

Cultural Studies
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Module No. # 02
Key Concepts
Lecture No. # 06
Representation (Part Two)

Hello, welcome back to this series of lectures on cultural studies, which as you all know is being recorded under the aegis of NPTEL or the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning, which is a joint venture by the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India.

We are now in the second module; in fact, we have been through a couple of lectures and discussions in the second module, which is entitled key concepts. And in the last lecture we talked about representation, which I had mentioned, is not only a key concept in contemporary cultural studies, but is also, we could say, almost a pillar of cultural studies as we know it today, without which some of the key premises or some of the key axioms of contemporary cultural studies would not be articulated properly. So, today we are in part 2 of representation, as I had mentioned in the last lecture, I would be devoting 2 lectures to representation.

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So, **let us see**, let us have a look at what we did in the last lecture. First, we looked at the definition of representation given by Chris Barker in the Sage Dictionary of cultural studies, and let us look at this slide here; first, Barker says, representation is a set of processes by which signifying practices appear to stand for or depict another object.

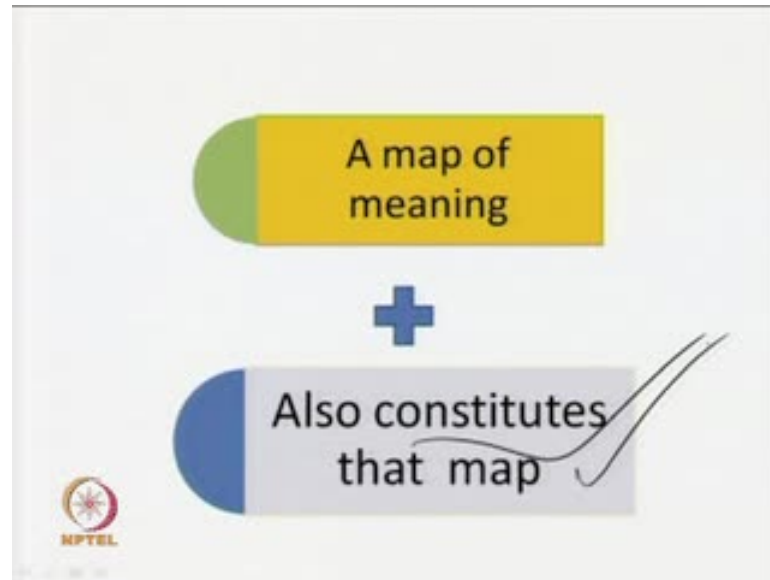
So, this is one way of understanding, **cultural, sorry**, representation in cultural studies. For instance, you see representation as a set of processes, is that, looks as if they stand for or they depict another object or any cultural practice.

In that sense, as Barker says, representation is an act of symbolism, why? Because the moment you begin to represent or re-present something - any object, any cultural practice, etcetera, what happens is, you take recourse to certain symbols and those symbols usually are in the form of a language. So, this is one definition of representation, but Barker says, **well, we have to**, you have to, you know, go beyond this and look at representation in a slightly different way, and here we look at the second paragraph here.

He says, however, for cultural studies representation does not simply reflect. Now, let us mark this. In the first case, we have words like stand for, depict, through act of symbolism, but he says, we should keep in mind that representation does not simply reflect in symbolic forms, even in language or symbolic forms - things that exists in an independent object world.

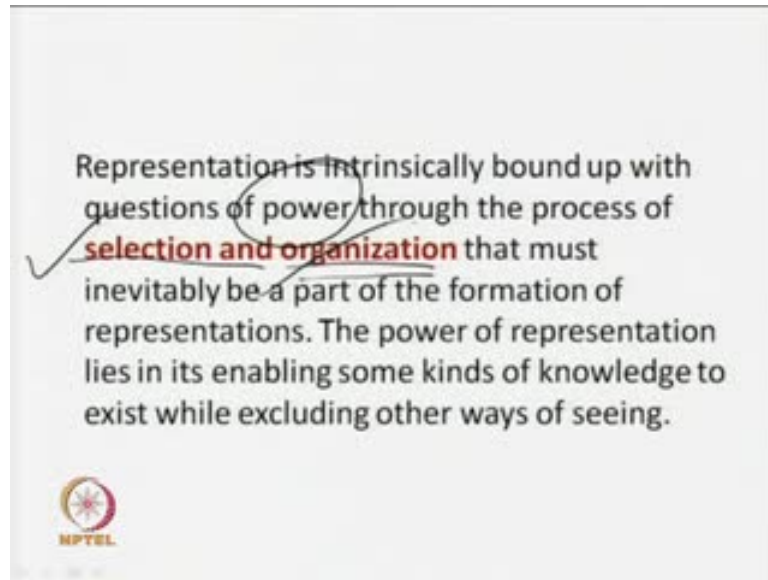
So, **well, if, if it does not**, if representation does not truly reflect things, then what? Then, he says, look at this, rather, representations are constitutive of the meaning of that which they purport to stand in for. As I mentioned in the last lecture, this is extremely important - representations are not just symbolic reflections of meanings.

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The important point to note here is - representations themselves are constitutive of the meaning. So, ultimately, as we can see in the next slide, ultimately, representation is a map of meaning. As we remember, we had seen, we have talked about representation being a map of meaning, pointers to meaning; but the second point is, **what is**, what is often reiterated by theorists and practitioners of cultural studies, that is this, that representation also constitutes that map. So, it is like the, what you call the recto and verso size of a piece of paper; can you separate, you know, the recto and the verso, the both sides of a piece of paper? In the same way, the both sides are constitutive of the piece of paper, so in the same way, the representation also constitutes those very maps of meaning, which we say are; so, it was not simply a pointer to meaning.

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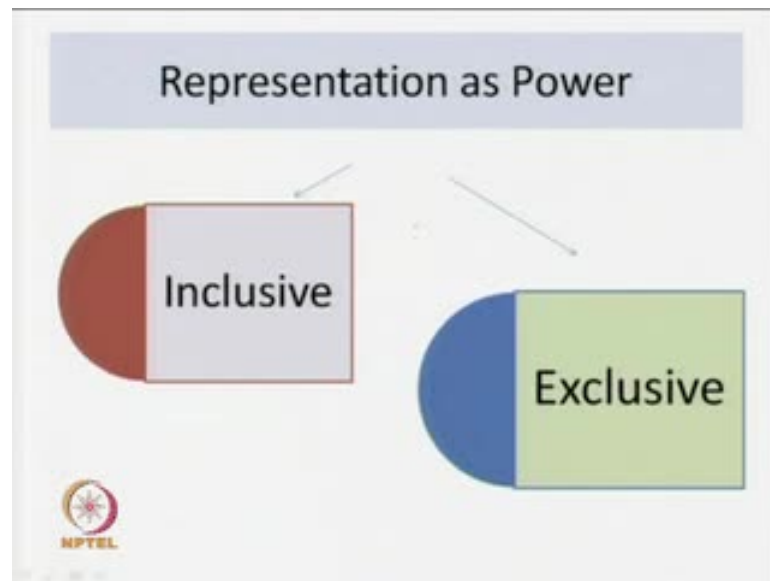


Next, we saw this, again by Barker, that representation is a matter of selection and organization.

We select things, we select what to represent. It is often held that you cannot or it is not impossible **to**, to represent things in their totality. So, what inheres in the whole process of representation, as shown by Barker and several other critics, is this, that there is, there are questions of power; there are questions of power, which determine the selection and organization.

Now we read here, selection and organization that must inevitably be a part of the formation of representations. Therefore, as we see here, representation as power, who entails both, inclusion and exclusion of aspects of things.

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Dani Cavallaro, *Critical and Cultural Theory*

Today many important developments in critical and cultural theory are associated with a **crisis in representation.**

Much recent criticism has claimed that the real as such is unattainable. We only experience it through the mediation of texts, images and stories.

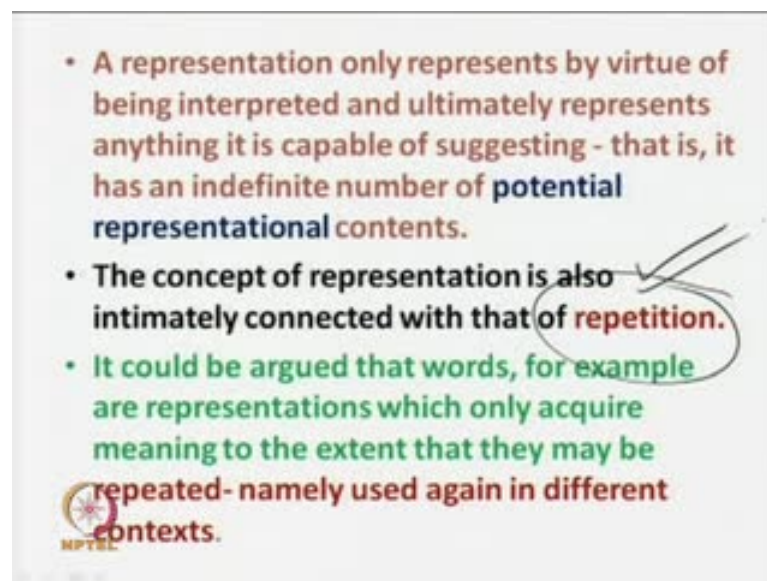
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Then **we**, we looked at Dani Cavallaro and his text, *Critical and Cultural Theory*, where we find term, written essay on representation, where he says, that there is today a crisis in representation.

What does it mean to say, that there is a crisis in representation? It means that representation has been rendered problematic. What does it mean to, I may have mentioned this in one of my earlier lectures, nevertheless, what does it mean for something to be problematized?

Simply put, it means, that we render a concept or term or event or process, problematic. We look at it as, you know, **not**, not at face value. We understand, we begin to discover, and then we realize, that there are many things that are hidden, that need to be uncovered in certain topics and representation is one. And hence, he says that there is a crisis in representation, and contemporary cultural studies **seeks**, seeks to highlight **these**, these crisis in representation.


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Then we also found, and I will go through the recap quickly, that the concept of representation, here the concept of representation is intimately connected with that of repetition, how is repetition important? And then further down, in the last point, you defined, that it could be argued, that words, for example are representations which only acquire meaning to the extent that they may be repeated - namely used in different context.

You can use the word currency, cultural currency. Any sought idea, concept, any theory gains cultural currency, only if it is repeated. So, repetition is inherent **in**, in representation, and this is one of the first phase of realizing, that representation is not simple idea or concept; that representation needs to be sought of unpacked, needs to be queried, needs to be questioned, from several angles.

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- These never mirror reality, transparently and neutrally but actually represent it according to the codes and are accordingly naturalized - i.e. their status as constructs is effaced.
 - Representations are a vital means of supporting a culture's ideology, the worldview invented by that culture to legitimate itself-and to discipline its subjects
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Then next, representations are also a vital means of supporting a culture's ideology. We have already done, we have already discussed ideology in, within this module, I think in the second lecture, if I am not mistaken, second or third; in fact, there were two lectures devoted to ideology. And you will see that in cultural studies, these key concepts are not discrete concepts. Theorists discuss these concepts in relation **to**, to each other; I may have, in the course of these lectures, taken up topics and it may seem to some, that it is a singular exercise, but it is not, please remember, that these are not.

For instance, ideology subjectivity, identity, representation, power, discourse, these are words that you cannot simply study in isolation. Every now and then, and the more you relate and correlate them, the more dense, the more sophisticated, the better theorized, your answers are, your axioms are, in fact, your understandings are. So, in this case, representation is tied to ideology, why?

Now, if you look at which representations are going to be upheld? As you know, quote unquote, the natural representations, only those which are supportive and which were legitimized by ideology; anything, any matter, any event, anything, any concept, name it, can be represented from **several**, several dimensions from several aspects.

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- This entails questioning many of the concepts and symbols which we are generally invited to **take for granted as timeless, objective and a matter of common sense.**
- Any cultural product can be approached as a form of representation **offering vital clues to a culture's belief systems,** its interpretations of reality and its ways of translating both factual and fictional situations into images.

And we need to understand, that there are, behind every, you know, every, sort of, legitimized, every legitimized representation of anything, there are always the potential, not use representations. So, this entails, this is also something that we had seen, this entails questioning, this is the word; to problematize, you need to question, questioning many of the concepts and symbols, which we are generally invited, to take for granted as timeless objective and a matter of common sense.

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- **Misrepresentation** plays a central role in the construction of personal and collective identities what we think we are often a product of how our culture misrepresents us and how we misrepresent ourselves.
- **Distortion, and misrepresentation are not secondary or accidental aspects of human experience.** We do not perceive the world as it is but rather as mediated by various filters and channels: forms of language and forms of interpretation that do not mirror the world but actually construct it, thereby perpetuating or challenging its ideologies.

So, now, we will, this is the end of the recap and we are moving into the rest of, what I want to tell you or show you about, discuss about, representation.

Cavallaro also mentions a very important point, he says, we do not talk only about representation tied to, or as a corollary to the word representation, is opposite, which is, he says, misrepresentation. He says when you talk about representation, we cannot do away with, in fact, the very problematization **of**, of the term representation brings into discussion, it seeming opposite, misrepresentation. So, let us read what Cavallaro has to say.

Misrepresentation plays a central role in the construction of personal and collective identities. You would have, that, or we would have thought, that representation plays a central role, here is Cavallaro suggesting and in fact, arguing that misrepresentation plays a central role in the construction of our identities.

What we think we are, often, is a product of how our culture, sorry, we are, is a product of how our culture misrepresents us and how we misrepresent ourselves? So, it is as if, all our representations, all our pronouncements, all our symbolic, sort of, you know, symbolic reflections on ourselves are incorrect.

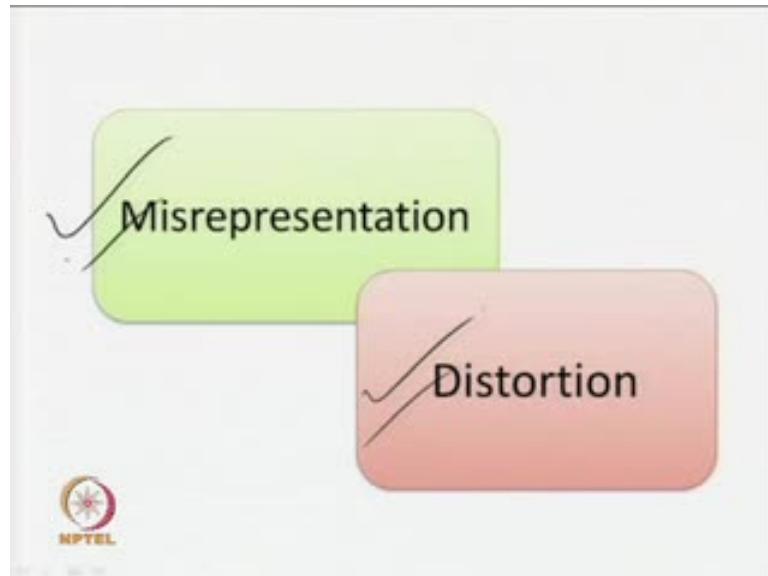
They, they, culture misrepresents us, and in turn, we end up misrepresenting ourselves. So, distortion is a next word. Distortion and misrepresentation are not secondary or accidental aspects of human experience. In fact, many **might**, might think that **it is, it is**, representation is one thing, and distortion is an aberration, misrepresentation is an aberration, but Cavallaro says, that you cannot even call it secondary or accidental representation, which is so much part and parcel of the representative process.

So, let me read this again. Distortion and misrepresentation are not secondary or accidental aspects of human experience. We do not perceive the world as it is, but rather as, we have come across word before if you remember, mediated by various filters and channels: forms of language and forms of interpretation that do not mirror the world.

So, **this is, this is**, this is almost established by now I think, in our discussions - forms of language and forms of, sorry, interpretation do not mirror the world, they actually construct it, is given to us not as the world is, or not as things are. They are mediator,

they are channelized through various symbolic forms; thereby, he says, perpetuating or challenging its ideologies.

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So, therefore, these, we find that, let us look at the slide, you can remember it better if this presented diagrammatically or graphically; misrepresentation and distortion are equally important **words**, words, like the word representation is.

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Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, Key Concepts in Cultural Theory

Language theories: representation as a function of language

- A) The representation of thoughts in language
- B) The linguistic representation of the world of empirical experience

Social Terms

- A) political meaning (e.g. pressure groups)
- B) Norms and practices representing social groups etc

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Now, **let us look at**, let us look at a book called, named, Key Concepts in Cultural Theory. This is another book, those of, you know, it is like a glossary, which more than a glossary really; it is, sometimes it give the historical development of certain terms. Nevertheless, key concepts that are used in theorizing culture, are well written in this or rather, written out well in this book by Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick.

Now, they talk about representation in two ways: number one, from the point of view of language theories: representation becomes a function of language. Now, let us see **the way**, the way they have put it is, A, it is a representation of thoughts in language, and B, the linguistic representation of the world of empirical experience.

First step is, we have thoughts and we couch them in a language. It is the language as tool school of thought, language is a communicative tool school of thought that looks at language, simply as a carrier of our thoughts; in that sense, representation could be definitely defined as **something, that**, something, that seeks to reflect or represent our thoughts in language. In the second case, it is also, representation is, therefore, the linguistic representation of the world of our empirical experience.

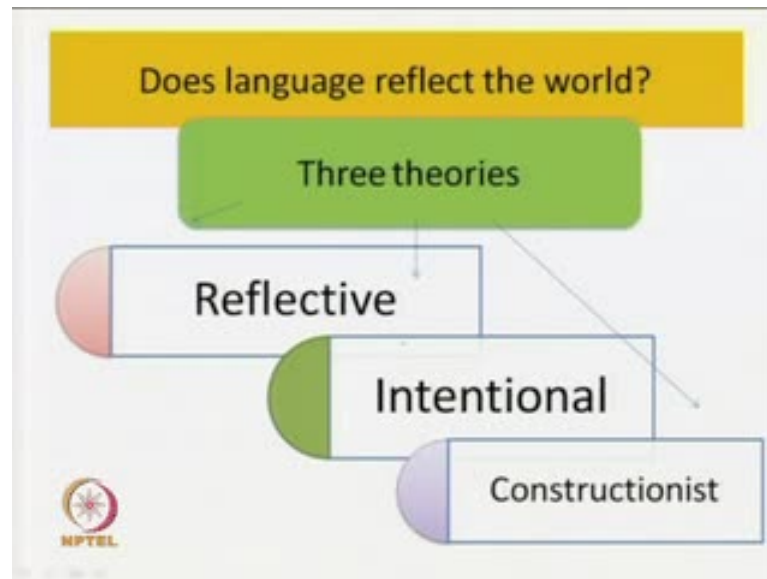
On the other hand, in social terms, representation could have a political meaning. For instance, pressure groups, A, representing a group of people, may be, going to the government to submit a memorandum; they are also a representation and in social terms.

And secondly, representation also refers to the norms and practices, representing social groups, etcetera. You say, that this, this way of life, these socio-cultural practices, these are representative of a particular group, or a particular community, in that sense also, we use the term representation; in the sense of being representative, being the core cultural artifacts, being the core believes, being the core everyday practices of a society.

However, having said this, we need to also remember that **it is**, it is point, in this case point B here, let us look at the slide, it is point B here, that has received the most attention in the study of representation in cultural studies, which is the linguistic representation of the world of our empirical experience. That, the everything is represented in terms of language, language being the most common symbolic, we may even argue, the most common symbolic form.

So, cultural studies, at least, new cultural studies, been talking about following the linguistic turn, following structuralism and post structuralism, has **posited**, that even culture is a language. These representations that we are talking about, the norms and practices points, since this is last point, the norms and practices for instance, representing social groups are also, or could be, read as a language.

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Now, having talked about, that the linguistic turn, a very important point comes to our mind, and please look at this slide, the question, **does language reflect the world**, does language reflect the world, or you know, its related question, if yes, how far?

Now, there are three theories here, which try to deal with the question, does language reflect the world? Among these are number one, the reflective theory or the reflective school of thought and next, the intentional theory, and finally, the constructionist theory.

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Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation"

The Reflective approach

- Meaning lies in the object or event in the real world.
- Language is a mirror that reflects the true meaning as it already exists in the world.
- Also called the mimetic approach.

The Intentional approach

- The addresser/author imposes meaning on the world through language.
- Words mean what the author intends them to mean.

mimesis imitate

Words mean what the author intends them to mean.

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So, remember the relation between language and the world. Language and reality are tried to be explained by three different theories, and let us see how they try and work it out. Now, **in this, you know, we are, you know,** to explain this, we are looking at an important essay by Stuart Hall. There is, you know, a book edited by Hall, which is considered in cultural studies, a seminal text for us.

And we are looking at the essay there, The Work of Representation; in fact, these three theories have been highlighted by Stuart Hall. First, Hall says, he talks about the reflective approach - in the reflective approach, meaning lies in the object or event in the real world. That, they, in the real world, in the world of objects, actual objects, in the material objects, in the world of actual events, actual phenomena that are happening; those contain meaning.

So, simply, you just have to reflect, you reflect the meaning that is inherent according to this school; inherent in an object or in the phenomenon; in an event in the natural world, in the real world, in the tangible world. And since the meaning is there, you grasp the meaning and, you know, **you,** you represent it, and you say, this is a sort of truth, this is a faithful, loyal representation of; since, the meaning is there, I have tried to grasp it and represent it.

Now, let us look at this slide. Language, in this case, is a mirror or is considered a mirror that reflects the true meaning, as it already exists in the world. It is also called the mimetic approach.

Now, what is mimetic? You will recall, that mimetic comes from the word mimesis, which is a Greek word, which means, to imitate. So, obviously, **this school**, this school holds, that the only need to reflect, as far as possible, as truly as possible, the meanings that are inherent in cultural phenomena, in natural phenomena.

The next approach, as we know, is the intentional approach, and this is, we will learn about it **through, through**, through Stuart Hall's essay. Here, **the addresser**, the addresser or the author, imposes meaning on the world through language; so, here, intention of the author is important. So, it is not the meaning inherent, the meaning inherent is filtered through; is a first time now, this, remember the filtering, the mediation, the mediation in the filtering occurs here. He said, the, well, the meaning is there according to the reflected school.

But the intentional approach says, that here, you have an agent through which an agent, that is seeking, to give you the meaning or the true representation, the so called true representation, but the addresser, author will, in according to this, please look at this slide, the addresser or author imposes meaning on the world through language. And importantly, those words that he uses or she uses mean, what the author intends them to mean? The word intends; hence, the **intentional**, intentional approach.

So, therefore, we already have somebody who is there; we have an agent and through the agent, his or her choice of words and meanings, and his or her intentions, they are important and our representation is already, so to speak, mediated or channelized by the time it reaches us.

Then, we have the constructionist approach, which is today considered, you know, an approach that is best suited to the understanding of not just representation, to the understanding of cultural studies in general, to the understanding of so many things, like power, like discourse, like ideology, like subjectivity, and identity.

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The Constructionist approach

- Insists on the social character of language *mimetic*
- Things don't mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs *intention*
- The material world and the symbolic or representational world are not the same *delinking*
- Though representation does use material objects like images, sounds, bytes, etc, the meaning depends on the symbolic function of those objects

Meaning through representational symbols is relational (as shown by Saussure)

Now, let us look at the slide. This is the constructionist approach, as given to us by Stuart Hall. Now, this approach insists on the social character of language. Remember, we are now leaving the mimetic school, we are now leaving or coming away from the intentional school, that is, the intention of one person, which is the author and we are going into the social aspect of language. The constructionist approach says as, well, language does, you know, is the vehicle for representation, but we have to understand the social character of language.

Here, things do not mean we construct meaning using representational systems, concepts and science. The material world and the symbolic or representational world are not the same. This is the, you could say, the final, you know, this is the very important statement; it is, you know, the final division or the delinking, if you use the word, this is the final delinking of the two domains - the material world and the representational world; I think, a very radical thing to say, when we consider, you know, when we consider philosophy, when we consider cultural studies. The material world and the symbolic world of representation are not the same.

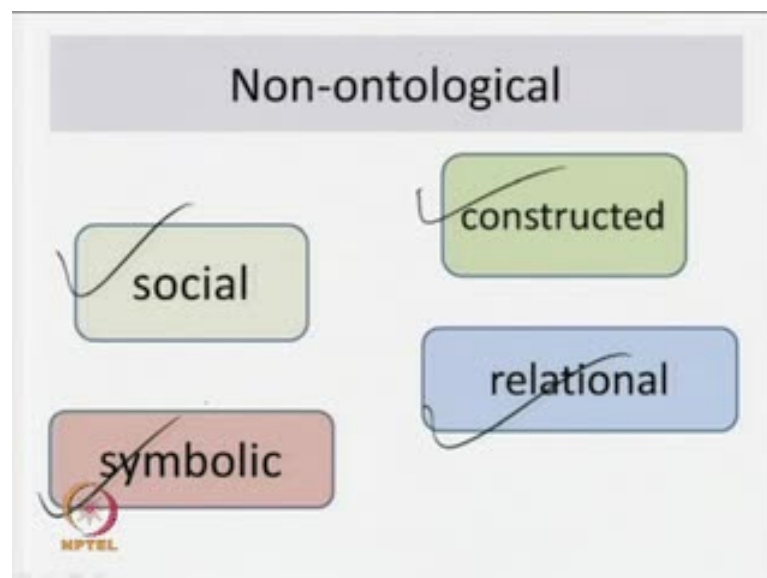
Now, let us look at the slide please, though representation does use material objects like, images, sounds, bytes, etcetera, the meaning depends on this, symbolic function of those objects.

It is obvious, because as we saw in Saussure, we saw in the lecture on structuralism, in module 1, it is through sounds, it is through images, that the message is conveyed. So, there is no doubting the fact, that images, sounds, and in the case of the digital world, bytes, are the carriers, but the meaning depends on, not again the images, the sounds, the bytes, per say. The meaning depends on the symbolic function of those objects.

Finally, as Hall suggests, meaning through representation symbols is relational; meaning is relational. You will again go, you can go, and you can refer to my lecture, to our lecture on structuralism, where we discussed, how meaning is relational in the chain if, you know, language is seen as a system, or of differences, a system of relations, a system of arbitrary science, which are called words. And meaning being in a systemic, both systemic and systematic, comes about, you know, in a system of relations with one another.

So, please remember that the constructionist approach is the approach, which today is understood as a more sophisticated account of representation and what it is than the older, so to speak, accounts like, there are approaches like the reflectionist approach and the intentional approach.

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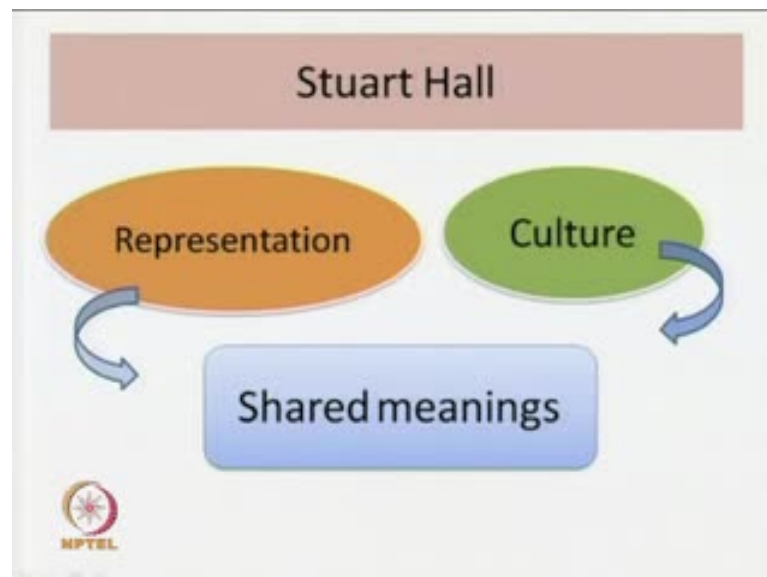
Therefore, now, we need to, you know, further theorize it and mean it to understand these, the last one, the constructionist approach as being a non-ontological approach.

Now, we again come across, recall that we have come across the word ontological over and over again. We need to use this word because ontology **is a, is, is,** has been a very **powerful,** powerful school of thought in philosophy, which sees things as inherently, you know, having meaning or sees things in terms of essences, that things have.

So, it is important for us to realize, that **the constructionist approach,** the constructionist approach, is a non-ontological one. So, let us relate it to the three approaches, so the first approach, if we say that now, can we call it ontological? Definitely, the first approach is the reflectionist approach, is ontological, why? Because it has said, that objects, remember objects, events, phenomena, practices, are where meanings reside, you simply, have to be able to faithfully represented.

So, representation is finally non-ontological, because it is here social, it is constructed, it is relational, and it is symbolic. So, by now, I think we have discussed this enough, which is constructed bit for bit and in some other slides, I may come back to it as some **other,** other critics have talked about it.

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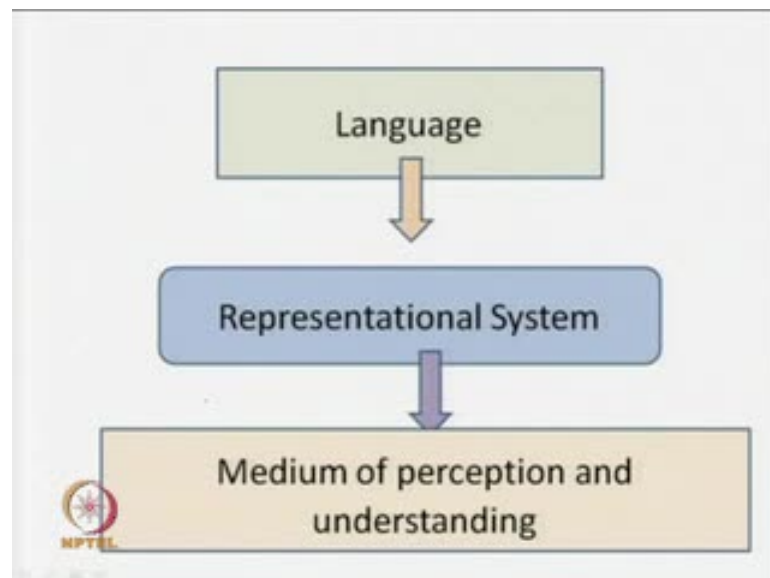
Now, again Stuart Hall, if you look at this slide, Stuart Hall says that both representation and culture are to do or have to do with shared meanings. Remember again, meaning is an important term; meaning is an important concept in cultural studies, after the

linguistic turn, especially. Are, you know, are focused ultimately, as practitioners of cultural studies, would be to see how meaning is created?

Now, in Stuart Hall's terms therefore, both, representation and culture is a matter of shared meanings, meanings that you and I share, meanings as members of community share. Now, what is important here is that meanings are shared all right, but meanings are not shared across cultures.

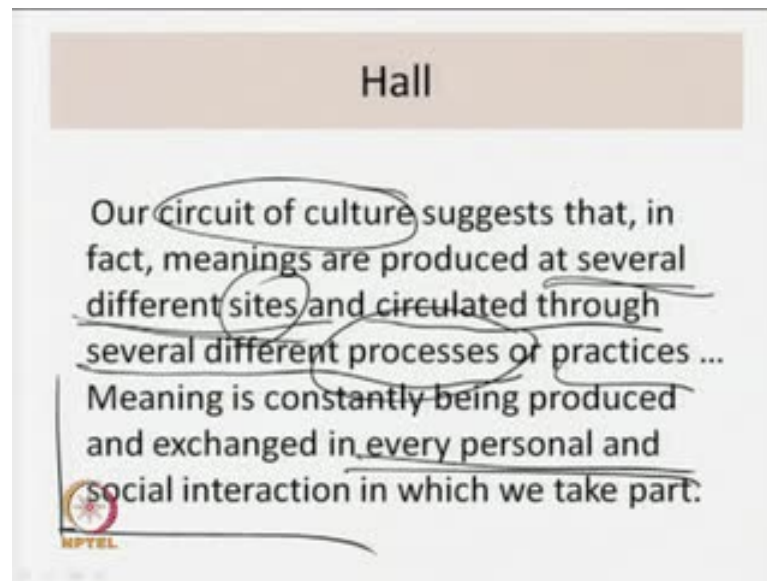
So, that, this is a very important point that Hall raises, other critics, other cultural theorists raise is, that they are shared meanings all right, but let us not assume, that meanings across all cultures are going to be shared.

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Now, language therefore, is a representational. To summarize these points, language is a representational system and the medium of perception and understanding.

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Now, we come to an important theoretical formulation given by Stuart Hall in the same work, and this is something, that almost all instructors of cultural studies, would bring to your notice. Now, I am quoting from Hall, our circuit of culture, this is what I wanted to bring to you, our circuit of culture suggests that, in fact, meanings are produced at several sites. Till now, we, we saw that meanings are produced as representations, meanings are produced through language, meanings are produced through symbolization, but Hall gives us an important, an important, it is almost like an important breakthrough, in the sense, that he says meanings are produced at several different sites.

And please look at the slide, circulated through several different processes or practices. So, let us do away with the illusion, that meaning is something that comes to us from only one medium or comes to us from medium of language, alright, but he would say next, when you talk about the circuit of culture, that meaning is produced at different sites, not only sites here, but meaning is circulated to us through different processes or practices.

This is the further problematization and a further formulation of representation. So, meaning is constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction, in which we take part.

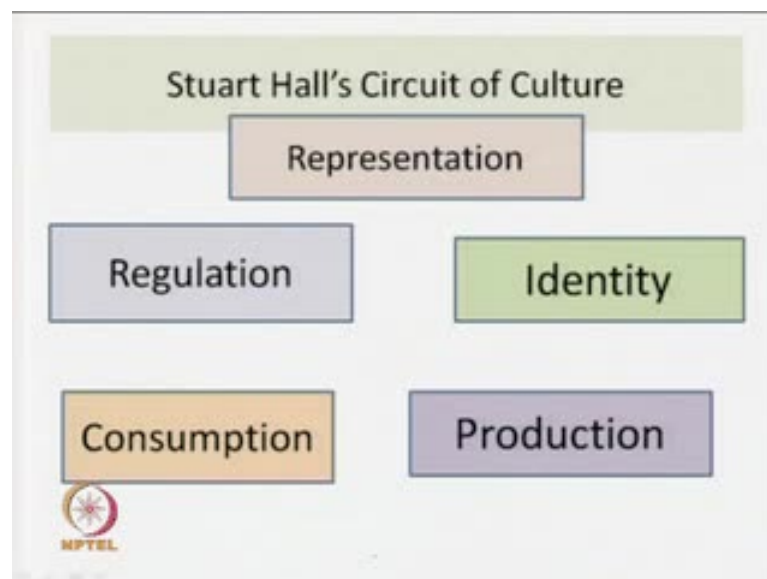
Now, the interesting thing here is that it is not that meanings are given to us by books, it is not that meanings are given to us by scriptures, or that meanings are given to us by canonical works; meaning creation and the understanding of meaning, if we may use the word, the negotiation of meaning, is something that happens every day.

Now, let us look at this key sentence again, meaning is constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction, that we take part. So, **what is**, what is the lesson that we learn here? Lesson that we learn here or the important point is this, that meaning is always fluid, meaning is always flexible.

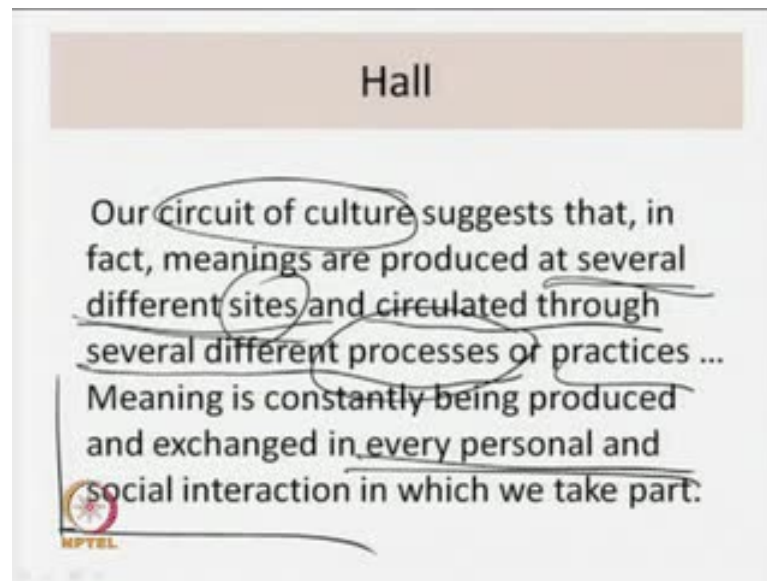
As many conversation acts, that you have take part in, as many social interactions you take part in, it looks like meaning is, as he says here, constantly produced and exchanged. This is something, that I would say, very few theorists have said.

They have theories, have talked about meaning being produced; we may have even talked about meanings being produced, not through one site, but in several sites, agreed. They may have also said, that there are different processes of meaning production, but tying down meaning to everyday practices and, you know, **the, the**, the reproducibility of meaning, and the constant change, and the constant production, and exchange of meaning happening in almost every single social interaction and conversation, is something that Hall has brilliantly given us.

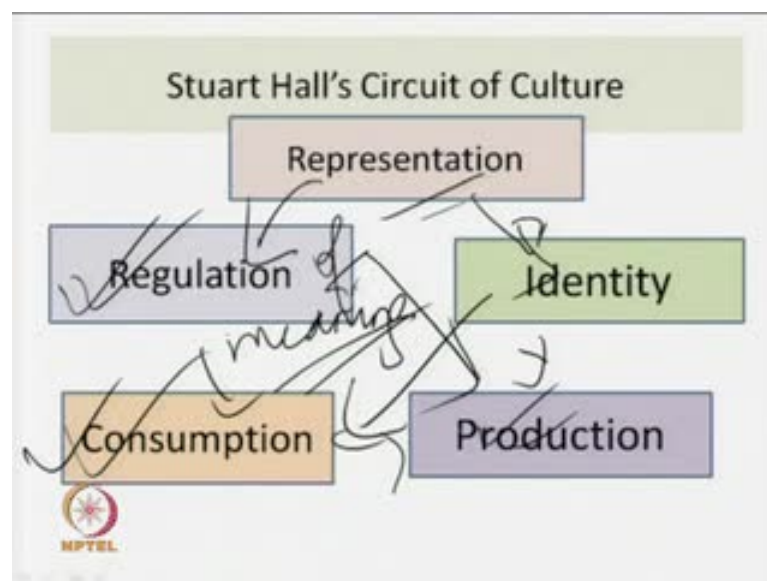
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Now, this is Hall's circuit of culture. So, we will go back again and see, what is the circuit of culture? The circuit of culture suggests that meanings are produced at different sites. Now, this is the circuit of culture, so it is not therefore, enough for us to talk only about representation. It is not enough for us to stop there.

We are going to look at processes, we are going to look at sites, and the moment we..., Remember, I had said, that in cultural studies and even if you talk about key concepts, even if you devote several lectures to the key concepts, in the end you have to tie these

round together, you have to talk about this in relation to one another, why? Because if you do not do that, the entire point of cultural studies is lost.

The things are inextricably related or sometimes, even blended with one another. Therefore, in the circuit of culture, apart from representation, what is important is the regulation? Regulations here are not simply rules, in the sense, that you understand rules and regulations; regulation, here, refers particularly, to the regulation of meaning; the regulation of meaning.

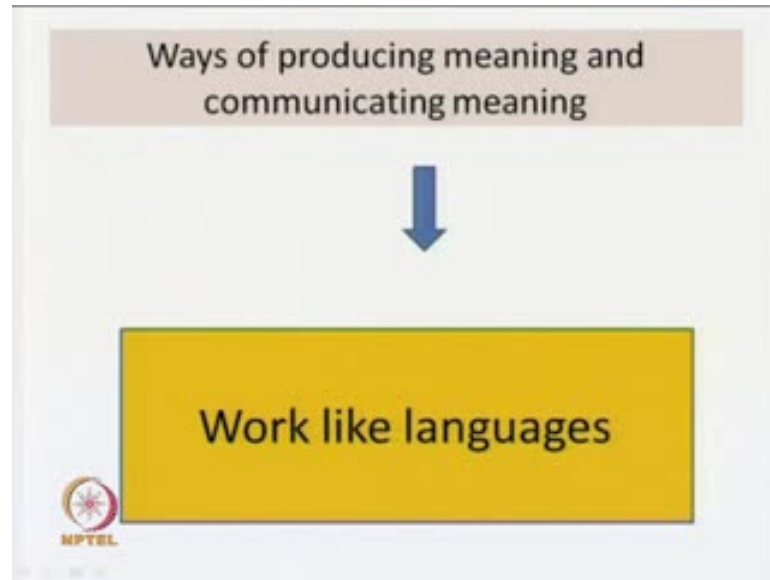
As long as we have ideology, as long as we have power, as long as we have discourse in the power of discourse, meaning will always be regulated by the dominant agencies and at the same time, regulated meaning will always be challenged by people, who are challenging the dominant ideology.

So, therefore, if you talk about representation, you definitely, cannot do without talking about the regulation of meaning; then obviously, this also ties, so it would go like this. They are so interrelated; each is related to the other, so in that case, identity or even, you know, subjectivity, identity, consumption. Now, well, we have representations, then we have the regulation of meaning, this does not take place as simply an exercise, we also consume meaning.

Now, by now, you, I am sure you probably have understood, how these words are related to one another? Representation and the regulation of meaning, the creation of identity, the consumption of a meaning, the contestation of meaning, then of course, before consumption, the production of meaning, these are related, say, inextricably bound with questions of representation.

So, this again is a brilliant move, **on**, in the part of Stuart Hall. Remember Hall's circuit of culture, and what are the components of Hall's circuit of culture? Representation, regulation, identity, production and consumption.

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Therefore, ways of producing meaning and communicating meaning, work like languages, so even the whole circuit of culture that we were talking about just before this, the entire process of production of meaning, of communicating meaning, of regulating meaning, and thereby creating identities and counter stations, creating, you know, producing meaning and finally consuming meaning.

All these, work like languages, or rather, all these work in a system of difference, all these work in a system of a certain, our degree of arbitrariness, and all these work in a system of relationality and differentiation.

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• ... not because they are all written or spoken ... but because they all use some element to stand for or represent what we want to say, to express or communicate a thought, concept, idea or feeling...
the 'language of the body' uses physical gesture ...
the language of facial expression uses ways of arranging ones features, television uses digitally or electronically produced dots on a screen, traffic lights use red, green and amber -- to 'say' something...
their importance for language is not what they *are* but what they *do*, their function.


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Ways of producing meaning and communicating meaning

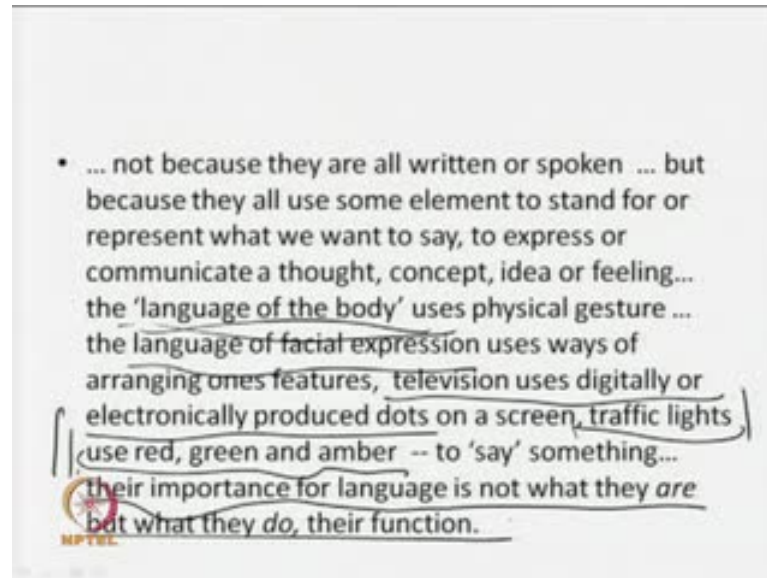
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Work like languages

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Now, you may think, that well, they work like languages, is it because they are simply written, they, **are simply**, are simply verbal, or they are written or they have spoken, is it why they work like languages? No, as is given here by the theorist, not because, they are, you know, these things, meanings, you know, work like language; if you look at the slide before this, ways of producing meaning and communicating meaning, work like languages.

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Not, let us read them, not because they are written or spoken, but because they all use some element to stand for or represent what we want to say, to express or communicate a thought, concept, idea or feeling, the language of the body uses physical gesture, the language of, look at this, language of the body. The body does not, the language of the body is not done in words, but still we talk about it in terms of a language, we talk about body language, in that sense, as he says, it is not simply, that it is, that has to be in a verbal medium or that it has to be written and spoken, we have to understand language in a slightly, slightly broader way.

A clear example here given is, for instance, when we use language, you know, in the sense of talking about body language or the language of the body, the language of the body uses physical gestures, the language of facial expressions uses ways of arranging one's features to mean something, to convey meaning; television uses digitally or electronically produced dots on the screen, traffic lights, now, traffic lights use red, green, and amber.

Look at this example for instance, could we not talk about the language of the traffic system? If I talk to you about the language and I said, this is the language of the traffic system, it means what? It means traffic system, signal, traffic signal system that we all use, which is common on almost across, at least to a huge extent across the globe, is a language that operates through difference.

It is a language that operates through relationality, you remember, in the example in Saussure's case, we had said that **there**, there may not be something ontological, essential, in the colours: **red, green and amber**, red amber and green, but through a system of difference, of red being not amber, amber being not green, and so on and so forth.

What happens is, the system may be called a language, why? Because it communicates. In this case, it is not in the verbal medium, it is not written or spoken, it is in the case of colors, but colors are used here as a language. So, whether it is a language of the body, whether it is the language of the facial expressions, whether it is the language of bytes, b y t e s, language of bytes in the digital world, whether it is the traffic system, their look at the slide, their importance for language, is not what they are, but what they do. When you talk about things as they are, you are talking about ontology. Remember cultural studies are, if not out and out, it is in the ultimate analysis, a non-ontological one. It is a non mimetic one, a non-reflectionist one.


Therefore, he says, the importance here for all these language systems, is that they, it is not important what they are in themselves, but it is important as, what is important is what they do? The function, the fact, and in this case, they call function like a language.

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Stuart Hall

Meaning and representation seem to belong irrevocably to the interpretative side of the human and cultural science whose subject matter – society, culture, the human subject – is not amenable to a positivistic approach ...

substitutable
measurable
quantifiable



Then, further, Stuart Hall says, meaning and representation seem to belong irrevocably to the interpretative side of the human and cultural science whose subject matter – society, culture, the human subject - is not amenable to a positivistic approach. This is the important point here; it is not amenable to a positivistic approach.

As Hall says, meaning and representation seem to belong irrevocably to the interpretative side of the human and cultural science whose subject matter – society, culture and the human subject - is not amenable to a positivistic approach. Look at the word, interpretative versus the word positivistic.

When you talk, in terms of theory, these are diametrically opposite, in the sense, that if you have a positivistic approach, it means, that you have something definite to say about any phenomenon, it is measurable, it is quantifiable, so that you have something scientific, so called scientific or definitive to say, or definite to say.

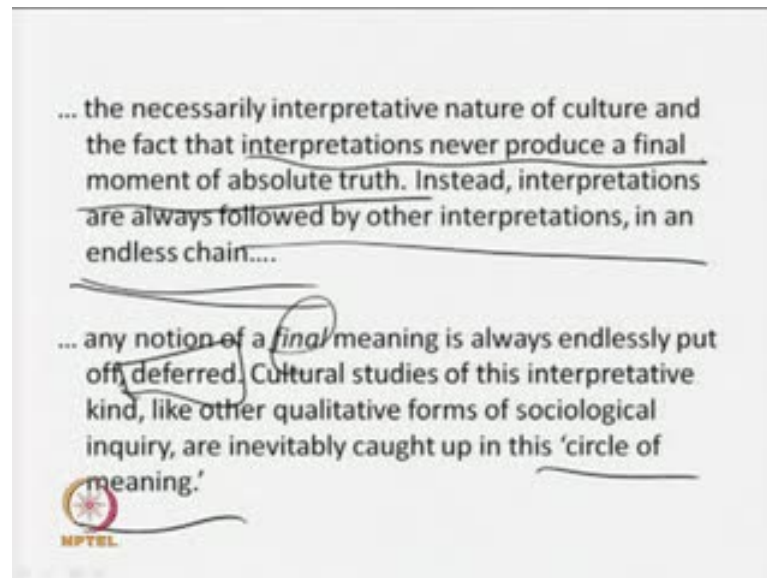
On the other hand, when you look at interpretive, note this is a point that he is making, meaning and representation. Look at the word irrevocably, you cannot, the irrevocable, in the sense, that you cannot, once you understand, in other way, you know, you cannot revoke it, in the sense, that, **you cannot**, you cannot take away that very quality that is there.

Meaning and representation, seem to belong irrevocably to the interpretative side of the human and cultural sciences. There are many interpretations to phenomena. This is the anti-positivistic school of thinking versus, the positivistic school, as we just saw, which **thinks**, believes that we can use science, and you can measure and quantify everything.

The interpretative school of representation of meaning, production, even perhaps, **even**, even, consumption would on the other hand say, that interpretation is all; so, there is no one interpretation. The moment you say that there is one interpretation or one representation or one true, definite, you know, representation of something, something that is backed by positivism, something that is backed by measurability, quantifiability, you are then doing an act of power.

And you, are, what to call, canceling out, you are cancelling out other aspects, or you could say, competing representations, **which**, which may not be, or are not quantifiable and measurable.

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So, we read on again, the necessarily interpretative nature of culture and the fact that interpretations never produce, this is important. This is the role of interpretation, this is what interpretation is, and this is what interpretation does not, you know, does not apologize for being, is this.

Please look at the slide, interpretations never produce a final moment of absolute truth. The interpretation, interpretative approach to representation holds, assures and argues, that you can never produce a final absolute truth, and there is also, never a moment of absolute truth.

Instead, let us read on, instead interpretations are always followed by other interpretations, in an endless chain. You, as practitioners, as people, who seek to understand cultural studies, would have to begin to think in these ways. It may seem, you know, that we are mostly, perhaps, even in our school life, taught in a more or less positivistic manner, that, this is, **this**, this phenomenon is this, etcetera.

When we move on to these higher ends of understanding, then we have to definitely, accommodate the interpretative approach, which says that every interpretation will be followed by other interpretations in an endless chain.

And secondly, we, let us look at this, **any notion**, any notion, any idea, of a final meaning is always endlessly put off or deferred. This has words like deferred, words like endless chain, are from the post structural school, particularly, the theoretical formulations by Jacques Derrida. So, **this, this is**, this kind of thinking, this kind of theorizing is directly affected or directly say, inspired if you will, by the pronouncements, by people like Jacques Derrida.

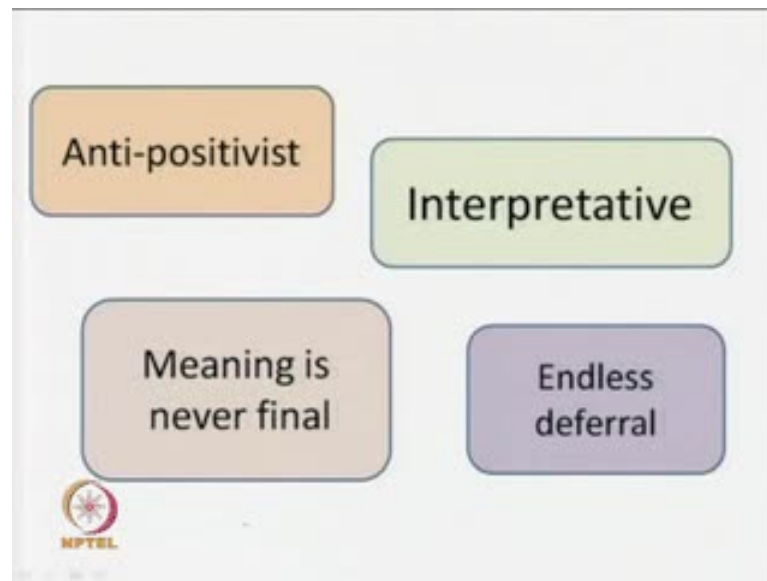
Any notion of a final meaning is always endlessly put off or deferred. Cultural studies of this interpretative kind or studies even of representation for instance, of this kind, like other qualitative forms of sociological inquiry, are inevitably caught up in this circle of meaning. There is a circle of meaning and there is a certain, or circularity, to with that you cannot avoid and you better celebrate these kind of endless, you know, deferrals of meaning.

We will talk about this later on, and we would, also would like to show that this is not. This does not mean irresponsibility, that it does not mean the accommodation of ridiculous or outlandish kind of explanations; there is a certain **logic**, logic to what is being said here.

The giving up of responsibility, when one enters into this sort of an understanding or this kind of a theorizing, the giving up of responsibility is something that is, that would not be done by a true scholar. A true scholar would understand this language, representation, other aspects of culture, as being, you know, characterized by this quality of interpretativeness, of interpretation, and the deferral of meaning.

Such a scholar, who understands it as a systemic feature will not, you know, it is a poor scholar who takes it upon himself or herself, to be irresponsible both, in one's theorizing and in one's living, by taking off from this. Now, this is to be understood is, as I said, a something that is part of the system that is systematic.

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Therefore, anti-positivism, interpretation, and the unfine finalizibility of meaning, and endless deferral, these are part and parcel of the representation process and of culture, in general. I will take you back, if you have problems with this kind of formulations, it is obvious, many people have problems with this kind of formulations of simply the interpretative, or of, you know **or**, or endless deferral of meanings.

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The slide has a title bar at the top that reads 'Chris Barker on the nature of Cultural Studies'. Below the title is a bullet point: '• Thus, I am recommending an approach that recasts problems away from an emphasis on representation, that is, the question 'what is . . .', to the more mundane and pragmatic issues of language use, that is, 'how do we talk about X and for what purposes?'. What something 'is' becomes constituted by the use of language within specific language-games'. The words 'pragmatic issues of language use' and 'language-games' are circled in black. In the bottom-left corner, there is a small circular logo with a star and the text 'NPTEL' below it.

One of the ways out is given to us by Chris Barker, and I may have talked about this in, you know, module 1, nevertheless, it is important for us **to**, to realize it. He says, that

given this whole problem of endless deferral of meaning, one way out would be, he says, **I am, thus I am**, let us look at the slide here please, thus, I am recommending an approach that recasts problems away from an emphasis on representation.

Now it is, you may think, that well, here is Chris Barker **who is**, who is a practitioner of cultural studies, who theorizes on culture, who agrees, that representation is a very important part of cultural studies, and here he is telling us, that we should move away from an emphasis on representation. He is not telling us here, to move away from representation as a key concept, per say.

What he is saying is that, you know, instead of following the endless deferral of interpretations, you know, at infinitum, even at **noisome**, he is saying, that we will then have to recast the problems of culture, of cultural studies, of cultural practices, by, you know, coming away from an emphasis, and here I would say, an over emphasis, you can even couch it in that language, and over emphasis on representation, particularly, representation from the linguistic turn point of view; that is the question, what is to the more mundane and pragmatic issues? For instance, how do we talk about X and for what purposes?

Now, here, **in**, in this case, you know Barker would insist, that, **instead of asking**, instead of asking, whether this representation **is**, is true, whether this is ontologically the representation, that we should take.

There are many questions behind this; there are many questions of ideology, power, of discursive practices, of politics behind this. Then he says, one way is to avoid that at infinitum, talking about representation is, **we also**, please look at this, we also ask this question, for what purposes are we talking about it?

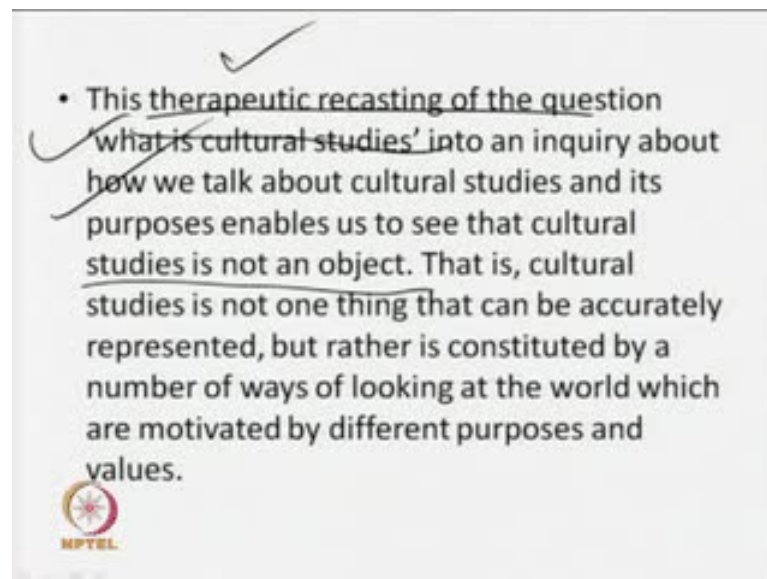
So, look at this word, pragmatism, there is a certain pragmatism in the end. After all, we cannot discuss things like, representation in abstraction all the time. We have lives to live out, we have to carry on with our work, we have to carry on with our cultural practices, we have to, you have to carry out with our everyday lives, and that is why, sometimes, we just do not throw the baby out with the bath water.

We say, that representation is just again, representation is a pillar of cultural studies, but we also need to bring in the element of pragmatism and of asking questions, like when we are talking about X, or when you are talking about any phenomenon, or event, or object, we need to ask, for what purposes are we talking about?

That is one way of, what? That is one way of avoiding the pitfalls, avoiding the pitfalls of **talking, talking**, talking continuously about the deferral of meaning. Therefore, what sometimes, something is becomes constituted by the use of language, within specific language games.

Language games is, what we had discussed with, remember we talked about widgeon sign, I think in the first or second lecture in module 1, where entitled, understanding cultural studies, and we talked a bit on language games, and I urge you to refer to those lectures further, to understand, what is meant here by thinking of language from a pragmatic point of view, as language games?

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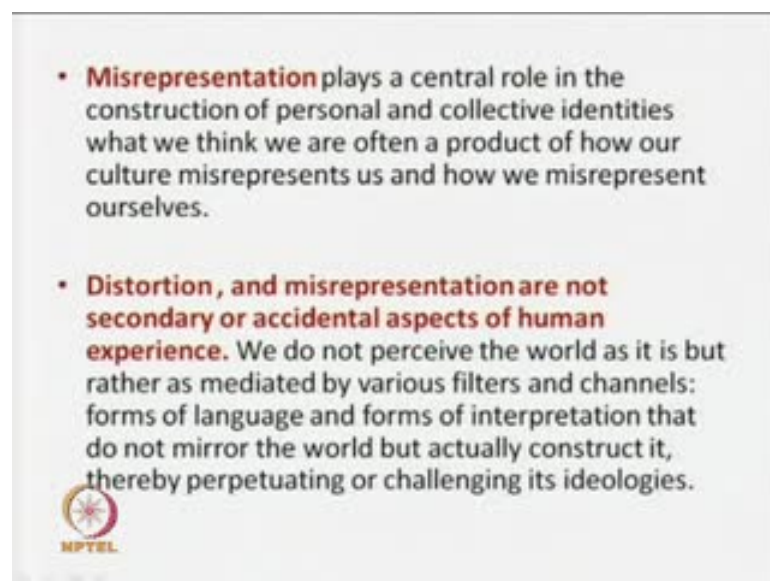
Then he says, this therapeutic recasting of the question, look at the word, so telling this therapeutic, why is it therapeutic? Because it, you know, it, after all this, the whole business of cultural studies has to be something, that gives us understanding, and understanding which is therapeutic for our purposes.

So, this therapeutic recasting of the question, what are cultural studies, into an inquiry about, how we talk? So, it is a movement from, what to how, we talk about cultural studies, enables us to see, that cultural studies is not an object. If you keep talking about it all the time in terms of representation and deferral, then we are objectifying cultural studies, as well.

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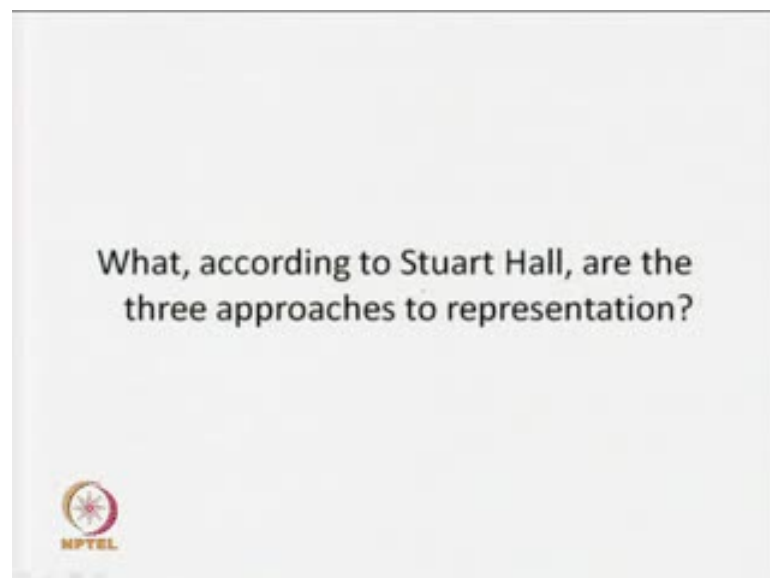
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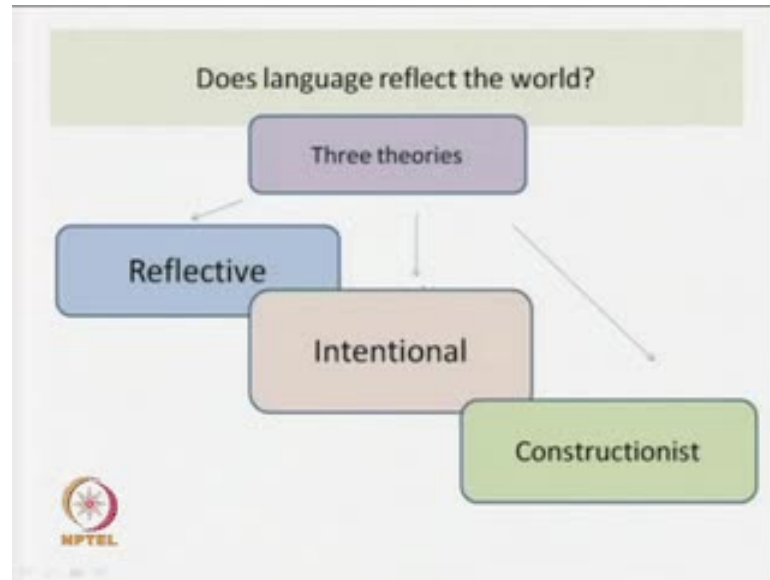
So, let us now, come to the discussion and the questions and say, number one, where, if you get a question like this, why is misrepresentation an important concept within representation studies? Which seemingly in opposite, but it is an important concept.

The answer is, misrepresentation plays a central role in the construction of personal and collective identities, and it shows us how cultural misrepresents us and how we end up also misrepresenting ourselves. **Kenrit** term here is distortion, and distortion and misrepresentations are, as argued by Dani Cavallaro, not secondary. They are not aberrations or distractions; they are part and parcel of the representation process.

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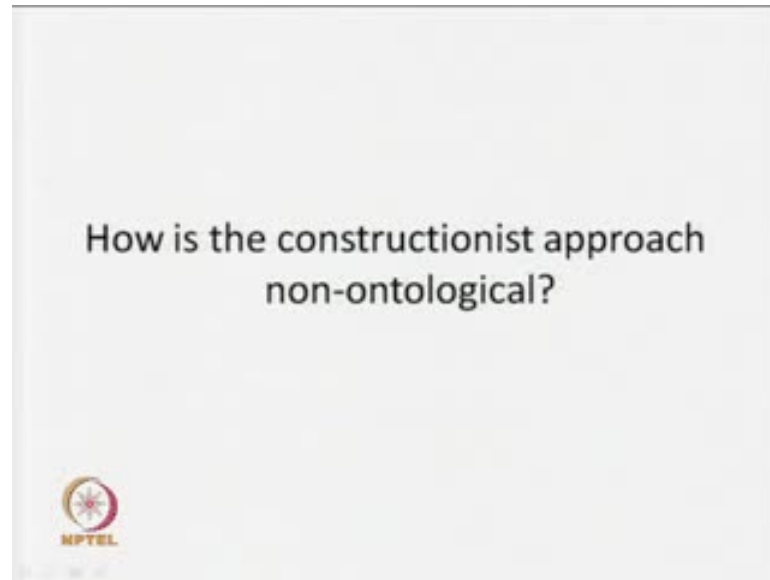


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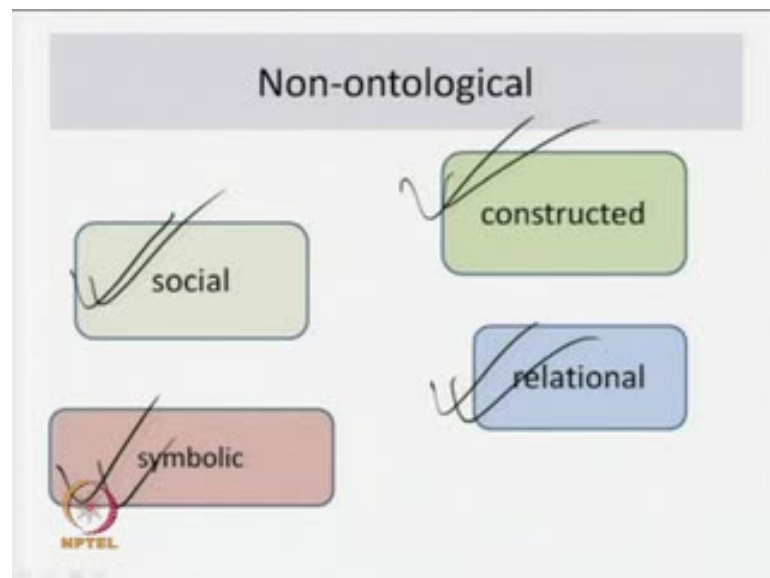
The slide has a light orange header box with the title "Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation'". Below the header, there are two sections. The first section is titled "The Reflective approach" in red text and contains three bullet points: "➤ Meaning lies in the object or event in the real world.", "➤ Language is a mirror that reflects the true meaning as it already exists in the world.", and "➤ Also called the mimetic approach." The second section is titled "The Intentional approach" in red text and contains two bullet points: "➤ The addresser / author imposes meaning on the world through language." and "➤ Words mean what the author intends them to mean." In the bottom left corner, there is a small circular logo with a star and the text "NPTEL".

Next, what according to Stuart Hall are three approaches to representation? And particularly to the question, does language reflect the world? The three are: reflective approach, the intentional approach, and the constructionist approach.

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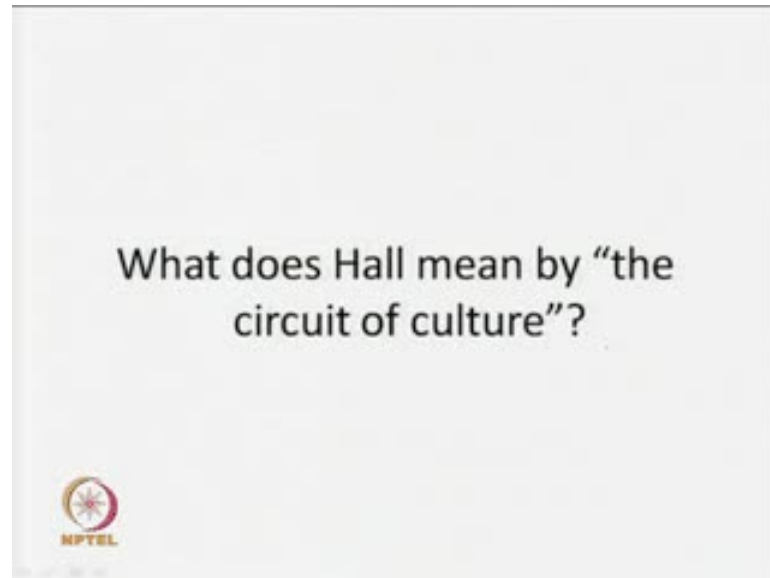


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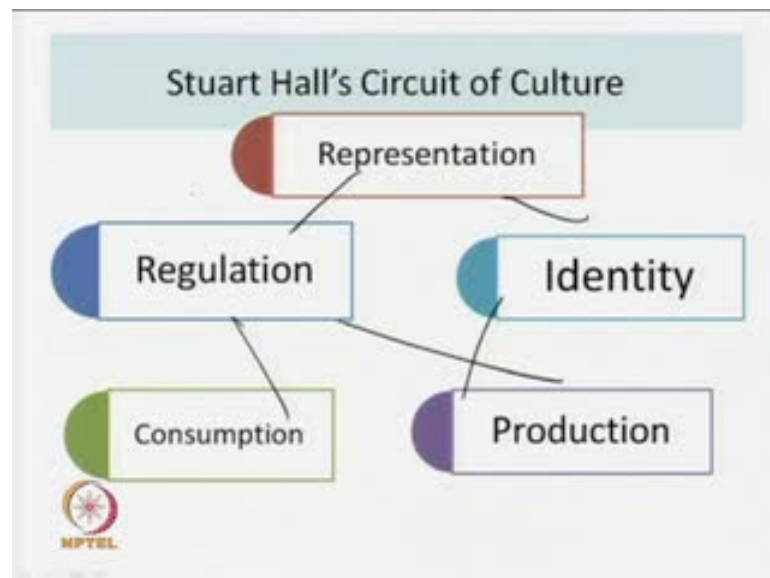


Question number three, how is the constructionist approach non-ontological? The constructionist, that, the third, the constructionist approach is non-ontological because it talks about representation, about culture, about reality, about knowledge, as things that are social and not individual; and of memetic as meaning and representation has been constructed as symbolic and relational, in a system to other things. So, this is non-ontological and it is non-essential.

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What does Stuart Hall mean by the circuit of culture? By the circuit of culture, he means that things are not elements of culture, are not to be seen in their singularity, or not to be seen as discrete terms. The circuit of culture is such, that representation, regulation, consumption, the production, and finally, identity, and perhaps even some other terms here. We could add here and improvise on it **are**, or they act in a whole circuit.

It is again, part of a system, in which you cannot talk about representation without talking about the regulation of meaning; you cannot talk about the regulation of meaning

without talking about identity; you cannot talk about consumption without talking about, how meaning is produced in the first place, how things are represented in the first place.

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Our circuit of culture, as Hall suggests, that in fact, meanings are produced at different sites and are circulated through different processes or practices, you recall we had talked about this.

This is what we have discussed in our deliberations on representation, and let me hasten to add again, like all the other concepts, it is impossible to exhaust all the different shades, the different formulations on representation. In fact, you could even have whole 40 lecture series on representation itself.

However, my aim here in this lecture and in the lecture before this, was or has been to bring to you, A, the way it is understood, the way representation is understood in contemporary cultural studies, and, B, by talking about practitioners like Stuart Hall, like Dani Cavallaro, and by using certain formulations like the circuit of culture and of pragmatism.

I hope I have been able to just, you know, unpack a bit of what it means to be studying representation in cultural studies, and may be in some other, other lectures, in other modules, the representation would come up again, but for now, I hope this has been, has been a useful discussion with you. Thank you so much.