that support it. Butler shows that recognition, grievability, and precarity are unevenly allocated across normative and institutional systems, illustrating that livability is a politically shaped and historically specific accomplishment rather than a fundamental characteristic of human life. This ethical obligation, recognizing our interconnectedness and a dedication to changing the societal structures define who qualifies a life worthy of value. A politics based on common vulnerability does not idealize dependence but rather sees it as the essential basis for any feasible social interaction. In developing this framework, Butler provides not only a critique of current forms of dehumanization but a forward looking approach, one with increased recognition, redistribution of vulnerability and fostering of interdependent solidarity- which together form a foundation for a more just and sustainable world.

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