
Global Trends

Postcapitalism: From Consumer Individualism to Expressive Individualism?

D. A. Davydov[#]

Institute of Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences, Yekaterinburg, Russia
e-mail: davydovdmiriy90@gmail.com

Abstract—It is proposed to consider the transition to postcapitalism not as the struggle of the oppressed for a more just and equal society without class antagonisms but as a process of gradual displacement of consumer individualism by expressive individualism. Within the framework of this perspective, postcapitalism is not a fundamentally new socioeconomic system built on the ruins of capitalism but a set of social relations developing with the gradual deactualization of materialistic values for a significant part of the population (material wealth, money, etc.) and the growing importance of postmaterialistic values (self-realization, the search for the true self, etc.). In this sense, many phenomena associated with modern identity politics can be attributed to postcapitalism. Nevertheless, this article criticizes the perception of identity politics as a set of strategies and ways of fighting for equality and justice, presented as an approximation to the ideals of socialism or communism (the so-called overcoming of “systemic oppression”). Today, the struggle for diverse identities testifies to the triumph of individualism, as well as a new round of the “war of all against all” and the destruction of the common lifeworld.

Keywords: postcapitalism, identity politics, individualism, Marxism, post-Marxism, social justice, communism

DOI: 10.1134/S1019331622120036

INTRODUCTION

A remarkable phenomenon is observed today. On the one hand, capitalism (both as a world economic system and as an idea) has never been so close to its collapse. We see a large number of systemic problems: from the growing socioeconomic inequality in developed countries (with regard to wealth, all over the world) [Milanović, 2017; Piketty, 2016] and the unpleasant social consequences of precarization [Standing, 2011] (including the epidemic of “deaths of despair” [Case and Deaton, 2020]), digital labor [Jones, 2021], and so-called “surveillance capitalism” [Zuboff, 2022] to the increased risks of environmental, anthropogenic, and/or military disasters (given the circumstances, the prospect of nuclear war no longer appears unrealistic). However, as if according to the precepts of Marx, against the backdrop of the progress-balking “superstructure,” new productive forces and production relations are actively developing. The world of high technologies and digital communications has given rise to many discussions about the coming technosocialism [King and Petty, 2021], knowledge communism [Gorz, 2010], creative revolution [Buzgalin, 2021], postcapitalism [Srnicek and

Williams, 2016; Mason, 2017], platform socialism [Muldoon, 2022], etc. Utopias are multiplying, accompanied by the popularization of bold ideas such as the introduction of a system of “freeing” basic income [Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2020].

On the other hand, instead of a united and bold movement towards a better future, there is the “betrayal” of the left [Kagarlitskii, 2017]. They seem to have completely stopped thinking about the problems of the working class and are increasingly focusing on identity politics, in which the issue of the necessary number of recognized genders is more significant than the decline of the working class, not to mention a full-fledged social revolution changing the rules of the game. People who dream of a revival of trade unions and a strong national industry call themselves leftists. People for whom one of the most urgent needs is the choice of preferred pronouns also call themselves leftists. The Left are those who fight for workers’ rights, but also those who shut down factories en masse and increase prices as a necessary sacrifice for the “transition to renewable energy.” The Left are the social democrats who support politicians like B. Sanders, because socioeconomic inequality is growing. At the same time, they also include those who voted for H. Clinton or J. Biden, for whom friendship with movements like Black Lives Matter and all sorts of “the oppressed” is much more important.

[#] Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Davydov, Cand. Sci. (Polit.) is a Senior Researcher in the Department of Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and Law, RAS Ural Branch.

Obviously, we are dealing with a contradiction. The reason why we still use the word *left* as a generic term since it contains something in common between heterogeneous groups “opposing capitalism” is a set of abstract values. According to E.O. Wright, they are all fighting for equality/justice, democracy/freedom, and community/solidarity [Wright, 2019, p. 132]. After all, this was the main point of the idea of intersectionality [Crenshaw, 1991]: under capitalism, there is not only economic oppression but also racial, gender, etc. Different forms of oppression can intersect and overlap each other, and therefore, the common cause is to fight them all. However, something has gone wrong: today the Right, that is, conservatives, nationalists, or populists, are often “to the left” of the Left, and there can be no question of any unified struggle to undermine all intersecting “types of discrimination.” Increasingly often, some leftists are pursuing interests that are directly opposed to those of other leftists, while rightists are drawing the attention of those who until relatively recently were called the revolutionary class.

These circumstances constitute a serious challenge to all of left-wing political thought, especially to Marxism. The anomalies discussed below can be explained by the betrayal of the elites, the immaturity of the current revolutionary subject, or conceptual distortions of initially correct ideas (for example, the idea of racial equality, passed through the speculative post-modern millstones). However, as will be shown below, the discord of the Left testifies not to temporary differences within the framework of the general project of the struggle for equality, justice, democracy, and freedom but to the fact that the sought-for postcapitalism is not what it was imagined. The bourgeois “war of all against all,” fueled by the greed of *Homo economicus*, is gradually being replaced by the postbourgeois “war of all against all,” in which, along with the size of the wallet, it is “self” itself that is becoming increasingly important, requiring the maximum range of available ways of recognition and self-realization (not only “money” or “business”). In other words, the movement towards postcapitalism can be understood not as a process of sincere striving for equality and justice but as an evolution of individualism on new, postmaterialist value bases, which is noticeable in the realities of identity politics.

INDIVIDUALISM INSTEAD OF INDIVIDUALISM

To understand all the intricacies and anomalies of leftist discourses, it is necessary to change the lens through which the perspective of postcapitalism should be viewed. The purpose of this article is not to prove the technological or economic prerequisites for the formation of postcapitalist social relations. The author partly relies on a set of already developed concepts [see Gorz, 2010; Buzgalin, 2021; Mason, 2017; Srnicek and Williams, 2016; Davydov, 2021].

In the first place, note that postcapitalism should not necessarily be associated with the ideas of equality, justice, and classlessness. It may be not so much a radically new socioeconomic formation, “spasmodically” emerging on the ruins of the bourgeois system after a political revolution (which has never happened in the history of changes in social formations), but a set of social relations that appear in those places (or “blanks,” “gaps”) where the capitalist logic of material accumulation no longer works. These social relations, as well as the values they generate, can expand and become more relevant for more and more people due to saturation—or simply “intangible” interests and priorities. Note that colossal masses of people will continue to live in the capitalist universe, subjected to brutal exploitation or experiencing the consequences of growing economic inequality. As a historical analogy, in the era of the formation of capitalism, many people continued to be impoverished peasants, whose situation was rapidly deteriorating.

The social sciences have long noted the displacement of “materialistic” social values (material wealth, security, etc.) by postmaterialist values (secularization, tolerance for foreigners, gender equality, tolerance for divorce, etc.), and such observations have a solid empirical basis [Inglehart, 1997].

What exactly remains relevant for a certain part of the population (especially inhabitants of university campuses, celebrities, journalists, and political activists) who are not very concerned about the “material” aspect of existence? Liberation from the “material,” from routine and earning “daily bread” leaves more room for the practices of self-realization and self-presentation, not only through consumption but also—increasingly often—through personal self-affirmation (in Western countries, the desire for the “nonmaterial” is relevant not only for the richest segments of the population because the quality of life is constantly growing due to scientific and technological advances, even if real wages “stagnate” [Pinker, 2018]). In other words, the “self” (that is, the personality itself) becomes the most important “good” bringing pleasure, which, at the same time, must be “obtained” or produced (by constructing a desired and attractive image or removing all the social negativity surrounding it). A significant role in this process is played by the struggle for destigmatization; maximum diversity; and acceptance of sexual, gender, racial, ethnic, and other identities (identity politics).

Importantly, identity politics does not completely exclude material self-interest or the struggle for rent (privileges). However, over time, such “materialistic” motives lose their significance. Economic issues (“What is my income if my identity is *A*?”) are gradually giving way to social and cultural ones (Is it acceptable to consider morbid obesity a disease, or is it a reason to be proud? [Lupton, 2021]). Moreover, without the rise of postmaterialist values, identity politics

would have been unthinkable. The progress of this direction was due not so much to the strength of the “oppressed” and other fighters for identity but to the evolution of values towards the acceptance of maximum social and cultural diversity (tolerance for other sexuality, faith, etc.).

In his book *Identity*, F. Fukuyama notes that modern people attach more and more importance to the question “Who am I?” As the tedium of everyday survival, the monotony, predictability of inherited professions, and the humdrum of traditional society gave way to comfort, relative security, and a multiplicity of life prospects, personal identity itself ceased to be a given and became an intractable problem that required a constant search in an era of accelerating progress and the loss of firm ground. In addition to Fukuyama’s observation, note that the actualization of the problem of identity in recent decades can also be associated with postcapitalist trends. He himself stresses something of the kind: “Economists assume that human beings are motivated by what they label ‘preferences’ or ‘utilities,’ desires for material resources or goods. But they forget about thymos, the part of the soul that desires recognition by others, either as isothymia, recognition as equal in dignity to others, or megalothymia, recognition as superior” [Fukuyama, 2019, p. 111]. Searching for an answer to the question “Who am I?” does not come down solely to positioning oneself by emphasizing the economic status in the system of bourgeois social relations (within the framework of the corresponding “superstructure” with its fashion, brands, etc.). On the contrary, liberation from the burden of obtaining food, labor routine, and thoughts about earning money leads to a change in priorities: I am not only what I eat, consume, etc.; there is and should be something else—something internal (deep), individual, and unique, demanding recognition, respect, or admiration from others.

Herein lies the root of many problems related to the expectations of the left. According to Fukuyama, identity politics is basically a consequence of resentment. The view of Fukuyama (who takes a “leftist” position in this context) on identity politics as a struggle between groups that have lost their dignity or feel neglected by others is hardly entirely consistent with the complex reality. It implies that it is hypothetically possible to reconcile different groups and create a situation in which the dignity of everyone is respected (for example, if “potentially costly plans that would concretely reduce inequality” are developed [Fukuyama, 2019, p. 221]). This seems to be what the left adherents of the intersectionality idea hope for: yes, the “oppressed” groups are very different, but they are all fighting for something common—recognition, respect, justice, or equality.

However, the pseudoegalitarian façade of identity politics hides an unmistakable individualism. Recently, it has become increasingly difficult to view

identity politics as a space for the struggle for equality and justice. If the choice consists of dozens of configurations of gender identities or, say, preferred pronouns, this implies an expanding set of self-positioning tools to attract attention (according to M. Rectenwald, when the University of Michigan implemented a “designated pronoun” policy to allow students to choose the way they wanted their professors to refer to them in class, one student created a new identity: “His Majesty” [Rectenwald, 2020, p. 49]). In this sense, the “acquisition,” for example, of a fashionable gender configuration is very similar to the “acquisition” of a fashionable expensive car. The only difference is the nonmateriality, “nonmarketability” of the process of building a personal identity. Sexuality or gender is not bought but “found,” and then in various ways they achieve recognition and even admiration (so-called “victims” easily become the privileged [Scarry, 2020]).

Tribalism is also not primary here (despite the presence of certain elements of “tribal strife”), although some theorists do discuss it, accusing identity politics of departing from the principles of liberalism (for example, the rejection of “racial color blindness” [Hicks, 2011]). Large groups are gradually losing their significance, and, most importantly, primordiality disappears. While a few decades ago women, blacks, gays, and lesbians had “innate” identities and fought for equal rights and opportunities, today any identity becomes a construct independent of biological reality, like a product in a store. Such a “product” is chosen, tried on, configured to one’s liking, and presented as something special that distinguishes its wearer from the rest. In such circumstances, being a bigender polysexual transvestite is much more expressive than an ordinary masculine heterosexual man. The widespread struggle for “inclusiveness” means the collapse of any normative structures if they concern how to accept a person. Everyone should have the absolute right to choose their lifestyle, gender, sexual orientation, body weight, appearance, even race and nationality, as well as all kinds of external social manifestations and attributes of social identity, such as preferred pronouns (for example, *they/them* for people with a “nonbinary” gender). In fact, the multiplying group identities become a kind of Lego construction toy, from which sometimes bizarre individual identities are formed to satisfy the need for acceptance and self-expression as much as possible (for example: “I am a trans woman, an intersex woman; my pronouns are *he/she/it/they*; I should be addressed as “Your Grace”; my eyes are tattooed; my nose is pierced; I identify myself as a threat, a nightmare, and a goddess”;¹ and so on).

¹ Ben Shapiro, “Reaction to TikTokers,” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-kZgRs3pIM>. Cited December 16, 2021.

These processes testify to the expansion of individual choice freedom. Of course, skin color or, say, biological sex cannot be chosen, but identity is not only a set of “built-in” characteristics. As G. Akerlof and R. Kranton rightly noted, it can be useful for specific individuals who correlate their actions with the norms and ideals associated with certain reference groups [Akerlof and Kranton, 2010]. Even if it is impossible to “reject” some features, a particular individual is free to choose between different strategies of, roughly, building relationships with his/her group affiliations: from complete denial of identity (suppression of “nontraditional” sexuality) to the choice of specific role models of behavior (from hiding his/her sexuality to being proud of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community). The situation observed in Western countries in recent decades is the rapid expansion of both various options and configurations for building personal identity and the freedom of individual choice of role practices that allow maximizing the usefulness of belonging to certain groups (legalization of same-sex marriages, destruction of gender stereotypes about “women’s” and “men’s” professions, etc.).

It is this expansion of the freedom of individual choice that has led to numerous contradictions that have turned the original “leftist” struggle for inclusiveness, equality, and justice into the habitual individualistic “war of all against all.”

Is this idea of postcapitalist social relations a simplification without accounting for the difference between culture and economics? No, if we assume that these areas are closely interconnected. Moreover, even the classics of Marxism held that capitalism is, in fact, the last economic social formation (if we see a clear difference between the two meanings of the concept of *economic*—as economic activity proper and as the dominance of commodity production and capital accumulation [Kondrashov, 2016, p. 241]). True, identities can also be considered as a kind of good. If identity is a source of suffering (harassment, exploitation, ridicule, etc.), then its usefulness is negative. If identity is the basis for pride or a source of pleasure from one’s personal image, then its usefulness is positive. The processes of material production automation and the possibility to provide all with a minimum set of material goods (basic income, etc.) mean that more and more people will be concerned mainly with the quality of personal identities that combine many group identities. Therefore, the idea of a rational choice of identity as one of the possible approaches in the relevant field of research should be preserved [Davydov, 2012].

AGAINST ALL OTHERS

Consumer individualism is one of the causes of the collapse of socialist utopias of the 20th century. Among the mythologemes supporting the viability of capitalism, there was the idea of the middle class as

consisting of independent diligent individuals [Weiss, 2021]. In essence, the middle class eliminated the antagonistic tension between the bourgeoisie and the workers by promising the latter a set of material goods sufficient for a relatively good life in exchange for political loyalty. The benefits contributed to the focus of people’s attention on personal and family well-being, which not only made it impossible to succeed in the struggle for an egalitarian postcapitalist future but also led to all those negative consequences of the consumer society about which much has already been written: alienation, the capitalist “war of all against all,” the pursuit of a status emphasizing material wealth, etc. (“Whatever is consumed is consumed individually, even if in a crowded hall” [Bauman, 2008, p. 178]).

In the era of emerging postcapitalism, consumer individualism is being replaced by expressive individualism. The property factor in the practices of “presenting oneself to others” is giving way (at least due to the move away from ownership and the transition to the sharing economy [Munger, 2018]) to maximizing the feeling of satisfaction with the personality itself, in whatever forms it may be presented (appearance, sexuality, race, gender, etc.). As before, individualism by its very nature hinders the establishment of real social unity. Of course, the classics of Marxism did not claim that communism would solve all social contradictions overnight. However, the idea of communism assumed the primacy of unity over disunity, the collective over isolated existence, common goals over narrow group ones. It was believed that if you removed the animal need for material things; fed people; and gave them housing, education, and a proper upbringing, then unity, friendship, love, and striving for common goals would become the main values determining the lives of the vast majority of the population.

Apparently, Marxism made one of its most significant mistakes in this respect. Postmaterialist values only deepen individualism. In essence, the “material” was not so much an obstacle to universal human unity as it acted as the last bastion holding back cultural tendencies towards even greater individualism and alienation. Thus, there remained the need for the family as a single organism, on which social reproduction directly depends, and even the survival of individuals. A strong nation was associated with efficient institutions of the welfare state. The poor and working people felt class unity and believed in their liberation mission. Today, these tendencies are on the wane, dissipating the last hopes for communism—even if only as a viable project for the common pursuit of genuine equality and fraternity on a human scale.

Although modern leftist fighters for “social justice” declare a desire for equality, real identity politics develops into a clash of interests of proliferating groups and subgroups. This collision is facilitated by the linguistic picture of the world inherited from poststruc-

turalism (so-called “applied postmodernism” [Pluckrose and Lindsay, 2020]), which allows the alleged “victims” and “oppressed” to see “structural” barriers everywhere and therefore to blame others for personal failures. Hence, we have the ubiquitous rise of conspiracy theories masquerading as science, as well as various “critical” concepts, poorly supported by concrete facts or arguments from the natural sciences [Shapiro, 2019].

A clash of interests is an inevitable consequence of individualism. It is well known that selfish interests easily fit into the mythology of a “common cause” or a necessity justified by the common good (for example, deforestation for development, which is justified by the need for investment in a particular municipality or for new jobs). At the same time, while in the realities of capitalism clashes of interests are primarily of a property nature, identity politics that goes beyond the conventional “bourgeois universe” contributes to the collision of different ways of interpreting the world, which directly affect the ability of other people to extract the corresponding “usefulness” from their identities. Yes, people are becoming more tolerant and more inclined to accept diversity. However, good intentions do not always lead to the expected results. Of course, purely outwardly, one civic activity or another mimics the leftist struggle for social justice, but the number and scale of accumulated contradictions persistently increase.

Much has already been written about how the struggle for social justice has become, in fact, a struggle for privileges, antiracism has turned into even stronger racism, and feminism very easily flows into misandry (for example, [Pluckrose and Lindsay, 2020]). The line between the struggle for justice and the megalothymia of the so-called “woke people” (woke ideology) is blurred. The good intentions of “justice” turn into “cancel culture” [Dershowitz, 2020], censorship of conservative media and social media [Knowles, 2021], a hierarchy of victims [Murray, 2021], and a kind of cultural dictate [Shapiro, 2021]. Hence, we have the imposition of certain “requirements” on films nominated for the Oscars (mandatory support for LGBTQ+, women, and minorities), up to the public harassment of those who try to challenge the newfangled discourses of the “Left.” The current situation cannot but destroy the common “lifeworld,” especially when you consider that it is predominantly white men who are blamed for “systemic violence,” racism, etc. Thus, according to the popular concept of “white fragility” [DiAngelo, 2018], any attempts by whites to deny their involvement in racism should be viewed as a defense mechanism, as avoiding responsibility for “privileges.” For example, a white Italian American who claims that white people also experience racism because his own ancestors suffered from discrimination is accused of racism. The outbreaks of violence, as the Black Lives Matter riots of May–June 2020 demonstrated, are not

generated by real discrimination (after all, the world has never been more racially equal than today) but by mutual exclusion.

Contradictions are growing not only between conventionally “left” and conventionally “right” groups. Basically, there was no particular unity among “new” communities in the past as well. According to D. Murray, however primitive it may sound, gays and lesbians do not always have warm relations with each other. Gays often characterize lesbians as tasteless and boring. Lesbians often call gays stupid and childish. These groups are not of interest to one another and rarely meet in places of leisure. Gays and lesbians at the same time are known for a high degree of suspicion of those who call themselves bisexual. Bisexuals continue to be perceived not so much as part of the same “community” but as traitors in its ranks. Gays tend to believe that men who call themselves “bi” are in fact gays who deny their nature (now bi, then gay) [Murray, 2021]. In addition, there are significant cultural differences in individual communities. For example, in the gay community there is a mutual dislike between outrageous “queers” (who believe that they are fundamentally different from the rest) and supporters of acceptance through normalization (“nothing makes them different from their heterosexual friends and neighbors” [Murray, 2021]).

The very need to expand the freedom of choice provokes the emergence of new contradictions. Social constructivism, which was necessary to justify the ever-proliferating identities, has eventually run into arguments referring to human nature. According to D. Soh, a bizarre form of thinking has arisen of late. Because of the tendency to treat gender and sex as spectra, the concept of *sexual fluidity* claims that anyone can be gay, and that human sexuality is truly free-floating: whatever you want is possible. Perceiving sexual orientation as innate is considered an outdated and oppressive way of thinking that limits our self-expression and freedom. It does not seem that nonbinary activists have thought through the consequences of denying the biological evidence of sexual orientation. If being gay is a choice, it becomes harder to oppose attempts to change it [Soh, 2020, p. 126]. In other words, if belonging is determined by free choice, then what is wrong with reparative therapy if it is carried out at the request of the “correcting” person him-/herself? Moreover, in this situation, the picture of the world broadcast by transgender activists is dissonant with the picture of the world of the gay community. For the former, many gay men are nonrecognizable trans women. The latter often argue that “trans femininity” is a consequence of autogynophilia² or other perversions [Murray, 2021, p. 356].

Perhaps one of the tensest points in identity politics today is the conflict generated by the displacement of

² A male’s propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as a female.

the concept of *sex* (as something innate and biologically determined) by the concept of *gender* (as a result of choice in the search for the true “self”). Women, who are now legally equated with trans women (biological men, who today do not even have to go through a full range of surgical procedures to become recognized women), have taken a serious blow. As a result, female sports are literally destroyed since biological women have to compete with biological men and—in the vast majority of cases—lose, or even get seriously injured (as is the case with women’s rugby or boxing). At times, it becomes utterly absurd. Thus, in 2015, the IOC allowed transgender people to participate in the Olympic Games. This organization allows people with obvious biological advantages to compete but disqualifies athletes for even a small trace of doping. According to L. Blade, the testosterone level prescribed for trans women at 10 nmol/L is much higher than the female testosterone range of 0.52 to 2.4 nmol/L. Testosterone is just one of thousands of variables that distinguish men from women. Decreased testosterone levels have little effect on reducing many of the structural benefits that adult males have, such as higher muscle mass, larger lungs and heart, greater oxygen-carrying capacity in the blood, longer and stronger bones, and neural networks that offer a faster reaction time [Blade and Kay, 2021, p. 101].

These manifestations are the consequences of the impasse and self-denial that feminism has come to. Various currents in feminism have contradicted each other before. For example, there is a contradiction between emphasizing “femininity” and the desire to turn this femininity into a set of prejudices that supposedly should be discarded by appealing to the idea of the absence of significant biological differences between men and women. In a situation where gender is primary, the entrance ticket for trans women to women’s sports is quite justified. Hence, there is the natural split in feminism itself between supporters of gender concepts and the so-called TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical feminists)—radical feminists who exclude trans people. For the latter, the problems are not limited to sports. For example, they are concerned about the access of trans women (biological men) to women’s locker rooms or women’s prisons (there are already cases of sexual violence by those who “feel” like a woman [see Stock, 2021]). Another issue relevant to feminism is the “stereotypical” behavior of trans women. The femininity that many radical feminists used to dismiss as some kind of negative experience (physical vulnerability, objectification of the female body, etc.) regains performative significance, and biological men use it for their own “benefit.” As Soh writes [Soh, 2020, p. 155],

Many feminists take issue with transgender women, and especially the autogynephilic subtype, alleging they perpetuate sexist stereotypes of what it means to be a woman—self-objectifying, airheaded, and only good for sex.

Trans women are seen as embodying clichés about what women are supposed to look like, including long hair and nails, heavy makeup and high heels, a “costume” that says little about what it means to be a woman, particularly in the eyes of feminists who have fought long and hard against it.

The above examples are just some of many. As different identities multiply (Facebook³ alone has counted 70 genders), the spectrum of controversy is also expanding. Among recent manifestations, note bullying of those who refuse to start romance and have sexual relations with transgender people, which causes natural rejection on the part of some groups (for example, some lesbians do not particularly welcome relationships with trans women who have not undergone a surgical transition). In essence, modern identity politics has become an ideology of acceptance, according to which any “nonstandard” identity is sacred, as is the choice (even if it is a choice of gender by a four-year-old child), determined by some kind of “deep self” regardless of any biological and other objective circumstances. However, where “self” is in the first place, constant contradictions and clashes of interests inevitably arise, no matter what “left” wrapper the corresponding discourses are wrapped in.

The big question is whether to consider the processes taking place mainly in the West as universal. In the opinion of the author, the actualization of expressive individualism can be considered an inevitable consequence of improving the quality of life in material terms. Any traditionalism is likely to be only a temporary obstacle to the realization of people’s desire to express themselves in the widest possible range of ways. In the end, even in Russia, despite all the anti-Western rhetoric, young people are more tolerant to representatives of sexual minorities.⁴ However, Western identity politics is perhaps not a historical example to be followed. As was shown, ignoring scientific facts (for example, about sex biological characteristics) and the (pseudo)postmodernist rhetoric lead to ambiguous social consequences.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of leftist movements is the history of disillusionment with revolutionary subjects. The reason why modern leftists pay so much attention to the concept of intersectionality and identity politics is simple: the 20th century showed that the idea of a revolution carried out by the working class is not viable. To fill the resulting vacuum, some substitutes were

³ Included in Meta Platforms, recognized as extremist, and banned in Russia—*Ed.*

⁴ Attitude of Russians towards LGBT people, October 15, 2021. Levada Center (recognized as a foreign-agent NGO in Russia—*Ed.*). <https://www.levada.ru/2021/10/15/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-lgbt-lyudyam/>.

needed. The “new hope” was all kinds of “victims” and oppressed groups. Note that many leftists continued to adhere to the idea of egalitarianism, inspired by the distant prospect of communism as a classless society. Most likely, this concept was a major misconception. In reality, there is, in fact, a further evolution of individualism—but mainly on postmaterialistic grounds. One can again blame capitalism for allegedly steering identity politics in the wrong direction. However, such reasoning inevitably leads to conspiracy theories about some kind of omnipotent capitalism, which does little to analyze specific social processes that have a very indirect relationship to the capitalist economy. Postcapitalism simply does not need major political upheavals to gradually clear its way (as, in fact, was the case with its predecessor).

As material production is gradually replaced by “immaterial” production, and a vision like “fully automated luxury communism” [Bastani, 2019] looms on the horizon, people are redefining hierarchies and prestige to account for new scarce goods and resources. While under the conditions of capitalism these hierarchies and ideas are formed in accordance with unequal access to the “material,” today people are increasingly struggling for attention, which cannot be equal for everyone. People will never stop fighting to be better, brighter, more outstanding, and more popular than the rest. The development of postcapitalist social relations should be thought of as a transition to the predominance of new forms of competition: if not capital, then attention; if not material goods, then the pleasure of self-expression. Identity politics in this context is responsible for the expansion of freedom of choice because we live in a society the representatives of which devote ever more time to the search for and assertion (“production”) of their “self.” As demonstrated in this article, one should not look here for genuine egalitarianism or the desire for it. Even more so, one should not invent such strange concepts as “transgender Marxism” [Gleeson and O’Rourke, 2021], artificially associating group logic with the idea of communism. On the contrary, everything suggests that individuals who pursue their narrow interests continue to be at the center of the processes under consideration. In this connection, we can say that in the future we should expect further strengthening of the “enmity of all against all” and the destruction of the lifeworld since most people will demand from others the “recognition” of more and more new identities, even if this requires silencing the objectionable public. Will there be real leftists among these “objectionables”?

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

OPEN ACCESS

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

REFERENCES

- Akerlof G.A. and Kranton R.E. (2010) *Identity Economics: How Our Identities Shape Our Work, Wages, and Well-Being*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bastani A. (2019) *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*, New York: Verso.
- Bauman Z. (2008) *Tekuchaia sovremenost’* [Liquid Modernity]. Saint-Petersburg: Piter.
- Blade L. and Kay B. (2021) *Unsporting: How Trans Activism and Science Denial are Destroying Sport*, Toronto: Rebel News Network Ltd.
- Buzgalin A.V. (2021) Kreativnaia revoliutsiia transformiruet rynek i otnosheniia sobstvennosti [Creative Revolution Transforms Market and Property Relations], *Ekonomicheskoe vozrozhdenie Rossii*, no. 1, pp. 109–115.
- Case A. and Deaton A. (2020) *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Crenshaw K. (1991) Mapping the Margins Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color, *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, pp. 1241–1299.
- Davydov D.A. (2012) Sotsial’naia identichnost’: teoriia rational’nogo vybora kak al’ternativnyi podkhod k kontseptualizatsii [Social Identity: Rational Choice Theory as an Alternative Approach to Conceptualization], *Sotsiologicheskoe obozrenie*, no. 2, pp. 131–142.
- Davydov D.A. (2021) *Postkapitalizm i rozhdenie personaliata* [Postcapitalism and the Birth of the Personaliat], Moscow: Ripol Klassik.
- Dershowitz A. (2020) *Cancel Culture: The Latest Attack on Free Speech and Due Process*, New York: Hot Books.
- DiAngelo R. (2018) *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Fukuyama F. (2019) *Identichnost’. Stremlenie k priznaniuu i politika nepriiatiia* [Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment], Moscow: Al’pina Publisher.
- Gorz A. (2010) *The Immaterial: Knowledge, Value and Capital*, New York, London: Seagull Books.

- Hicks S. R. C. (2011) *Explaining Postmodernism. Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault Ockham's, Roscoe: Ockham's Razor.*
- Inglehart R. (1997) *Modernization and Postmodernization*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jones P. (2021) *Work Without the Worker: Labour in the Age of Platform Capitalism*, New York: Verso.
- Kagarlitskii B.Iu. (2017) *Mezhdru klassom i diskursom. Levye intellektualy na strazhe kapitalizma* [Between Class and Discourse: Left Intellectuals in Defence of Capitalism], Moscow: HSE Publ.
- King B. and Petty R. (2021) *The Rise of Technosocialism: How Inequality, AI and Climate will Usher in a New World*, Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International.
- Knowles M. (2021) *Speechless: Controlling Words, Controlling Minds*, Washington, D.C.: Regnery.
- Kondrashov P.N. (2016) Kakogo zhe Marksa my chitaem? Chast' 2 [Which Marx We Read? Part 2]. *Diskurs-Pi.*, nos. 3–4, pp. 238–246.
- Lupton D. (2021) *Zhirnye* [Fat], Moscow: HSE Publ.
- Munger M. (2021) *Zavtra 3.0. Transaktsionnye izderzhki i ekonomika sovmejnogo ispol'zovaniia* [Tomorrow 3.0. Transaction Costs and the Sharing Economy], Moscow: HSE Publ.
- Milanovic B. (2017) *Global'noe neravenstvo: novyi podkhod dlia epokhi globalizatsii* [Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization], Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Instituta Gaidara.
- Mason P. (2017) *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Muldoon J. (2022) *Platform Socialism: How to Reclaim our Digital Future from Big Tech.*, London: Pluto Press.
- Murray D. (2021) *Bezumie tolpy. Kak mir soshel s uma ot tolerantnosti i popytok ugodit' vsem* [The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity], Moscow: Ripol Klassik.
- Piketty T. (2016) *Kapital v XXI veke* [Capital in the Twenty-First Century], Moscow: Ad Marginem.
- Pinker S. (2018) *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, New York: Viking.
- Pluckrose H. and Lindsay J. (2020) *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity – and Why This Harms Everybody*, Durham: Pitchstone.
- Rechtenwald M. (2020) *Beyond Woke*, Nashville, TN: New English Review Press.
- Scarry E. (2020) *Privileged Victims: How America's Culture Fascists Hijacked the Country and Elevated Its Worst People*, New York: Bombardier Books.
- Shapiro B. (2019) *Facts Don't Care about Your Feelings*, Hermosa Beach: Creators Publishing.
- Shapiro B. (2021) *The Authoritarian Moment: How the Left Weaponized America's Institutions Against Dissent*. New York: Broadside Books. 288 p.
- Soh D. (2020) *The End of Gender: Debunking the Myths about Sex and Identity in Our Society*, New York: Threshold Editions.
- Srnicek N. and Williams A. (2016) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, New York: Verso.
- Standing G. (2014) *Prekariat. Novyi opasnyi klass* [The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class], Moscow: Ad Marginem.
- Stock K. (2021) *Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism*, London: Fleet.
- Transgender Marxism* (2021) Gleeson J.J. and O'Rourke E., Eds., London: Pluto Press.
- Van Parijs P., Vanderborght Y. (2020) *Bazovyi dokhod. Radikal'nyi proekt dlia svobodnogo obshchestva i zdorovoi ekonomiki* [Basic Income: A Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy]. Moscow: HSE Publ.
- Weiss H. (2021) *My nikogda ne byli srednim klassom. Kak sotsial'naia mobil'nost' vvodit nas v zabluzhdenie* [We Have Never Been Middle Class]. Moscow: HSE Publ.
- Wright E. O. (2019) *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Verso.
- Zuboff S. (2022) *Epokha nadzornogo kapitalizma. Bitva za chelovecheskoe budushchee na novykh rubezhakh vlasti* [The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power], Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Instituta Gaidara.

Translated by B. Alekseev