

**Cultural Studies**  
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**Module No. # 01**

**Introduction**

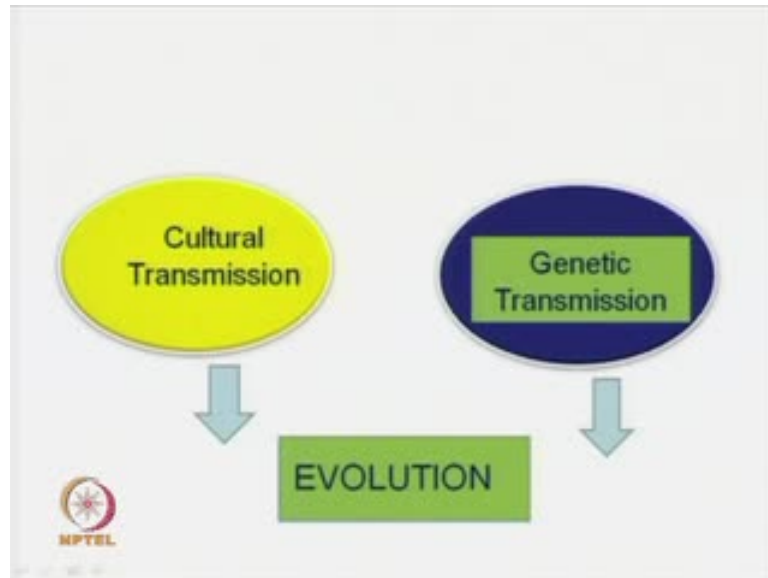
**Lecture No. # 07**

**Cultural Theory: Structuralism**

Welcome back to NPTEL, The National Program on Technology Enhance Learning. We are in the first module of our lectures. The first module is introductory in nature. We have already been through six lectures. The first two of which we devoted to an understanding of the domain of cultural studies. After three or four lectures, those were devoted to the way in which the findings from science may be incorporated into an understanding of ourselves as cultural beings. Paradigm of evolution was considered as one of the best paradigms, which can shed light on human behavior and psychology, which lead to culture.

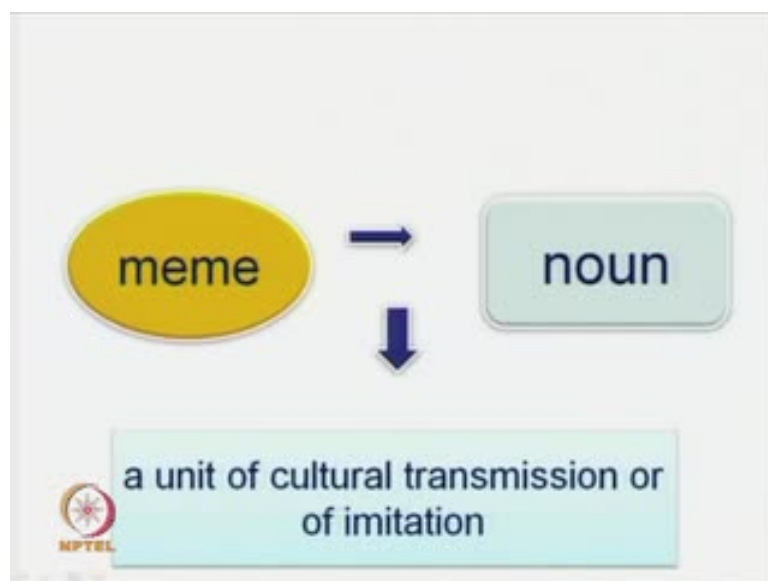
In the last lecture, we looked at memetics in a bit to understand cultural units in a way that is analogous to biological units called genes. Today, we are moving into what is there is the third phase in the first module. It is devoted to cultural theory and the first theory that we are going to look at is the theory of structuralism.

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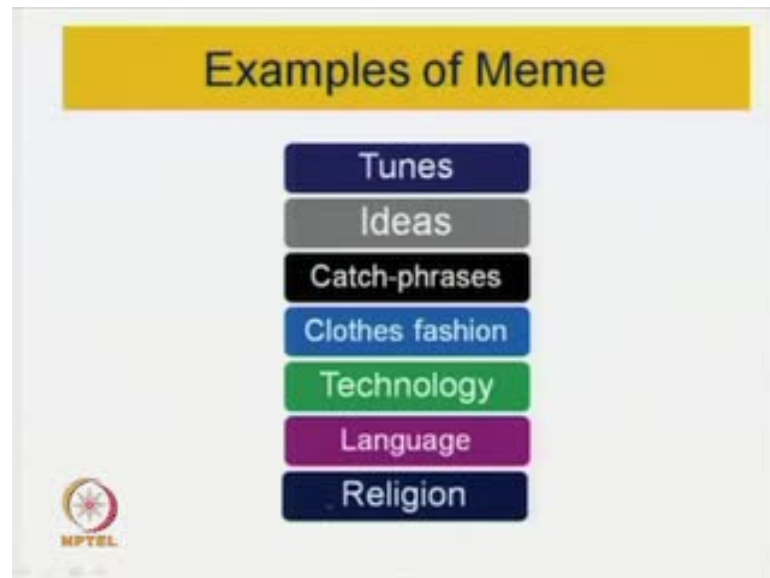
As always, let us do recap of what we saw in the last lecture. In the last lecture, among the other things, we saw that according to scientist, according to cultural thinkers or cultural studies practitioners, who believe in bringing in an analogy between biology and culture, the field of memetics is a strong field. Through the analogy of the gene and the meme, it enables us to look at both cultural transmission and genetic transmission in terms of evolution.

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We saw that the meme is a noun, which may be defined as a unit of cultural transmission or imitation.

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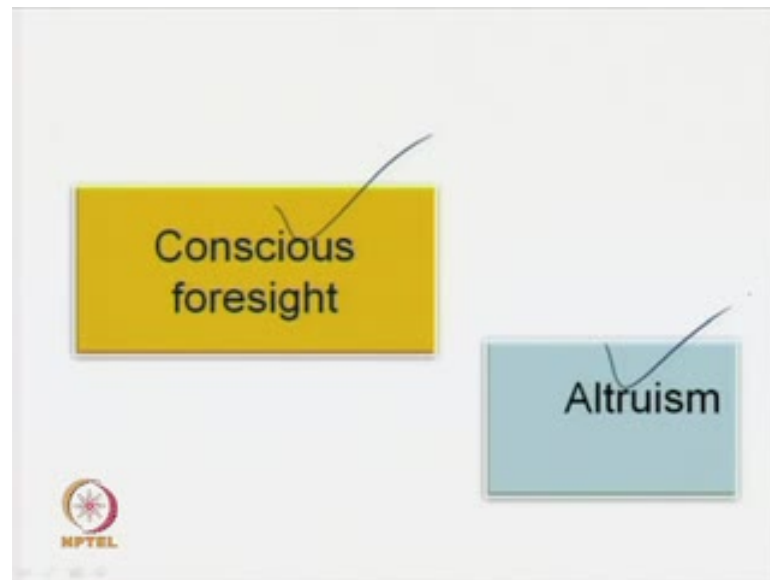
As examples of memes, we saw that the examples given by Richard Dawkins in his book - The Selfish Gene, where chapter has been devoted entirely to what he calls memetics or the study of memes. We found that examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes, fashion, technology, language and religion.

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Over and above, we also saw that as Dawkins showed us for memes to survive, they should have these qualities of longevity, fecundity and copying-fidelity. Only by these characteristics, memes can survive as cultural units. In the cultural, what we may call as the memos fear.

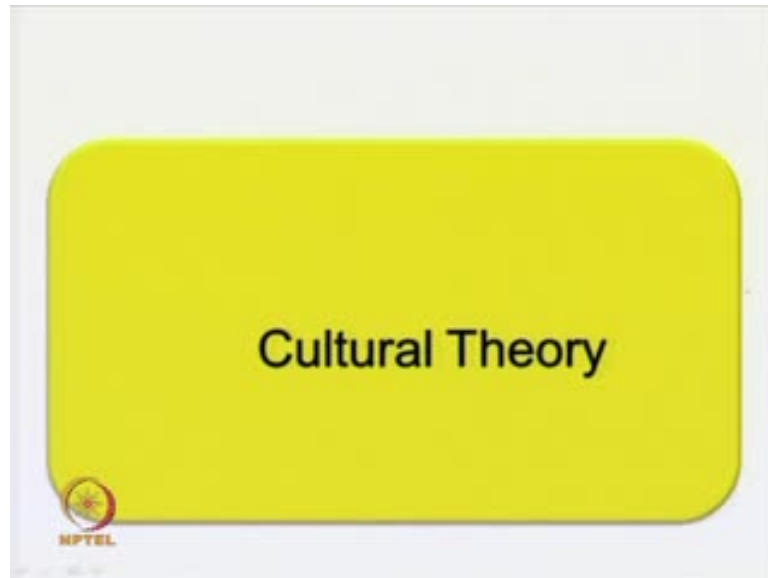
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We found that Dawkins beautifully tells us that we are not really slaves of memes. We are not slaves of these thought patterns that are there in our minds that are even instantiated as neural patterns in our brains. As a species, it is our unique capacity for conscious foresight and altruism.

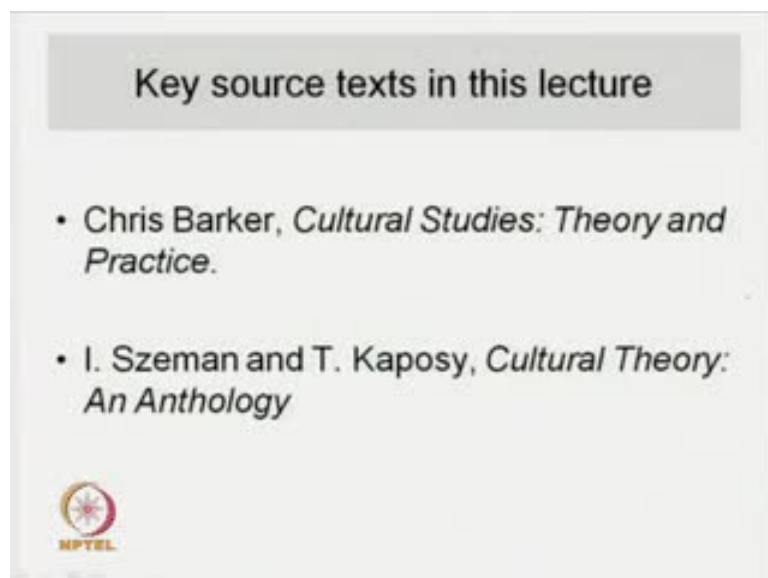
Conscious foresight allows us to sort out in vision future, towards which we may work and towards which we may also change our memes and our capacity for altruism of helping others, whether in the pure form or in the reciprocal form. These two are the characteristics we have that save us from being what Dawkins calls in his essay as slavish imitators or slaves of genes.

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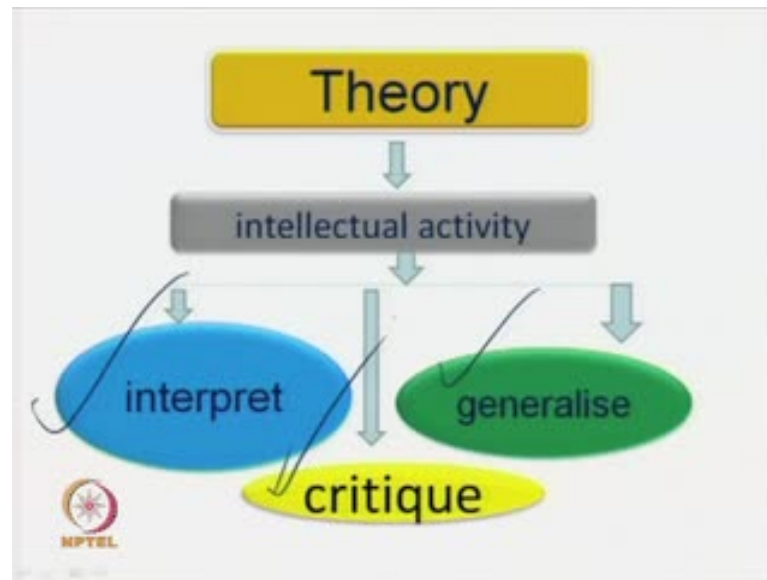
I hope in this brief recap, we have been able to quickly recall what we did in the last lecture. Today, we move into this very important domain call Cultural Theory. Without theorizing, without a degree of abstractness, we shall never be able to bring to bear upon different cultural forms or phenomena etc. We give certain generalized statements only when we know theory and when we are acquainted with the depth at theorizing. Can we throw some light on cultural phenomena, which otherwise will remain heterogeneous discrete and isolator?

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First, we are going to very briefly look at what cultural theory is and what theorizing is. Then move on to our first theory, which is structuralism. The key source texts in this lecture are Chris Barker - Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice, Szeman and Kaposy - Cultural Theory: An Anthology; this is an edited volume.

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Let us begin with asking this question, which many find difficult to answer. What is theory? Theory has received a bad name from certain quarters and failed at least at times. Their fears or criticisms may not be without any foundation, but what is all the more? Learning is the tendency in some people in academics to completely throw theory out of the scenario; it has some theories and I have shown.

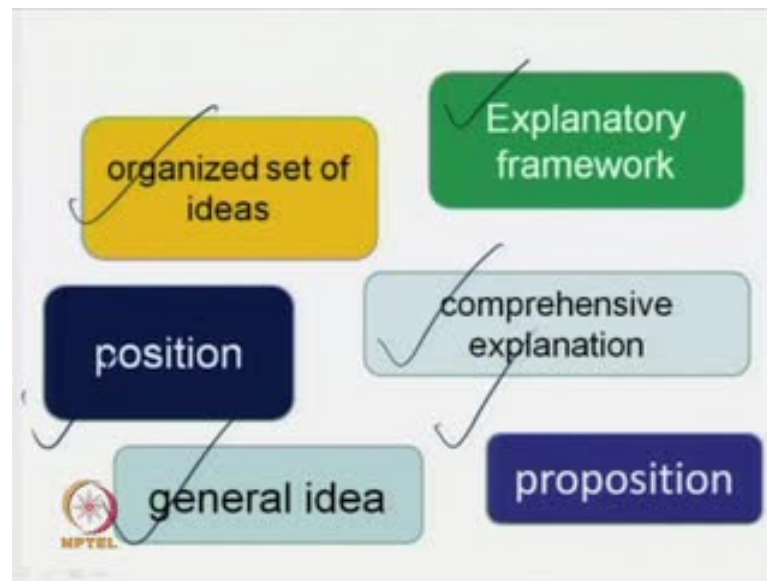
Perhaps, it arises among other things from a fear of learning new words from a fear of learning new technical terms as a person, who likes theory and who does theory. I always surprise at this, for instance we do not think twice before teaching a term like photosynthesis by teaching the theorization or the articulation in specific words. The articulation of how a plant produces its own food. We do not find it or need not find it grandiose idea or something that is not required to teach a class standard 4 or standard 5 students. The student is expected to know it, but why do some people dissuade even post graduate level students from undertaking theory?

This is also in the humanities and again these are formulations. If you are not scared to formulate theories to formulate stuff or write out in a formal sort of a way. What for? Sense entropy is or second law of thermodynamics is? Why can we not formulate or articulate things in an equally formal manner apart from cultural phenomena, when we find that formulating or articulating things in a formulized way in scientific phenomena are concerned is a give it.

Let us look at this slide, theory may be at this initial stage; theory may be described or defined as an intellectual activity, whose main job is these three things. It is to interpret cultural data, by cultural I mean all cultural forms, may be literary data, a literary text or may be sociological text or may be a social situation or cultural practice. The job of theory is three fold, which is to interpret to make certain generalizations by the use of concepts. Next module is therefore devoted to key concepts in cultural studies with which we build theories. Finally to offer a critique theory, it does not mean simply writing out in difficult English or in difficult terms using jargon things that you can talk very simply.

Therefore, theory is the description of an intellectual activity, in which you describe things about culture and other cultural forms in a certain manner. It may also be the way of speaking. You interpret on the cultural data in front of you and try to make abstractions, generalizations about those, so that you have certain theories, which you can apply. You offer a critique of those forms and cultural practices, so basically this is what one does in theory.

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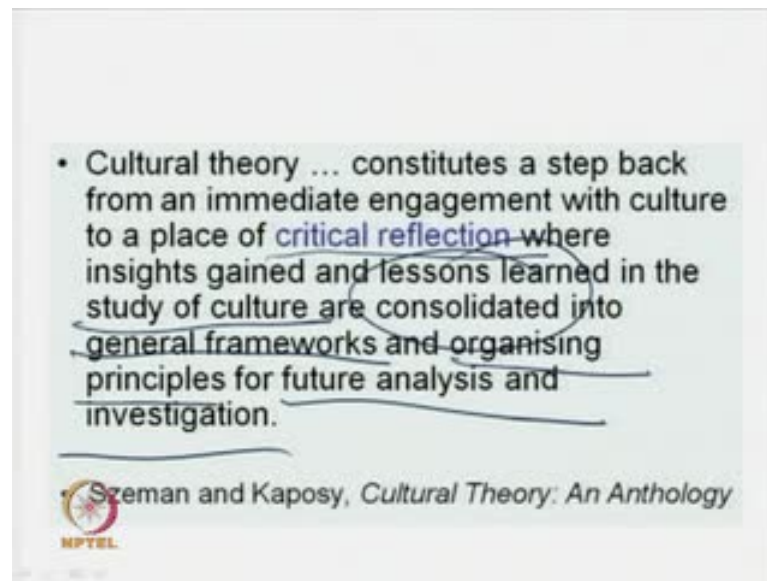


We may have other kinds of terminology in a bit to understand what theory is. So, the alternative terms and phrases that we may use for theory are these. Theory is an organized set of ideas, theory is also an explanatory framework and theory is a position. You take on any issue; theory is a general idea, theory is also a comprehensive explanation of something and a theory is also a proposition.

Now, how are you expected to go about even talking about socio culture phenomena, practices and objects, if you do not have an organized set of ideas, around which you begin to talk about something. You do not have an explanatory framework, theoretical framework, since you do not have a general idea or you do not have a certain position to critique that. So, do not be scared of theory. Learning theory is a most beautiful exercise and you will find that it equips you not just academically, but for many aspects of life. What is theory? The alternative terms, as I have said theory is if you look at the slide again, it is organized set of ideas, it is an explanatory framework, it is comprehensive explanation or proposition, general idea and the position you take on socio cultural issues, practices and objects.



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Let us read from Szeman and Kaposy's *Cultural Theory and Anthology*. In the introduction to this edited volume, this is what they have to say - cultural theory constitutes a step back from an immediate engagement with culture to a place of critical reflection; this is important and I have highlighted this to a place of critical reflection, where insights gained and lessons learned in the study of culture are consolidated into general frameworks and organizing principles for future analysis and investigation. I think this is one of the finest ways in which you can tell the student, what the business of theory is all about.

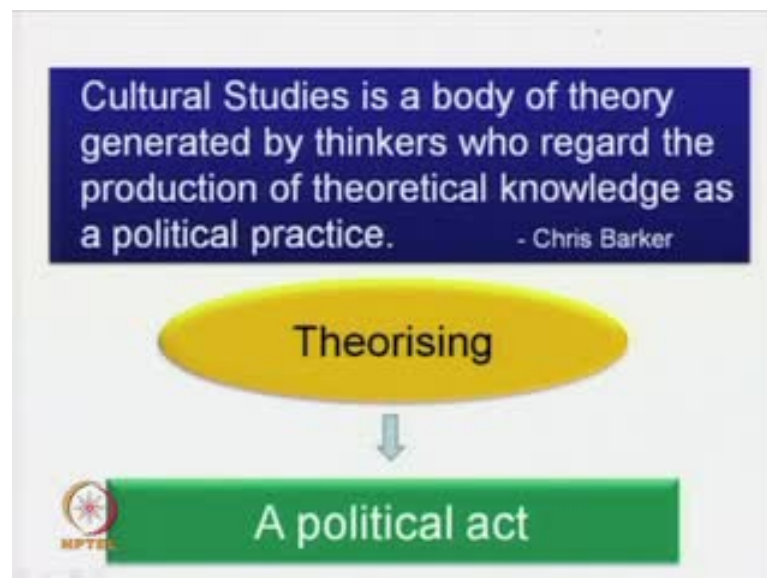
Let us unpack this a bit. They say theory is not an immediate unreflective engagement with the forms and practices of culture, in the sense that like many people, you just do not give very casual comments about a cultural object of form or cultural practice or generally of what culture is. This is not being academic and this is not being reflected. So, when you are doing theory, your responses are never immediate and they are not reactions. We are expected to sort out reflections. So, it is a step back from and say animated engagement with culture to situation or to a level, so to speak of critical reflection.

Now, the next part is also important, where insights gained and lessons learned in the study of culture are. Look at this; it is consolidated into general frameworks. Before this,

we saw that theory is also an explanatory framework. So, all the lessons learned and you make observations after observation. You try to extract a general statement of framework, within which you can explain not just the cultural phenomenon that you have been studying, but which will also accommodate similar phenomena that you will come across in the future that others may come across in the future.

You could not even say the test of a theory is in the number of individual occurrences of phenomena that could be explained by it. So, where the lessons gain are consolidated into a general framework and organizing principles. Now, the data that you have is not different from scientific enterprise. You have to organize that data and you cannot leave it chaotic; you have to organize those data within the general framework and principles. There are some organizing principles and the important word here is for future analysis and investigation. As we say that this has to lend itself to an equally sound analysis for future events and similar events that you are going to observe in culture.

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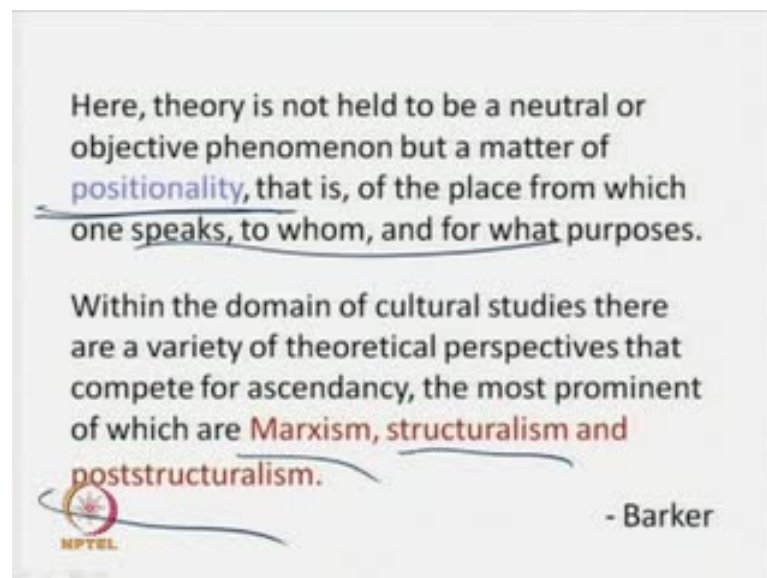


Now, this is quotation from Chris Barker in his book Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice. Cultural studies is a body of theory generated by thinkers, who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice. It is so important theory to cultural practice that Barker does not hesitate to even define cultural studies as a body of theory. So, cultural studies and theory are in that sense analogous and they are even

perhaps the same. Cultural studies cannot do without theorizing. Now, this is a body of theory that has been generated by thinkers not simply for the sake of making theoretical formulations. There is another part of it and which is to do with... Again, let us go back to that slide that has to do with position.

He says that who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice. Therefore, the theorizing becomes a political act. As we saw in the first two lectures that revealing past structures, talking about power is one of the fundamental aspects or one of the fundamental job issues of cultural studies.

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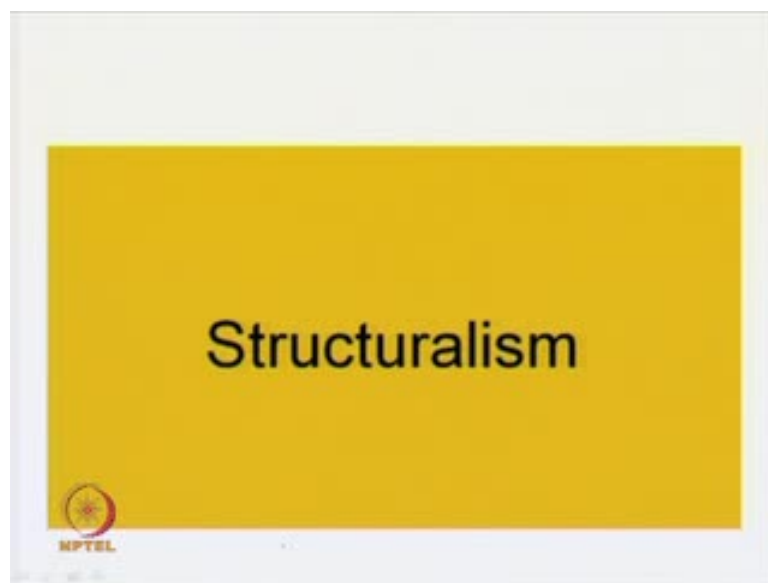
In that sense, theorizing is not only making abstractions, theorizing is also a political act by which you show the structures of power as operating in society. Here again, continuing to read from Barker, theory is not held to be a neutral or objective phenomenon, but a place of positionality. Remember, we came across position as word that you can use for theory that is of the place from which one speaks, to whom and for what purposes.

Within the domain of cultural studies, there are variety of theoretical perspectives that compete for ascendancy. The most prominent of which are Marxism structuralism and poststructuralism. In fact, they owe to positive of time here. There are other modules and

we have to the other things that we have to look at. I shall also be talking about structuralism, marxism and poststructuralism as theoretical chances in cultural studies.

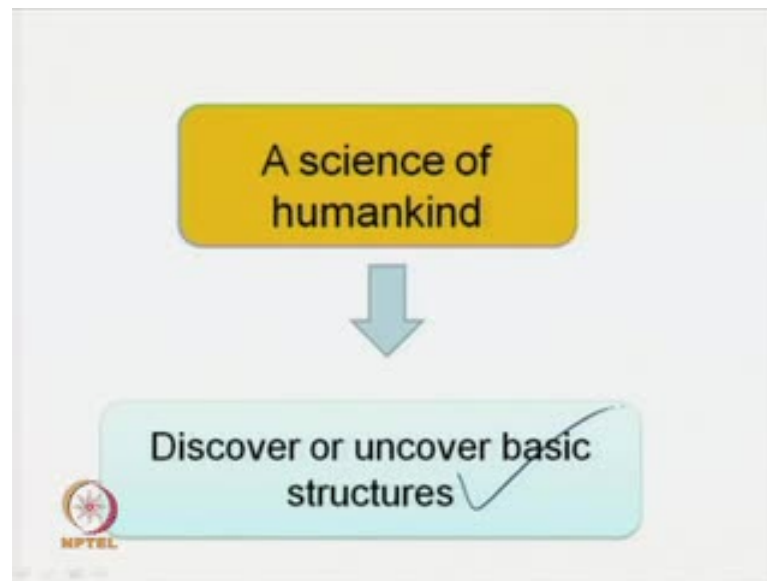
Of course, feminism is a very important part; very important theoretical framework, but I would be taking it up, when I talk a bit about gender. There may be two lectures devoted to gender. Even though, I may not be able to talk about different theories, we will talk about postcoloniality. For instance, there is another theory, but these will also be spread out over the other lectures in other modules.

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Having talked about theory very briefly, why should we give a whole lecture on theory, there are other issues to be looked at. We are now going straight into this theory known as structuralism. We shall see how these are again the theoretical framework, this is the position and these gives us propositions as theoretical enterprises.

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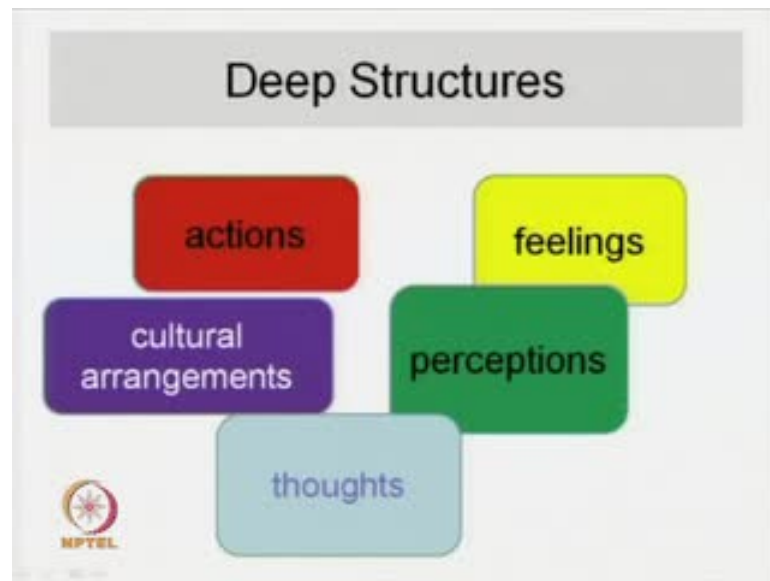


The first thing to note is structuralism is a science, but science theorem I do not mean that it is a branch of the sciences like physics is or biology is or chemistry is. It is a science or a systematic; it is a systematic rational logical study of human kind. So, even in the humanities and social sciences, where even though some people say that certain degree of wageness is a virtue and there are theories that at least aim to look in a systematic way at the cultural products of human kind.

You may first define structuralism as a science of human kind. What is this? Look at this slide here, what is the goal of structuralism? The goal of structuralism is to discover or uncover basic structures. Remember, I think our fourth lecture, if I am not mistaken on evolutionary psychology, we had seen that the goal of evolutionary psychology is to uncover the structure and design the human mind.

Here, what happens is also a systematic study. It is a bid, it has his goal and the uncovering of structures, but these are very fundamental structures, which can be applied to all forms of culture, even science as a form of culture, the structuralist, enterprise and we shall look at this in a while.

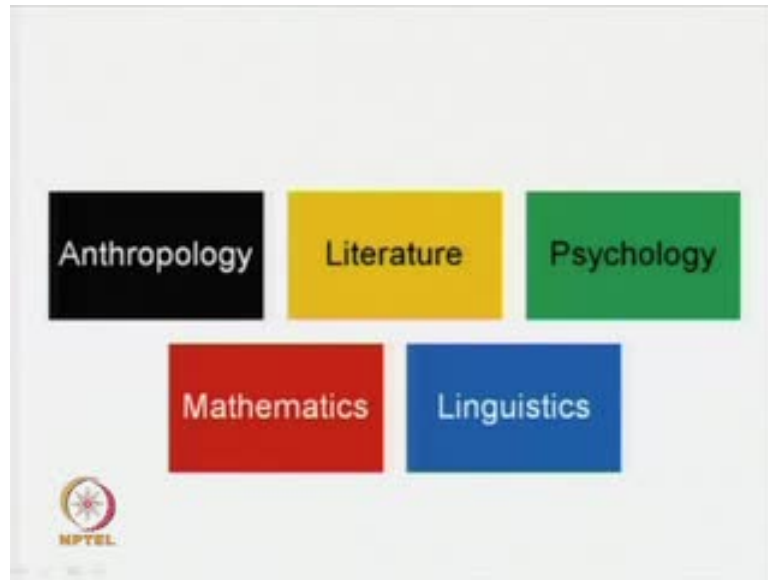
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Now to simply understand that structuralism seeks to uncover or to dig out the basic structures of cultural and the basic structures of over thinking. Therefore it holds that there are deep structures in us. The deep structures are those of actions, cultural arrangements, thoughts, perceptions and feelings.

Now, the deep structures in us are almost a priory in our minds. Without these deep structures structure is involves as a theory that the human race cannot generalize or generalize make general statements about cultural phenomena everything would remain chaotic

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Going by the deep structures of perceptions, thoughts, cultural arrangements, feelings and actions, we try and do structural analysis of culture. Now, the structuralist school is not one that is only to do with cultural studies as a discipline, as a domain, it is applied to many fields and more than what I am showing here.

For instance, it suffices for us to understand the scope. It is applicable to anthropology to literature to psychology to mathematics to linguistics may be to computer to the computer science to biology. Some strong proponents may claim all knowledge forms that human kind has ever produced.

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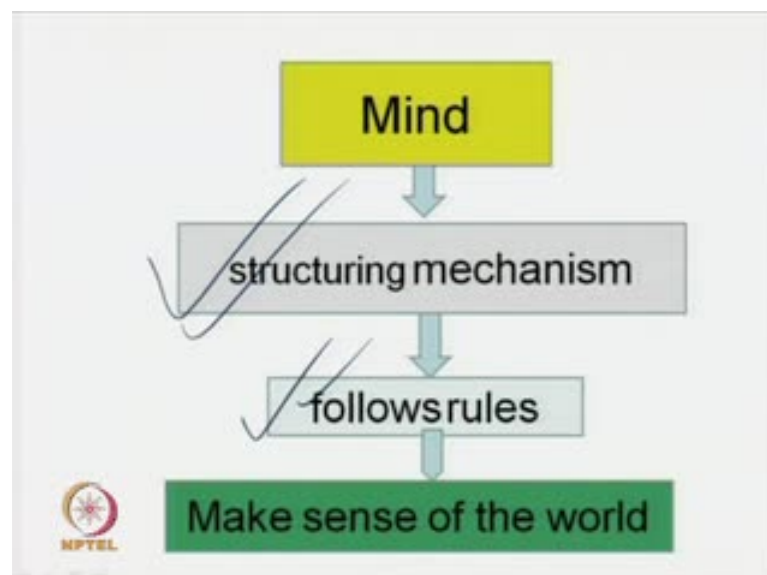
- If we go back to the various terms / synonyms of theory, we find that structuralism is a cultural theory in that it is

- ❖ An explanatory framework
- ❖ An organized set of ideas
- ❖ A position



If you go back to the various terms or synonyms of theory, you find that structuralism is a cultural theory. It is an explanatory framework, it is an organized set of ideas and it is also an overtly political position. Many say that structuralism is a political and it is a nonpolitical stand. It has a particular stand, a position, which we shall see now.

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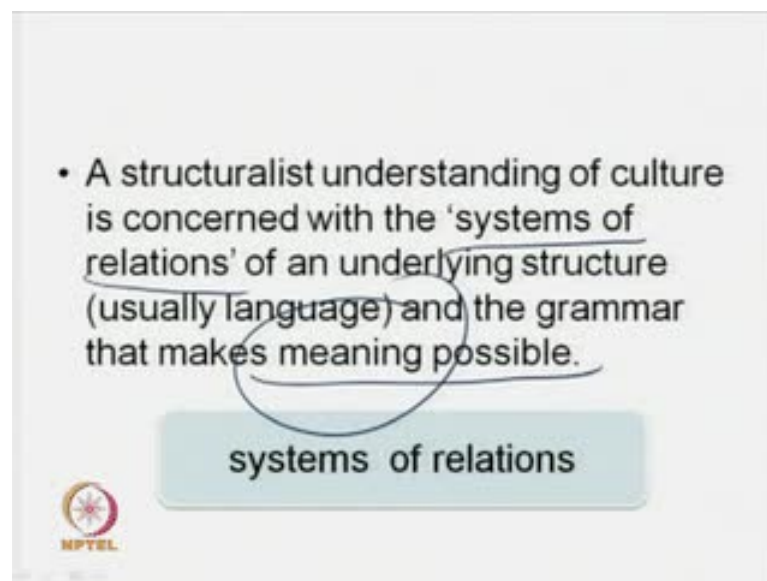


The structuralist theory holds that the mind is a structuring mechanism, which follows rules to make sense of the world. Remember that we have deep structures in our minds



without which all data would have been terribly chaotic **with not have**. One makes sense in the stimuli that we keep getting all the time. How does one make sense of not just the basic stimuli, but also of the complex stimuli that keeps coming to us that we take in all the time? So, the mind has to somehow structure to make some sense of. It has to organize all the data that are coming in. Therefore, structuralist say is the structuring mechanism and the mind follows rules in order to make sense of the world.

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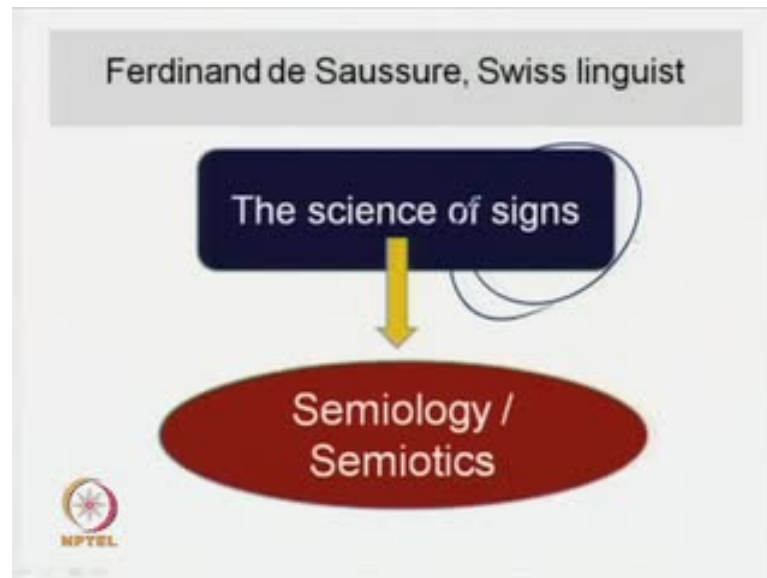


A structuralist understanding of culturist concerned with the systems of relations of an underlying structure and the grammar that makes meaning possible. Now, we know the emanation of meaning, the creation, the encoding and decoding of meaning. As we saw in the first or second lecture in module 1, it is one of the fundamental goals of cultural studies; at least a new or contemporary cultural studies. So, what does the structuralist approach to culture do? It is concerned with how meaning in culture is a result of a system of relations among different units.

Therefore, the inspiration is from study of language given to us by Ferdinand de Saussure, Swiss Linguist. It may also be one of the limiting factors of this theory, but the fact is it draws his inspiration, the cultural variant of structuralism draws its inspiration from the linguistic theories of structuralism and semiotics. It has been given by Ferdinand de Saussure. So, anyway cultural is seen as a system of relations or relations

among what or relations between what these units are. We are talking about it and we shall see in a while.

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As I had mentioned, Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss Linguist divides the study of science or semiology or some call it semiotics, which is a science of signs. You will say the sign is the fundamental unit of not only culture and language, but also of structuralism and it has a theory.

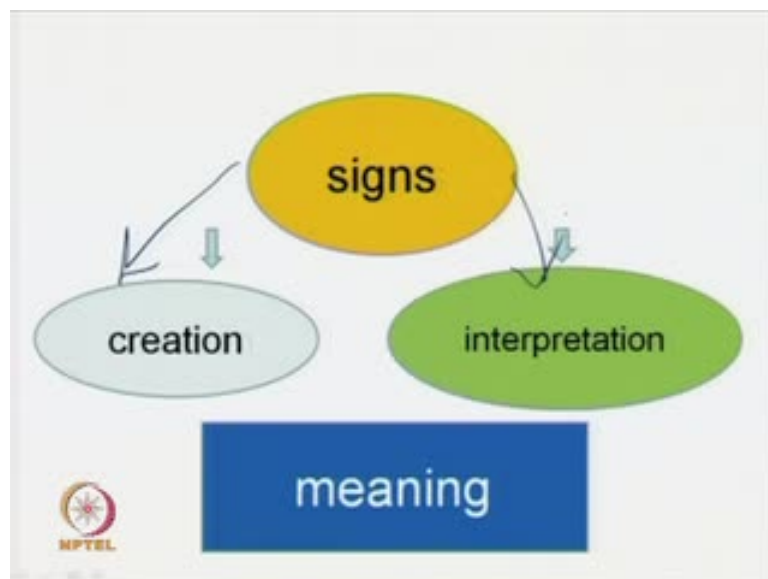
Structuralism is theory and begins with the basic unit known as sign; a scientific investigation into culture, into language, into all cultural forms. It tries to give some organizing principles; a framework of how to manage and how to both encode and decode, otherwise it is enormously chaotic called as chaotic data.

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There is another name here, which is C S Peirce. We would not be going into Peirce and we will be staying more with Saussure. He says this, we think only in signs as human beings. Therefore, signs or its practices are known as signifying practices. Signs are what that defines us. Thinking in signs, as Peirce says that is something that characterizes us as thinking beings and we think only in signs.

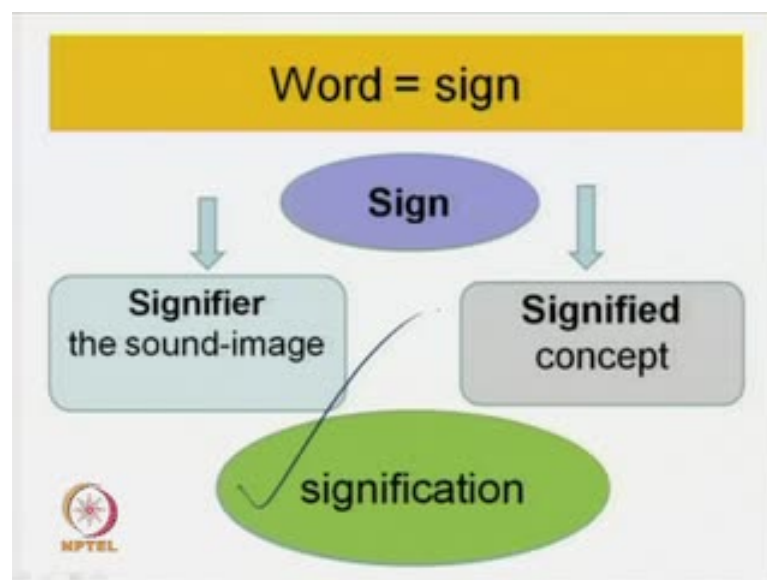
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Signs are of what use in meaning? If you ask how are signs related to meaning? Signs are used both in the creation and interpretation of meaning. When we unpack this theory, we shall understand how for the time being, you may simply understand that the sign is the basic unit, not only in language culture and other forms like structuralism. Even some of the thinkers say that it is a basic unit of the thinking process itself.

How is it that? Because it is through the creation of the sign by human beings, so that we are called homo significans and not just hominids, homo significans that we are always in a system of signification. Signs are used in both the creation and the interpretation of meaning. It seems under this theory, without signs there is no thinking and without signs there is no meaning.

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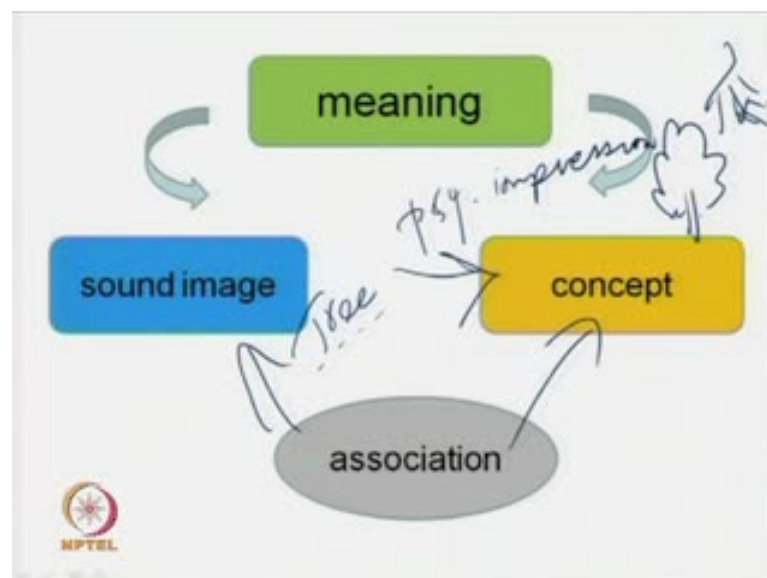
Now, going by the school of semiotic and structuralism, the first step always is to understand from a linguistic point of view that any word is a sign, a word is the sign. The word, word itself is a sign. What is a sign? A sign is made up of two parts, as you see in this slide here, which is signifier and signified.

Another way of putting it, a sign may be split into two parts. Scholars call it like the two sides of a piece of paper, the recto and verso sides, which you cannot separate. Can you separate the recto side of a piece of paper from its other side? At the same time, you say that this paper has two sides. So, a sign has or comprises of two parts. One is the signifier

and the other is signified. According to Saussure, the signifier is the sound image and by implication by extension, we can also say that it is also the mark on the page. So, it is the sound image or the mark on the page. You could say the signified as the psychological impression created moment. You use a signifier; a sign a signifier that is the sound image or the mark on the page or the psychological impression that you get and that is called the signified, for which we may also use the term concept.

Therefore, every sign has two parts - a sound image or written image, which elicits a response. It is a psychological response, which was said by Saussure and other say as the conceptual part of the sign. This whole business or this whole process has a signifier to give us a psychological impression, which is the concept. If you look at the slide here, it is known as signification in whole process of the sign and what it does? The two parts does signification.

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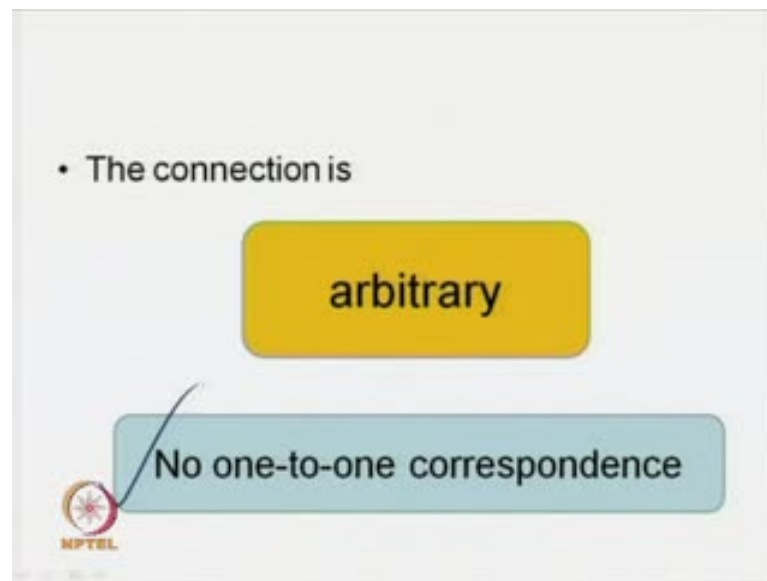
Meaning is a matter of two parts. Meaning is a matter of the sound image, which is as the signifier and the concept that is the signified. The association between the sound image and the concept; the association between the signifier and the signified gives us the meaning.

For instance, this is a very common example, if we have a sound image that is I say a word tree; this is the sound image or I write these letters - T r e e. This is written image

and these are marks on this slide. So, when the moment I utter the word tree and I say or I write down tree, it will create what Saussure called a psychological impression, pardon my hand writing. The psychological impression in our minds, which is the concept and then we may think of a tree or you may think of maybe some kind of tree structure in your computer science.

Therefore, every sound image or every signifier would therefore has to... If meaning has to happen, this is important. Every signifier will have to give you a psychological impression call the concept. There is no signification, if a signifier has no signified. In fact, we cannot even call it a signifier because it does not signify something, then it is not a sign. It can never enter into the process of signification. **Signifier and signified and sign and signifying system or signification**

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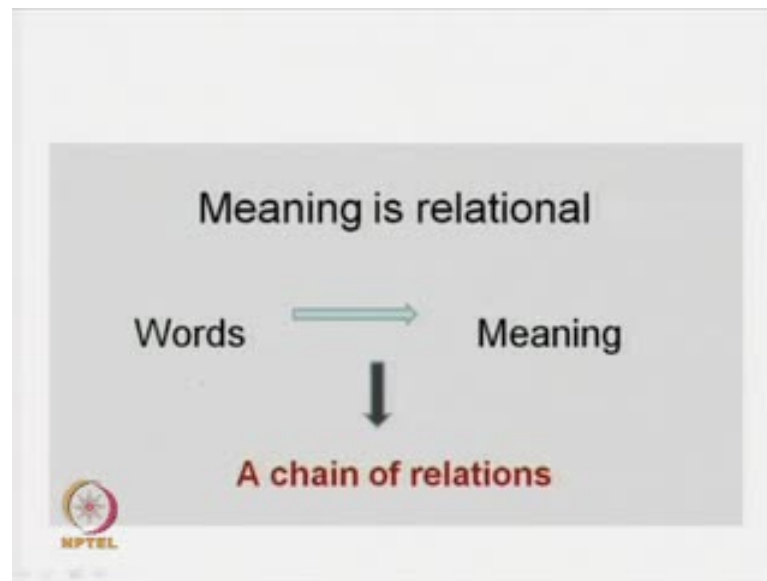
I would like to draw your attention to a very important formulation within structuralism and this is the concept of arbitrariness. Now, we know we have a signifier and we have a signified. So, Saussure says that the relationship between the signifier and signified is one of arbitrariness that is it is an arbitrary relation, in the sense that there is no one to one correspondence; no one to one or one on one correspondence between a sound image and the concept.

This is immensely important and I may be repeating this even in other lectures. For instance, this chair that I am sitting on is an object. If a word is a sign and chair is a word and chair is also a sign. If chair is a sign, then chair has to be composed of two parts; the signifier and the signified. Now, the moment I say chair, I am not referring to this chair at the moment. The moment I say the word chair as a person acquainted with the English language; the signifier, chair is going to elicit a response in you; a physiological impression or a concept of a chair because it is arbitrary.

We have to learn it and had there been something ontologically essentially to cherish about a chair, then anyone would know that this is a term you have to use for chair. Likewise, in the majority of words in all languages, the relationship between a word that is assigned to an object is arbitrary. Now, there are some words, which you call onomatopoeic words that is words that resemble the sound. For instance, hiss resembles the sound made by a snake. Saussure says that there is no denial of the fact that there are words in all languages that are onomatopoeic in nature or there is a one on one correspondence because it resembles the sound.

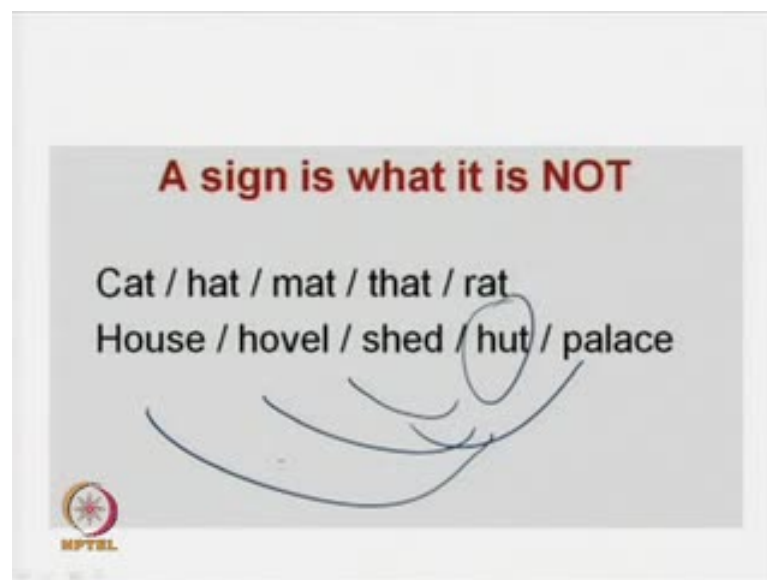
He says that these are very few, so it does not... They are so few in number that after sometime, this association does not really matter because it does not apply to other words. The repeat word is very small, further in English, we may use a word hiss to indicate the sound made by a snake, but the sound made by a snake need not be hiss in other languages. Even in onomatopoeic words, there is an element of arbitrariness. This is one of the fundamental characteristics, which also has enormous implications as we understand culture. We understand the relationship in signs between signs and the signifier and signified in the cultural level as one that is arbitrary.

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The second point is meaning is relational in a chain of relations. For instance, a sign is what it is not. This is called a meaning by differentiation or that meaning is differential.

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For instance, a cat is not because of its ontology. The meaning of cat arises by differentiation with other similar sounding words like hat, mat, that and rat. It is because in a system, this is very important. Remember, structuralism is all about systems, it is all about relations, it is all about structures and it is all about relations among different units

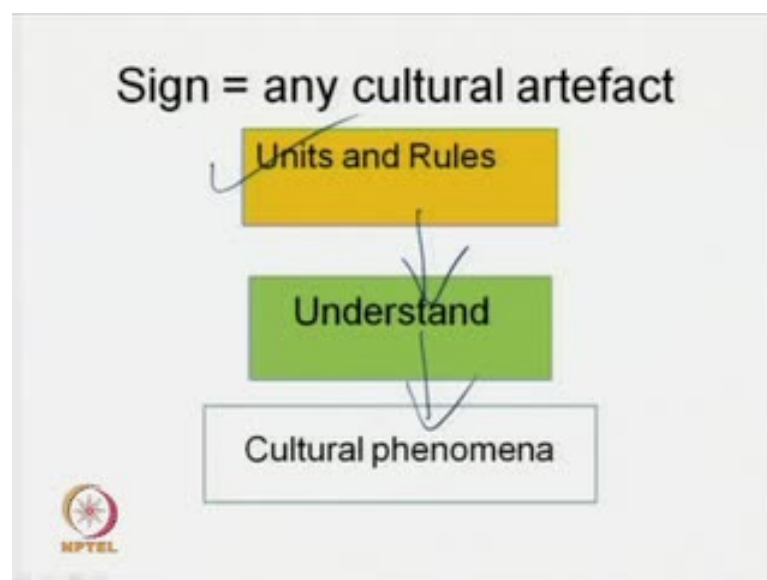


in a particular structure. If you look at this as a structure, the structure of the first sentence is a structure, so cat or the meaning of mat for instance is derived from its differentiation with similar sounding words.

Now in the second sentence, we also find from the point of view of not just sound. If you group them or cluster them in a different way from the point of view of dwelling places, there is nothing ontologically hutish about the word hut that says that you should call a particular dwelling place hut. The assignment of the term hut to a particular level of dwelling place gets its meaning from its differentiation with all kindred words. Therefore, meaning is relational in a change.

A hut is a hut because it is not a hovel, it is not a shed. A house is a house because it is not a shed or hovel or hut or nor is it a palace. Do you understand? So, a sign is then what it is not the meaning is therefore relational in a chain. Therefore, we saw that a word is equal to a sign that is a word is a sign. Now, we are going to say, when we come to the cultural realm, a sign may also be any cultural artifact. It may be any cultural object, it may be even a cultural phenomenon or it may be also a cultural practice. We can have an explanatory framework for culture or we can have propositions.

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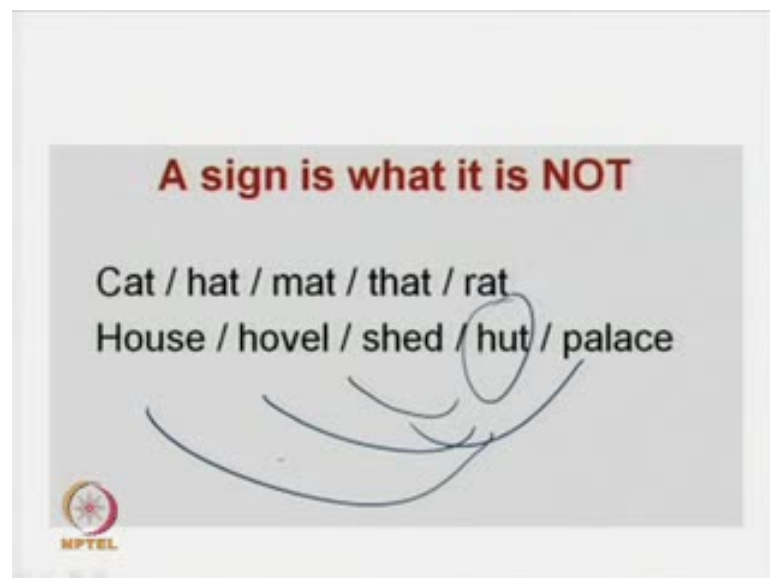


Paradigms are for understanding the cultural phenomena as units and rules. Look at this slide here, a sign is any cultural artifact or practice phenomenon. Anything in culture is

also a sign because it signifies something and it follows it. It has its meaning in a system of units and rules and this is the one of the ways in which we can understand and theorize cultural phenomena.

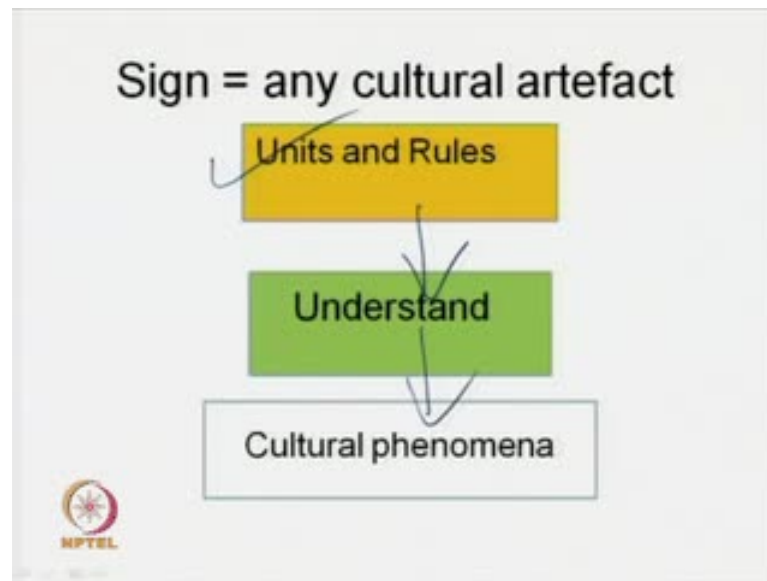
The meaning of cultural practices, forms, events and all these emanate from a system of difference. Remember, meaning of relationality is relation in a change. You just have to transpose this to the level of the cultural. Cultural happens as a matter of relation as a matter of differentiation along with other cultural units and working in a system of units and rules.

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For instance, in this we found the linguistic level that there is a rule here. In the first case, the rule one is to do with sound. It is based on sound, so that you cannot have cat house shed in once sentence.

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These units are following or they are grouped they are clustered as laid out here as for a particular rule which is based on sound and the second instance the rule is based on dwelling places so you see this is even in the realm of culture or cultural practices can be again brought under a structure in which you try and understand those through by kind of attaching certain rules by which we may understand these. This is the way we theorize language this is the way we theorize cultural practices.

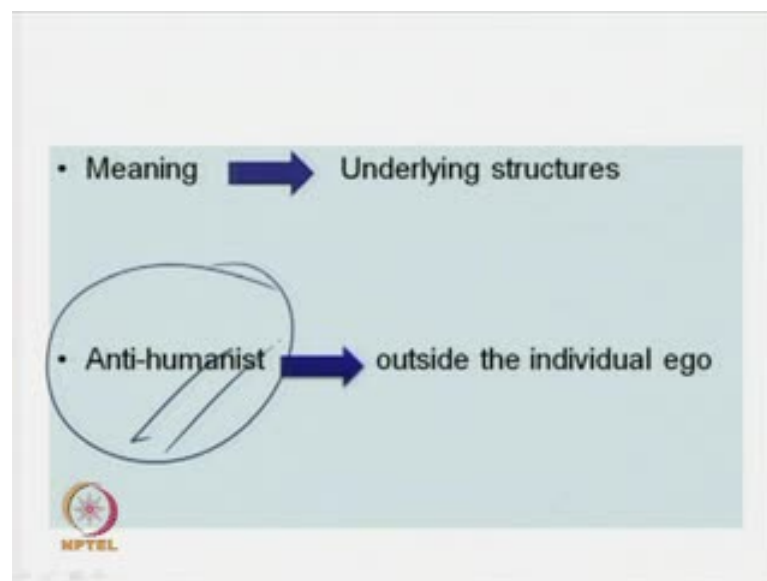
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If you look at this slide, culture is a structured system. Culture is about signifying practices. Any cultural practice will have a meaning. There is the signifier or that is a particular cultural practice that you have signifies something and gives the meaning. So, it is a meaning or a concept. Therefore, it is a matter of signifying practices and it follows. It is about units and rules and it is in the system of units and rules. This is something we are coming across in the first place. It is also based importantly in the structuralist, understanding on certain binary opposites.

Now, think about binary opposites, in terms of how you understand the word binary in your classes. For instance, in zeros and ones, which are the absence of something and the presence of something. For instance, nature and culture is a binary set. Man and woman, light and darkness, black and white. So, these are also understood in another kind of clustering, another kind of arranging by rules and that rule is one of binary opposites.

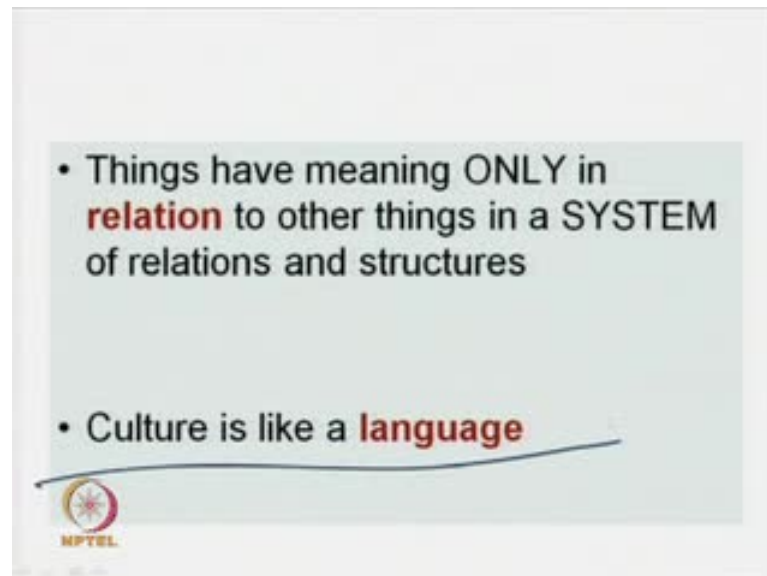
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We have an anti-humanist theory. When you look at meaning as humanity from underlying structures, it is an anti-humanist, but it does not mean that it is anti-human or that it is anti-humanitarian by anti-humanist. First, it means that talk is about humanism. Humanism is a school of art, is a philosophy, is an orientation, is a method, in which the human occupies center stage. Everything is understood in reference to the human being and the human is the center of reference.

Now, structuralism removes the human being as the central point of reference and puts the structure. You may even say the sign as the central point of reference. If you look at the slide here, it is an anti humanistic because it goes outside the individual ego. Seeing the individual also as part of a system of structure, seeing his or her cultural practices has to be understood within signifying systems and within structures, units and rules.

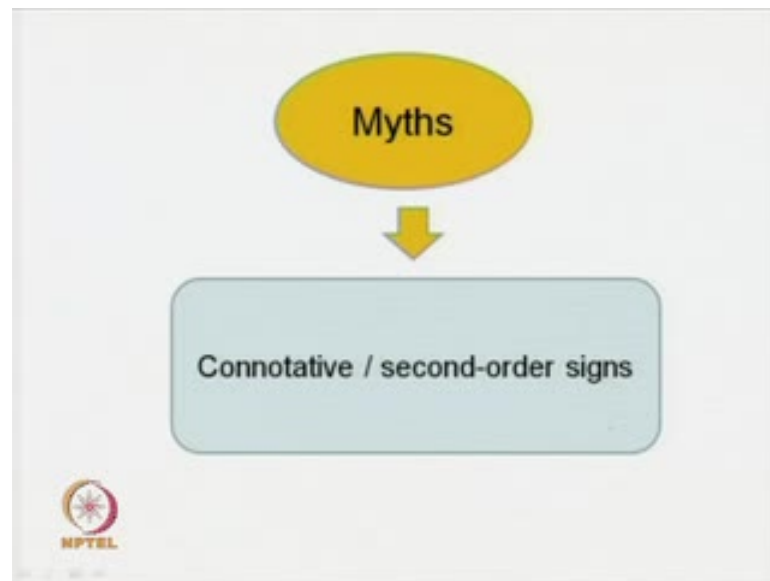
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Things have meaning only in relation to other things in a system of relations and structures. Therefore, this famous statement within structuralist, understanding and theorizing of culture that is culture is like a language. This is indeed a loaded sentence. We can spend the whole lecture or to only on this. Culture is like a language for us at this elementary level, it simply suffices for us to understand the analogy that is drawn from Saussure linguistics to the sign and its arbitrariness that has relationality, differential meaning units and structures.

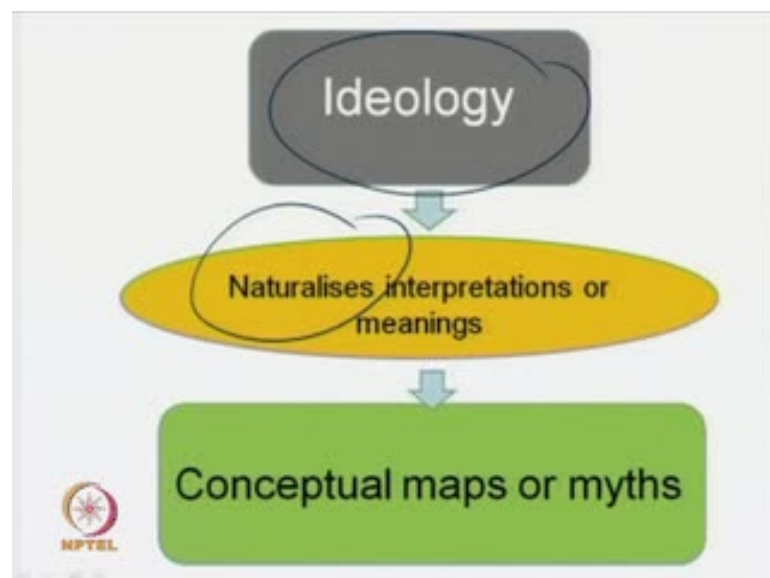
Culture is also a language. Cultural units forms signs, whose meaning comes out in a relation between the signify and signified. It is politically importantly, the relation between the sign, the signifier and signified is an arbitrary one and it is something that we accept only through convention.

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As I pointed out by some people, myth is like role. For instance, myths are also second order signs and can also be understood as a system of signifying practices as having meaning. Meaning emanates through a system of rules, through a system of binary opposites and we can talk about this later, if we have time.

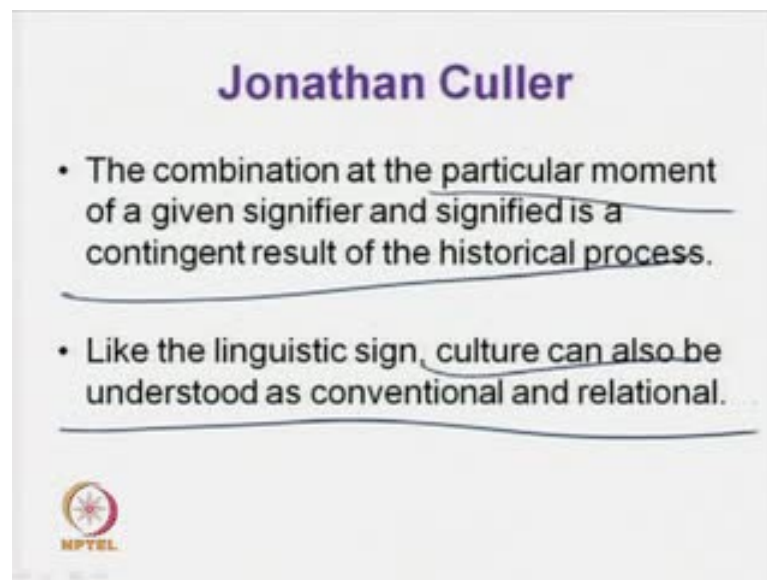
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The political part of it and the position here is important. Remember, theory also has to take a position. Structuralism shows us this because of the arbitrariness of the sign. We

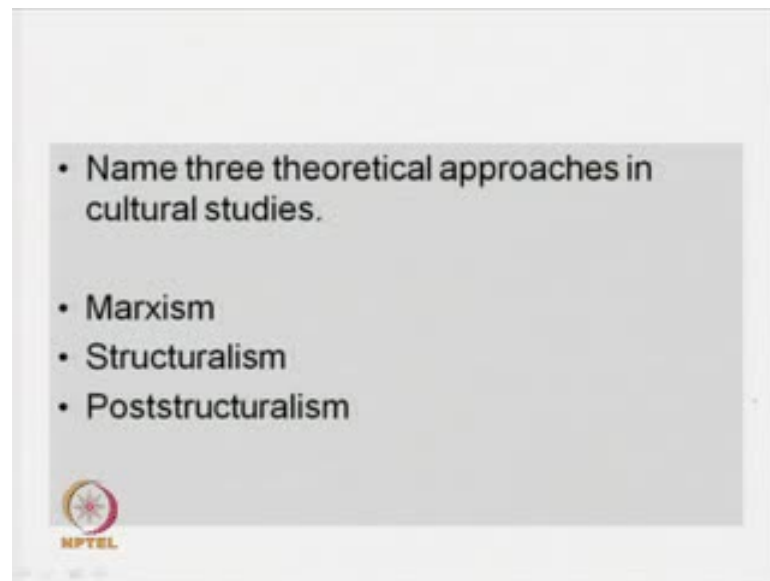
know that signs are accepted by convention. The deeper question here is how does the relationship between a signifier and signified... or how do binary oppositions, where the one or the first term is always a more privilege term like man and women, husband and wife, parent and child, then light and dark. How is it that they are worked out or signified in these ways? The point is ideology. It is ideology or a way of thinking a way of comprehending the world that naturalizes impetrations and meanings. Meanings do not happen on their own matters of power. Ideology of politics naturalizes interpretations of meanings and gives us these conceptual maps or myths.

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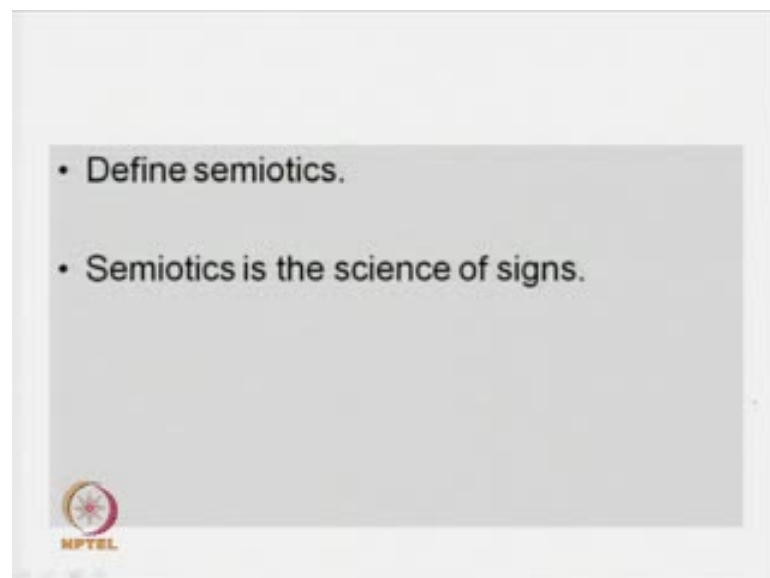
We shall end with a point given by one of the famous structuralist critics named Jonathan culler. Culler says that the combination at the particular moment of a given signifier and signified is a contingent result of the historical process. If you understand the historicity, the special and temporal saturateness of a meaning connection between the signify and the signified, then you understand that these are constructs in time, constructs in space, only because of repeated use through its legitimation by power structures that they have become naturalize. To use a proper word, they are conventionalized, but they are not given. So, like the linguistic sign, Jonathan culler says culture can also be understood as conventional and relational.

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Let us go on to the discussion. So, name three theoretical approaches in cultural studies. They are many, but only if you just have to name three, these are marxism, structuralism and poststructuralism.

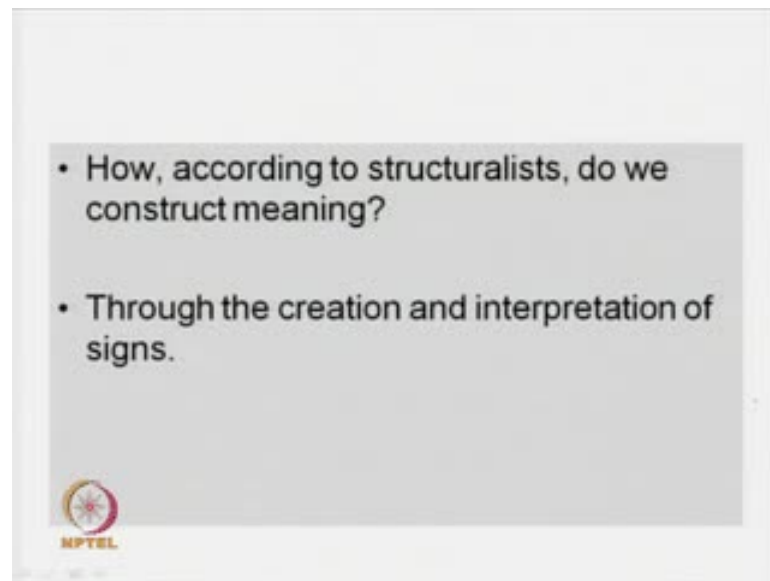
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Define semiotics. Semiotics is defined as the science of signs.

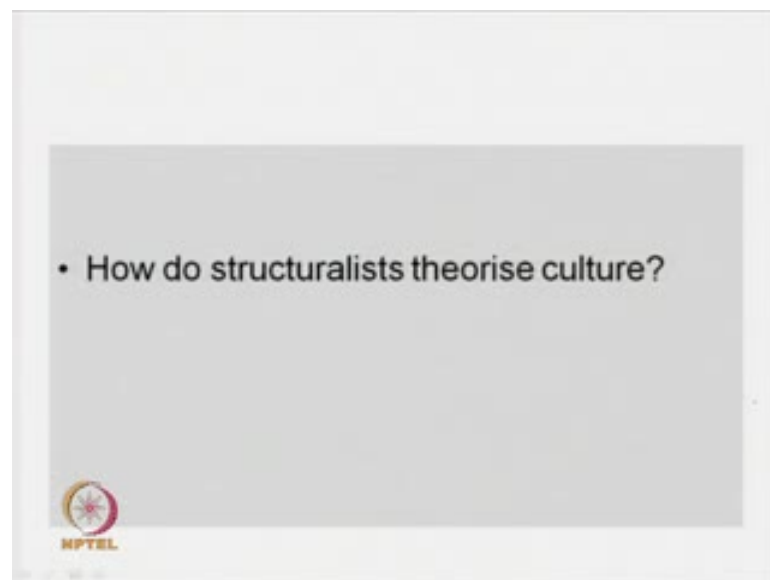


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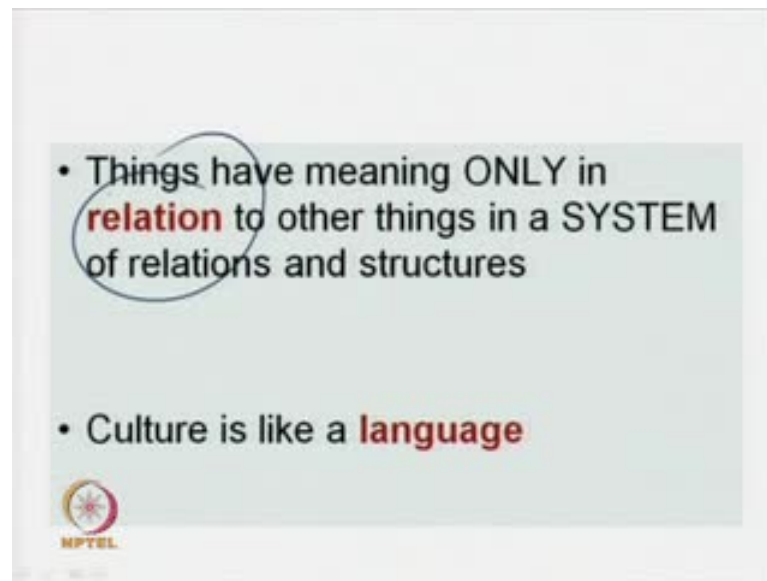
How, according to structuralists, do we construct meaning? We have to say that meaning according to structuralism or structuralists is constructed through the creation and interpretation of signs.

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How do structuralists theorize culture? This is the most important question for us.

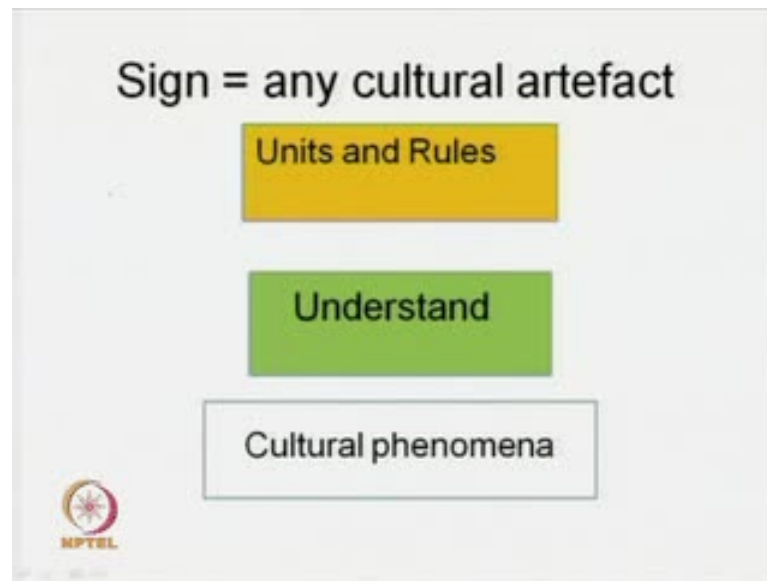
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Structuralists say that like language, culture is a similar system. In fact, culture can be read in terms of a language. The theory of structuralist linguistics has given to us by Saussure and others. Things or cultural objects forms phenomena have meaning only in relation to other things in a system of relations and structures, particularly by differentiation and by binary opposites. Remember, the first point, which are structures of seeing, which are ways of seeing deep structures and by which human kind has been trying to make sense, otherwise it is chaotic data.

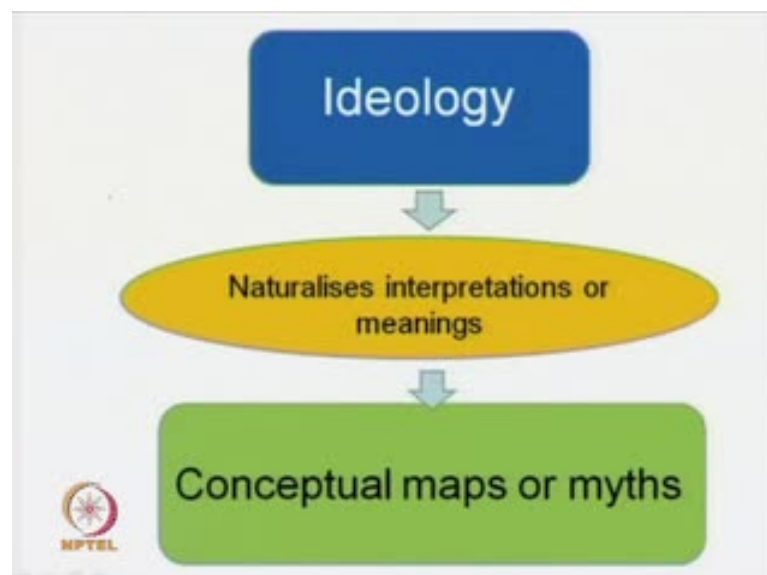
These are structures that are imposed. So, in a way, it raises the greater philosophical question -what is reality? We say that reality is nothing but the sum total of the structures of the mind that we bring to bear upon the chaotic data that are incoming. So, this again raises a huge problematic question of whether the reality that we perceived is indeed the whole thing or something that is only constructed by us. These are matters of philosophy and we are not going to go into that.

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In structuralist understanding of culture, we can say that if a word is a sign, then similarly any cultural artefact is a sign. It has its meaning in a system of units and rules. It has its status in a system of units and rules. We understand cultural phenomena as signifying practices.

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Finally, ideology - the political position, here you can always counter those who say the structuralism is a political stand and it is an outer and outer scientific way by saying no.

By doing this, we understand a very important point because of the arbitrariness of the sign. We can therefore conclude that no sign is natural.

Now, we are not only talking about the linguistic level, mostly importantly in the cultural level. Cultural phenomena signify certain things and these significations are not natural ones. They are naturalized through ideology, through a way of looking at the world about which we will be talking in another module. So, I hope this was not difficult for you and not scary for you. Theory is beautiful, theory is one way of enriching understanding, be it language, be it culture. In the next lecture, we are going to look at another theory that is Marxism. Thank you.