

# “Post-modernism” and feminism: individualism and relativism at the service of imperialism\*

MFP - Popular Women’s Movement (Brazil)

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Post-modernism emerged as a bourgeois philosophical current in the period after the end of the Second World War, with the pessimism that befell part of the (petty-bourgeois) intelligentsia in the face of the disasters produced by imperialist wars, and especially after the XX Congress of the CPSU, when Khrushchev spewed his hatred for Comrade and great Marshal Stalin, spreading lies of all kinds with the objective of attacking socialism and restoring capitalism in the Soviet homeland. French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, who was a member of an anti-Stalin “socialist” group in Algeria in the 1950s, was the first to coin the term “post-modernism” in the late 1970s, which gained greater momentum and strength, particularly within universities, between the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, the collapse of Russian social imperialism, which put the US in the position of the only hegemonic superpower of imperialism in the world, as well as the fall of the Berlin Wall, events largely propagated as the supposed “failure of socialism” or the “end of real socialism,” were the basis for a general offensive of imperialism, converging with capitulationist revisionism and the Church. Such an offensive was insistently heralded as the entry of the world into a “New World Order,” in which “globalization” would mean the expansion of fraternal ties between nations and the pompous announcement of the “end of history,” with which capitalism would definitively be the last of the social systems to exist.

As part of the low-intensity war (LIW) launched during that period by

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\*<https://brasilmfp.blogspot.com/2023/02/pos-modernismo-e-feminismo.html>

imperialism, in the theoretical and ideological sphere, post-modernism played a supporting role to revisionism, in the sense of seeking to divert the masses from the revolutionary path, denying the possibility of the radical transformation of society as a whole, admitting changes only at the local, particular level, through small disputes over “micropowers” (in companies, workplaces, families, etc.). Thus, advocating the “failure” of so-called “metanarratives,” in order to centrally attack Marxism, post-modernist defenders claimed the theoretical and practical impossibility of knowing the foundations and social structures of a particular society, which is why it would not be possible to transform it as a whole. The resulting localist reformism is therefore similar to that practiced by revisionism, although the latter tries to pass itself off as “Marxist,” while post-modernists openly deny Marxism and science in general, emphasizing “experience” and individual “lived experience.” Socialism is presented by post-modernists not as a concrete possibility of social realization, but as mere “speculation” or hypothesis,” disregarding all science and the gigantic achievements made by humanity in the decades of socialist construction in the 20th century, in the name of a supposed rupture with Enlightenment ideals.

For post-modernists, all ways of interpreting nature or reality are equally valid, because there is no objective truth about phenomena, only different perspectives or different “discourses” about them. Opposing the possibility of human knowledge about nature and society, and sentencing the end of universal truth, post-modernism therefore defended the existence only of particular and subjective “discourses,” as local and always “contingent” (unstable, provisional) points of view, reaching the extreme of bourgeois idealistic and subjective relativism. Language takes center stage for most post-modernists, as for them it is discourse that constructs what we call reality. In this way, post-modern political “strategies” are reduced to the crumbs of cultural and identity demands’ “incorporation” by the old State and imperialism, centrally valuing changes in nomenclature, or as they say, the “resignification” of “open and fluid” concepts, diverting the struggle of the masses, including that of women of the people, into the field of mere “discursive dispute,” or “deconstruction” and “resignification” of concepts.

## Post-modern individualism and imperialism

Post-modernism is the maximum exacerbation of individualism in the last crisis period of imperialism. For post-modernist intellectuals like Lipovetsky, the individualism inaugurated by the bourgeoisie during the French Revolution, for example, was too “limited,” while post-modernist individualism is “total” or “unlimited.” After all, the revolutionary bourgeoisie of that period, in addition to proclaiming individual freedom, also advocated (at least in words) equality and fraternity among men (which would imply some limitations for the individual due to the social commitment that these latter banners demand, which is considered as “totalitarian” terror for post-modernists). As it quickly became apparent to the masses of workers and peasants who took part in the bourgeois revolutions, the exploitative class essence of the bourgeoisie implied that, once political power was taken and the feudal lords were decapitated, it revealed itself as an exclusive defender of its individual freedom, whose center is the freedom of exploitation, with equality and fraternity as stillborn letters for the popular classes until today, just like the much-touted “freedom,” which does not exist for the poor people in its full meaning.

For post-modernists, however, any situation that demands the subordination of personal, individual interests for the common good is seen as unacceptable “tyranny” and “totalitarianism,” while the subordination of millions of masses to the petty desires and dictates of a small handful of individuals in the world is classified by them as “freedom.” In fact, this is the only freedom that imperialist bourgeoisie (and their post-modernist apologists in academia) preach: the freedom of the individual (of the great bourgeoisie and other dominant classes, of course) to exploit the vast majority of the people (who, as in classical slavery, continue to be considered as beings devoid of a soul - or individuality, for our post-modernists).

Extreme individualism is justified by post-modernists as a desirable process of “personalization,” in which the individual is supposedly presented with a set of “options” and can “freely” choose which ones to consume. Consumerism, so encouraged by imperialism, leading to the illness of thousands of people, goes hand in hand with the exacerbation of individualism. The hedonistic individual desire, the search for immediate pleasure at any cost, without caring about moral, political, or social consequences, is justified by the maximum individualist saying that “every human being has the right not to be interested in others.” The apology for social apathy and indifference

made by post-modernists in academia seeks to promote class depoliticization and alienation, justifying the unhealthy social isolation in which millions of young people in the world sink today, in a desperate attempt to promote moral, political, and social non-commitment, especially among youth. However, while they proclaim in vain that there are no more classes or class struggle, that any social revolution is no longer possible, and that this is the motto and fatal destiny of the “new era” of post-modernity, of the egoistic and individual “culture of happiness,” they are only blatantly describing themselves, leaving bare the essence of the imperialist bourgeoisie as the most exploitative and reactionary class in history. This is also the source of their patent failure: while they try to disseminate this rotten ideology among the popular classes, these continue to resist and collectively counterpose themselves, truly as the new in society, in an extremely superior way, in all aspects, to the old. Socialism is young, communism is forthcoming, whether bourgeois semi-intellectuals want it or not.

The advertising of supposed “options” and “free choice” to “be yourself,” to “live as you want” or the “possibility of living without depending on others” are all apologetic expressions of post-modernists and their supposed “individual freedom” for the “conquest of personal identity,” which is always “fluid and variable” - which would be the maximum achievement of the individual. Man ceases to be a social being, as Marx truly analyzes, and becomes the “individualized individual” of post-modernity - whatever that may mean! But let’s see: it is the imperialist system itself that exerts the greatest ideological oppression over people, because by propagating its supposed “individual freedom,” it is only seeking to isolate the masses, in order to preserve its decayed system of extreme violation of the most fundamental rights of the people. Even some post-modern ideologues timidly accept that such freedom is limited by social condition, but they do not admit the inevitable: gentlemen, if “individual” freedom does not reach everyone in the same way in our society (which is an obvious and fundamental issue for Marxism, since we do indeed live in a society of antagonistic social classes), the consequence of this is that the masses will turn against you with even greater class fury, because the encouragement of consumerism and other values of social futility become, themselves, a source of questioning of the same order that you endeavor, futilely, to justify and defend.

After all, post-modernists claiming that “individual interests” should supplant those aimed at collective well-being should ask themselves: how can a society like this prosper? Survive? It is doomed to fail! With the victory

of socialism in almost half of the world until the mid-20th century, in which the collective interests of the class were placed (not only theoretically, but in practice) as a priority, only then could the vast majority of the people individually and collectively experience the greatest achievements ever made in world history. For the first time and in the millions, men, women, children, the elderly, all took part in the conscious construction of society, participating in social production (no longer as exploited!), in the development of technical and scientific knowledge, in the arts and culture in a massively unprecedented way, at all levels of formal education and in all areas and fields of knowledge and society.

No matter how much you propagate your “post-truths,” in which versions of facts are more important than the facts themselves, and continue to spread lies about the achievements of the masses with the democratic and socialist revolutions of the twentieth century, you will not be able to cancel reality, erase it, or prevent it from developing. This is what Nazi Joseph Goebbels tried to do, for whom “a lie repeated a thousand times becomes the truth” - he was defeated by the Soviets and the anti-fascist resistance in dozens of countries; as well as “Bush Jr.” and the entire monopoly of the press who invented the lying pretext of the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in order to justify their imperialist invasion - and were driven out by the Iraqi national resistance; as well as the blustering Trump and his following of far-right supporters in Brazil attempting to impose reactionary coups against the people, also unsuccessfully. Look at the post-modernists to whom they give ammunition and theoretical justification with their relativism that “there is no universal truth,” “all discourse is equally acceptable,” and with their “unlimited individualism,” which can lead only to the most reactionary bourgeois, fascist, and imperialist positions!

## **Hedonism and the false sexual freedom of post-modernists**

One very evident consequence of post-modern individualism today is the emphasis on consumption aimed at individual and hedonistic sexual pleasure, which ultimately turns the body, particularly the female body, into a profitable commodity and an object of obsessive and oppressive concern, mainly by women and young people in general. This is not new to the “post-

modernity” after all, since the aesthetic standards of the dominant classes have always been imposed on the whole society, especially on women, due to our assigned sexual and reproductive roles since the emergence of private property! What is exacerbated to the maximum, like every system in final crisis, is sexual appeal, the deterioration of affective relationships, and the cult of the body as component characteristics of a declining empire. Women and youth in this matter suffer particular ideological and cultural attacks that try to pass themselves off as “innovative,” supposed “choices of the new generation,” and alleged “sexual freedom” against any and all standards, “free love” without responsibilities, against “any and all morals,” but which are just re-editions of the dominant bourgeois morality, individualistic, where individual pleasure is central, and concern for others is seen as “moralism” or “traditionalism,” since relationships are all disposable in capitalism, or “fluid,” as post-modernists advocate.

We, combative and revolutionary women of the people, as well as conscious men of our class, must fight both the use of the female body as a sexual object and commodity, as well as the “post-modern” fallacies (re-edited from the ruins of ancient Greece) in defense of superficial relationships between people, centered on the mere obtaining of individual pleasure, without reflecting on the consequences, especially for women, of hedonistic practices, so strongly stimulated by imperialism in the present era. Male polygamy and female prostitution, as direct consequences of the emergence of private property in the early days of class society, are exacerbated in our time under new disguises, and we will not combat them with female polyandry or anything of the sort, under the post-modern feminist discourse of women’s “free choice,” because genuine equality between men and women cannot exist in a society of exploitation! Such hedonistic practices are the cult of the exacerbated individualism of post-modernism and imperialism. The masses of our people and the proletariat, in particular, defend relationships that combat individualism in all its manifestations, whether in the selfishness that is stimulated with “think of yourself first,” or in affective and loving relationships, since these should also serve the strengthening of our class, in a hard struggle for the profound transformation of this old society of exploitation and oppression! Mutual commitment, solidarity, respect, and proletarian loyalty among people are part of the revolutionary morality of the class, while disengagement, indifference, and disposable use of people (even if supposedly reciprocal!) are the opposite of this and ideologically corrode the masses, especially the youth thirsty for the new, true radical transformations and a

struggle for the destruction of the old.

## **Post-modern feminism and the old bourgeois reformism**

The political consequence of post-modernist positions, such as “there are no social classes and class struggle,” “only local micro-powers can be contested,” and “discourses constitute reality,” was the advocacy for the pulverization of popular movements and their fragmentation into different “niches,” according to the “most particular” particularity of each class segment, professional category, gender, sexuality, race, etc. Thus, the so-called “New Social Movements” emerged in the 1990s, as well as NGOs, driven by imperialism, all centrally focused on ethnic, cultural, gender, behavioral issues... in opposition to (old?!) popular and revolutionary movements, with a classist and combative character, as we have several examples in the world and in our country, among them the MFP itself!

In the women’s movement, the impact was in the same direction, giving rise to a “new” post-modernist reformism, which positioned itself mainly in the defense of the so-called “identity policies,” seeking “recognition of difference” and “deconstruction” of “masculine language,” especially influencing young people from the petty bourgeoisie and the university environment in our country. Post-modern feminism thus fosters the illusion of social change through the “re-signification” of signs (terms, words), which supposedly should lead to individual women’s “empowerment.” A clear example of this position was the so-called “slut walk,” in which a mediocre insult to women gave name to a march, in which these women began to self-identify as sluts, seeking to modify the social meaning of the word “slut,” in a supposed attitude of resistance to sexism - and the most “revolutionary” action possible for post-modern feminists!

Some post-modern feminists try to blend the position of “re-signification through language,” which centers on the “recognition” of terms with new meanings, with the so-called “social policy of equality.” And what does this mean? Only mere crumbs, called by them “redistributive solutions” within the same system of exploitation, that is, compensatory policies that imperialism itself encourages (through NGOs and public policies of crumbs), as a way of reducing the social tensions that threaten its declining dominance -

and that do not solve any of the problems that affect women of the people daily! Thus, the defenders of such “policies,” well versed in opportunism and revisionism (which have served post-modernism so well in academia and in their “behavioral agendas”), unable to deny the problem of blatantly increasing social inequality in the world, cannot also move forward in the task of ending women’s oppression - a task only possible to be achieved with the end of the imperialist system of domination and the building of socialism worldwide, towards the end of the class society, communism.

Of petite-bourgeois and bourgeois character, however, post-modernist feminists say it is not possible to identify common ties, demands and claims of women, only fragmented portions of them. For Judith Butler, one of the prominent post-modernist feminists, it would be “illusory” to seek a “universal structure of domination of women.” Now, if we do not identify the origin and foundations of domination, not only of women, but also of imperialist domination, semicolonial and semifeudal domination in our country, how can we organize ourselves to end these dominations over our people? It is precisely there that we understand the most important objective of the dissemination of post-modernism among intellectuals and youth: to give up understanding and transforming reality!

On the other hand, just like in all other currents of bourgeois and petite-bourgeois feminism, post-modernist feminism identifies “men,” or “hegemonic masculinity” as the dominant antipode in relation to “feminine” or “femininity.” For example, Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell states that “all femininities are formed in positions of subordination to hegemonic masculinity.” For Nancy Fraser, “androcentrism” would be the way masculinity imposes itself as the dominant cultural standard, that is, “a pattern of cultural value that privileges traits associated with masculinity while deprecating everything that is coded as ‘feminine.’”

In this way, post-modernist feminism ends up reproducing the old refrain that the struggle of women is against men. They say they do not seek the causes and origins of female oppression, to hide that, in fact, they analyze their cause to be in the superstructure (customs, cultural patterns, family traditions, affective and sexual relations, etc.), particularly in “male domination” and the “male” definition of such patterns, omitting all the class character of female oppression in class societies. However, they cannot answer: why did such practices historically constitute themselves in this way and not in another? Even if they say they are not “essentialists,” post-modern feminists cannot deny that they end up falling into the logic of “masculinity”



as the cause of oppression over women, which is nothing but a new reheated form of the old reactionary theories about “male superiority nature” and “deficient female nature...” to escape from the debate and hide their underlying position, they affirm, like Butler, that “the subordination of women has no single cause or single solution,” which is the same as saying nothing about the cause and solution of female oppression!

To make their positions even more diffuse and confusing (and any apparent theoretical “confusion” always has a political intention), post-modern feminists also assert that “varieties of oppressions cannot be classified.” In other words, “oppressions” are so particular, so individualized, that they cannot even have a common name, as that would reduce them to the “authoritarianism” of a “concept,” since, for post-modern feminists, “language shapes and restricts reality.” Therefore, we should speak of feminisms in the plural, because there is lesbian feminism, black feminism, transgender feminism, an infinity of particularities that, according to this position, do not have any “common basis” from which they emerge and organize. Now, ladies who apologize for imperialism, what you are doing by “grounding” false theories like this is encouraging the division and even the pulverization of the class, and in particular, of women of the people, directly contributing to the maintenance of this same system that exploits and oppresses millions of women of the people in the most barbaric and vile way worldwide! By wishing to “suspend” words and concepts such as “women” and “oppressions,” so that they can be “deconstructed” in their meanings, you are not taking a single step towards overcoming sexual oppression of women, which brutally and quite objectively strikes half of the class every day – something easily identified by working women, in the countryside and in the city, with their double and triple days of exhausting work, facing unheard-of lines in health systems for medical attention to their families, dealing with their children’s hunger, cold, violence, and humiliations of all kinds on all continents!

## **Crisis of Imperialism and Failure of Post-modernism**

What has resulted from this apology for cultural relativism, which considers all “truths” or “discourses” equally legitimate without the possibility of critical judgment (from a social, political, or moral standpoint)? It has resulted in the purest nihilism and lack of perspective among the youth, which is severely affected by this phenomenon, especially in the heart of the greatest

imperialist beast (as evidenced by the recurring massacres of children and young people in US schools). Furthermore, it has led to individualistic hedonism and the desperate pursuit of individual pleasure at any cost, as well as a cautious tolerance of the growth of fascist positions, since it is their individual right to defend their reactionary and anti-people positions (after all, is it not just another “discursive” point of view?).

On the other hand, the specter of communism is once again haunting the world through the growth and radicalization of mass struggles for their rights, which have been completely discredited by the bourgeois and bureaucratic institutions of the old state, the struggles for national liberation, and the People’s War under the leadership, see now, of the proletariat (the class that post-modernists claim never existed as such!) through their Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Communist Parties. And the women of the people are mobilizing on the front lines of all these struggles, standing shoulder to shoulder with their class comrades against bourgeois, landlord and imperialist domination and in defense of the World Proletarian Revolution!