

Poststructuralist Perspectives

This lecture will examine post-structuralist theory and practice.

What does the term post-structuralism refer to?

- as a result of structuralism?
- the aftermath of structuralism?
- the rejection of structuralism?
- the development of structuralism?

Structuralism is best approached as a method of analysis concerned with social and cultural structures or predictable regularities that lie outside of any given person. (Barker, C., 2004, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, SAGE publications: 189)

What are the social and cultural structures or regularities that perhaps we assume are determined or prearranged?

Poststructuralism: The prefix 'post' clearly suggests 'after', thus poststructuralism is after structuralism in that the terms of this philosophical stream are ones that involve both the absorption of key ideas from structuralism and a critique and transformation of them. (Barker, C., 2004, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, SAGE publications: 159)

structuralism
[reductive]

post-structuralism
[expansive]

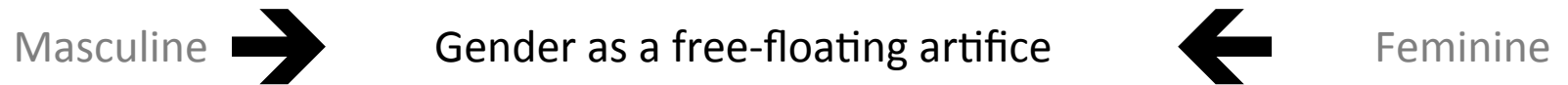
Structuralist Thought

Masculinity (Male)



Femininity (Female)

Poststructuralist Thought



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc>



Judith Butler

American theorist, born 1956. Key figure in queer theory due to book *Gender Trouble* (1990), which argued that idea of two 'biological' sexes is just as socially constructed as gender is. Feminist discussion of men and women as separate groups – and all women as one coherent group – has only served to maintain this problem. Butler calls for proliferation of radical gender performances to subvert assumptions.

For more, see www.theory.org.uk/butler

[Card 2 of 12]

STRENGTHS: Groundbreaking, constructive critical skills

WEAKNESSES: Increasingly impenetrable writing style

SPECIAL SKILLS: Offers radical lifestyle manifesto

‘When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.’ (Butler, J., 1990, *Gender Trouble*, Routledge)



Jesper Just, *No Man is an Island*, 2002, film, duration: 3'45

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yunI40clydU>

‘Perhaps what is happening here is that the binary tale turns into a Derridean tale of oscillation and undecidability’. (Lomax, Y., *Writing The Image*: 64).

- **Structuralism** posits that meaning is generated by the organization of signs that are held together by cultural convention.
- **Poststructuralism** deconstructs the idea of the stable structures of language that structuralism assumes.