

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

**NPTEL
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Ecology and Society**

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Now we move on to a different understanding of how nature's culture is both sort of contested and we will try to look in some of the domains and boundaries.

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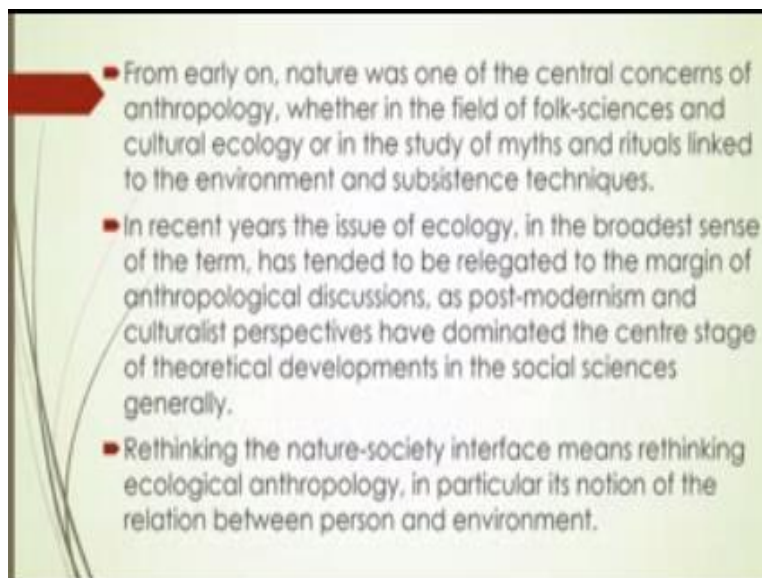


Of culture at the same time try to look at the various conception of nature mainly from the works of in goal at the same time desk, now we will try to begin with some of the general observations how nature in essence is considered to be the central concerns of anthropology or slate and whether is there any scope of the feel of this the discipline of Hope Sciences and also cultural ecology in the study of sort of needs and rituals, which are normally linked to the environment and the subsistence technique may be the phrasing group like the hunters and gatherers or if not

the kind of agricultural practices. Now one thing is pretty sure that, human engagement with the environment or making sense of the nature tends to take different forms.

Now there is a general understanding that normally things are being socially constructed and also that perhaps tends to guide understanding of how we methods of the environment. Now in various histories of for example, the hunting and gathering societies even though the knowledge which is being passed on to the younger generations by the elders.

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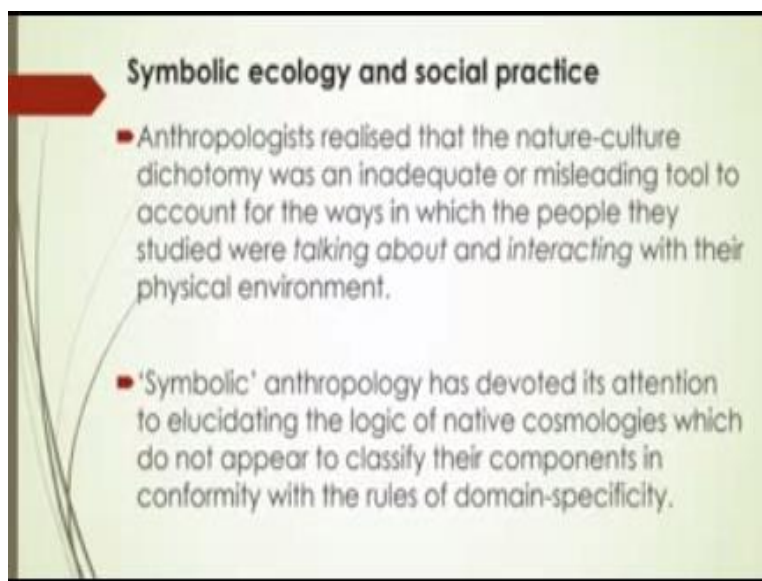


Maybe they tends to be guided by different kind of a selection process, when it comes to sort of haunting, maybe even if they are being guided by certain kinds of norms and values, in terms of their relationship, in an environment one, cannot really rule out the kind of, individual choices one path. Therefore some of the issues concerning ecology in the recent times has sort of been relegated to the margins of anthropological discussions and also as we see in these post modernism and cultural this perspective, has tends to dominate this end the state of the theoretical advancement in social sciences generally, therefore it is important to rethink the nature society interactions or the interface.

Which in away means which require a rethinking of the ecological and anthropology in particular and its motion of the kind of reactions between the individuals and the environment, so it is not just about the society and the environment but also sometimes it is more with the individuals and the environment by things so I am not reducing the kind of relationship with what human and nature share but also at times one should also look at the kind of personal relationships, which have. Now to begin with we will try to look at what some of the basic concepts like the symbolic ecology and how this in away guided the social practices overtime.

Now and topologies of plate have perhaps they have been pursuing this but then there is an increasing realization, that the nature culture dichotomy in a way is inadequate or at times tends to be misleading because of how the way in which people looked at or talks about and interact with their physical environment. Why is this mythical dichotomy inadequate?

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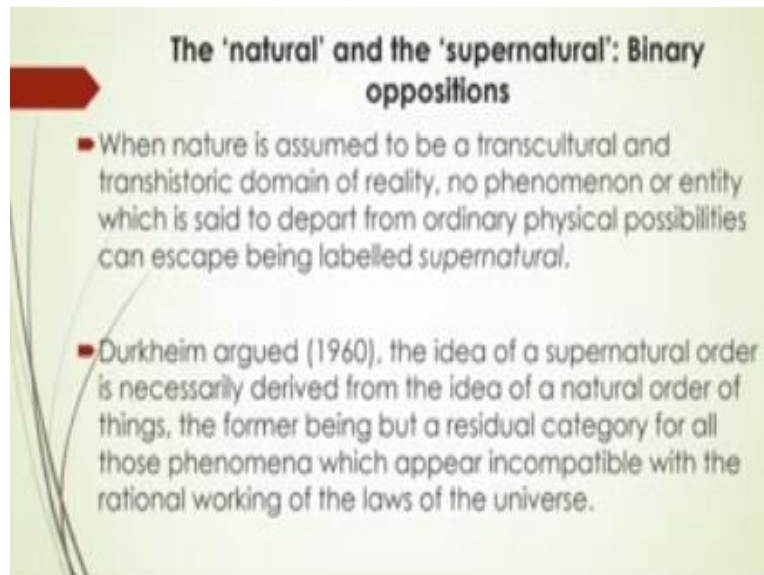


Is because one cannot really sort of draw boundaries or one cannot make hard and fast rules or principles in generalizing, therefore one needs to look in a more in-depth and more sort of the inner meanings of how we perceived at the same time interact with the physical environment.

Now first and foremost is within the symbolic anthropology which in a way has devoted the attention to sort of maxim's of the logic of native cosmology.

Now which in a way appears to sort of classify their components in a more conformity with the rules of the certain domains which are specific to the cultural groups, now symbolic anthropology draws the sort of attention by trying to look at how, we as an individual the kind of belief system constants, the totems and also the enemies. And also how we try to categorize and classify the kind of naturals around which we are engaged into.

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Now let us try to first of all understand or defense it what is natural and what is super natural because for quite long this tool has exists as a binary oppositions. Now usually when nature is sort of assumed to be transcended cultural and plant history domain of reality, there is no phenomenon or anti D which is fit to be depart from this ordinary physical possibility and which we can escape being labeled as supernatural.

Now this inner innocence it is not really easy for one to really reduce if not the market the difference between this natural and supernatural. Now if you look at a century ago Durkheim has

argued in this work the idea of what super natural order is, because supernatural order which in a way is significantly derived from the idea of a natural order of things.

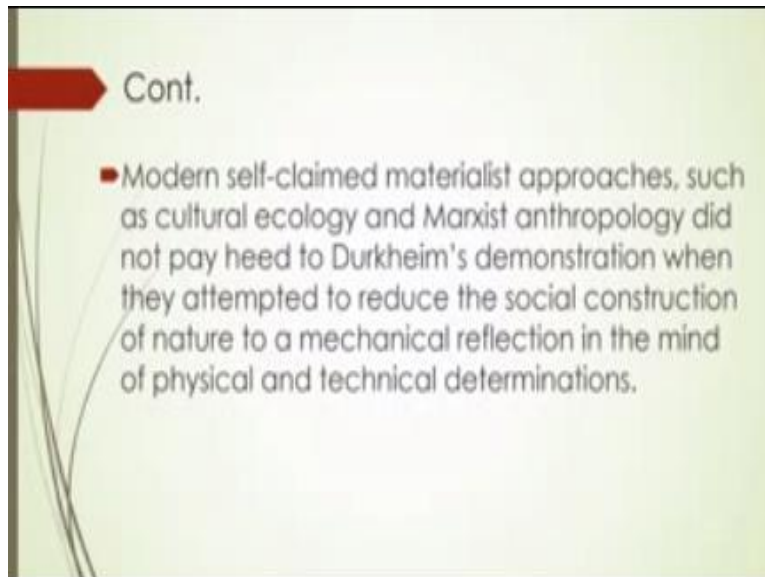
Because by saying so the time what the time tries to maximum is the supernatural cannot be in silly nice relations form the natural order of things, because this the form of being is a sort of a residue, which is the left ordered category for all those phenomena, which appear in a sense in with the rational working in the Lord of the universe. Now therefore there has been always a claim and counterclaim in trying to maximum of this idea of what is natural and what is supernatural.

Now if you look at the due times was mostly he in a way is trying to make sense from more of a functionalist perspective and when he talked about the most elementary forms of religion, he tends to see religion as something, as a unifying factor for the members of society. And became by studying some of the most elementary or rudimentary forms of religion like autumns we're in a culture who tends to perceive certain kinds of plants and animals in the surrounding as something which is separate and he goes on to classify and defensive between what is sacred, what is profane?

Now therefore in that context he tries to make sense of how this idea of supernatural innocence emerges from this order of things, now many others a school of thought so to say like the culture ecology or may be the Marxist anthropology tends, to sort of claim that more or less tries to reduce or sidelined due times understanding and reduce this social construction of nature to a more of mechanical reflection and tries to sort of draw a boundary between these the social and the physical.

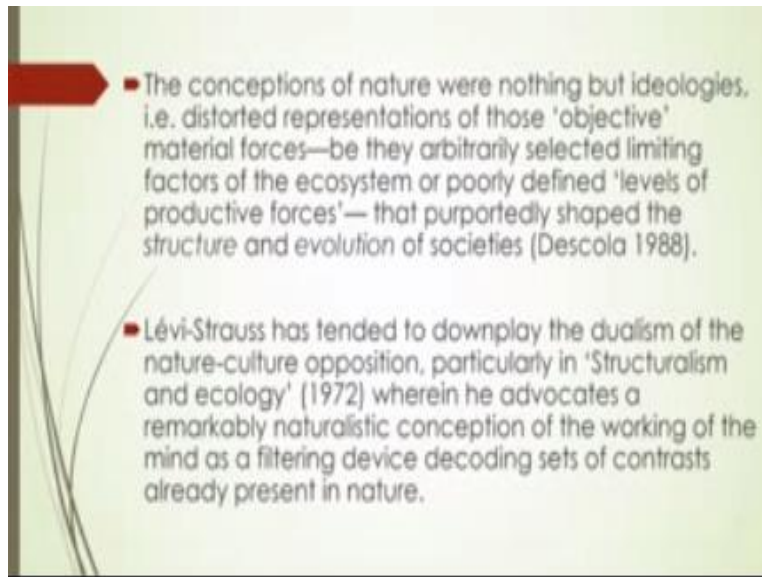
Because to do times understand Kym's has to be seen as a social fact, asocial fact is nothing but saying the order of things in relations to other that is the kind of activities or whatever actions we are engaged in to has to be sinned in relation to others.

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That is even if we tend to share some kind of relation with the physical world, it does have some kind of functional, functional perspective or functional purpose, now therefore this sort of the social and the physical in a way is being a sidelined or put aside by the materialist process.

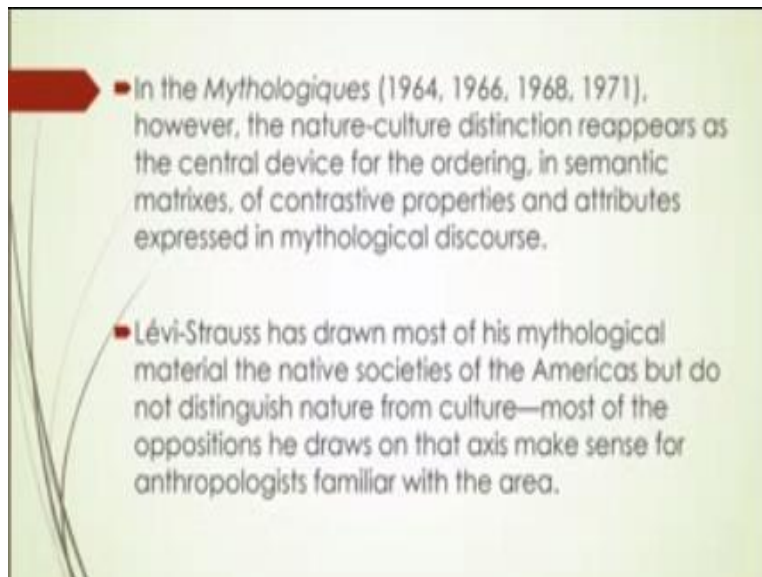
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Now this sort of concept conceptions of nature is not on the conception of nature is nothing but ideology that is how there is are presentations of the objectives, at the same time the natural forces be it arbitrarily selected limiting to the factors of the ecosystems or which is again maybe poorly defined and this levels of productive forces, in a way save the structure at the same time the evolution of societies. Now by saying so in a way human terms engaged in certain kinds of a selection process, of how they tries to sort of make sense of their surroundings.

Now this is again which is being propagated by Descola and Descola further argues that the way in which Levi-Strauss has tries to you know see the dichotomy of major culture. As opposing is again an idea if not the Levi-Strauss tries to you know downplay this dual is because as we had discussed in a section, on how nature and culture is a contested concept Levi-Strauss by employing is the structure list perspective tries to advocate that the nationalist conceptions of the working of this mind is sort of how he tries to deduce or downplay the dwellers in which exist between this nature and culture. Now if you look at the works of Levi Strauss in his the logic which was above this way back in 1964.

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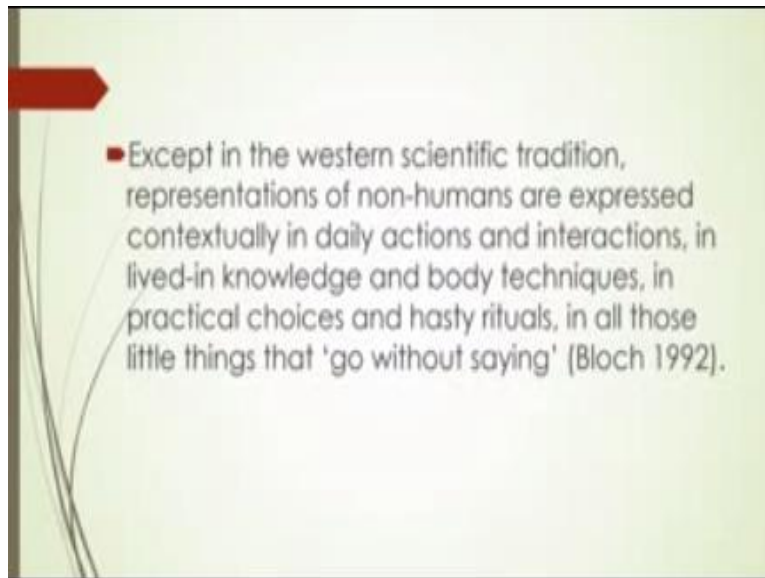
He tries to this make a distinction between the nature and culture sort of essential device in ordering that is in semantic net respect semantics is nothing but the kind of logic ignored which is normally used in the language of contrasting properties and also with attributes which is expressed in the methodological discourses. Now why this methodological discourses is important in the works of Levi Strauss is because he tends to draw much of history from the native societies of America, by looking at the mythologies and in essence even is Levi Strauss know from the mythologies native societies.

He is not clearly able to distinguish the difference between natures from culture, because he goes from death axis the sense for anthropologists which are in away could be understood by those who are familiar with the area. Which means it is difficult for someone who does not belong to these particular disciplines of anthropology to really make sense or understand or the differences between nature and cohesion.

Now these are perhaps one of the critics and the drawbacks of Levi-Strauss understanding of structuralism or trying to defend the state between nature and culture argued by this column, now if you look at the some of the ways of things from the sine-wave scientific traditions with

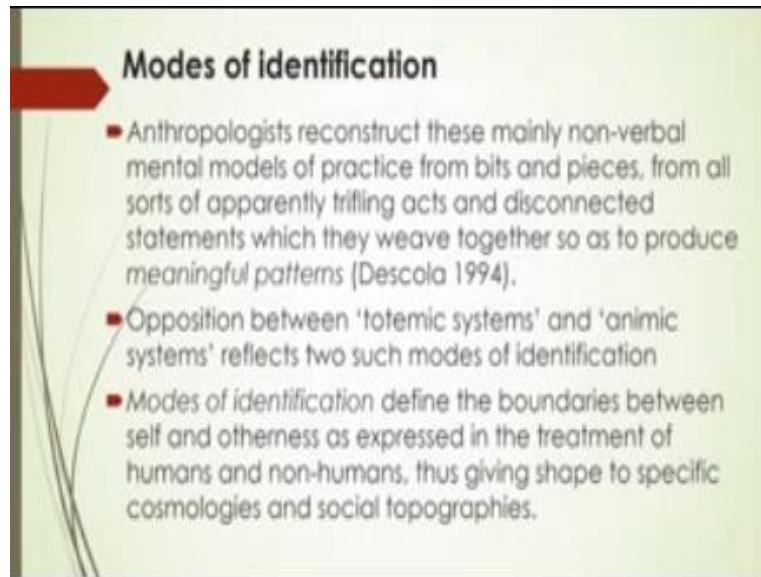
representations of normally then on humans are more or less expressed contextually in their daily actions and interactions because the knowledge with these native societies possessed with the idea of this one humans.

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Is more or less embedded in their everyday practical choices, which are more or less replicated in the form of rituals and therefore one needs to see this representation or this idea of non-human not necessarily from Olson scientific tradition but more from the one recent scientific.

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Because when we talk about the scientific it is also about not just the West one notion of understanding but also the folk societies, how the maxims of their universe because the poke scientist to some extent also tends to have occupy a more important understanding, now there are as we said there are different modes of knowing is not identifying the idea of this nature now usually s Descola has a point, then propylene is normally engaged in reconstructing mainly the nonverbal kind of practices.

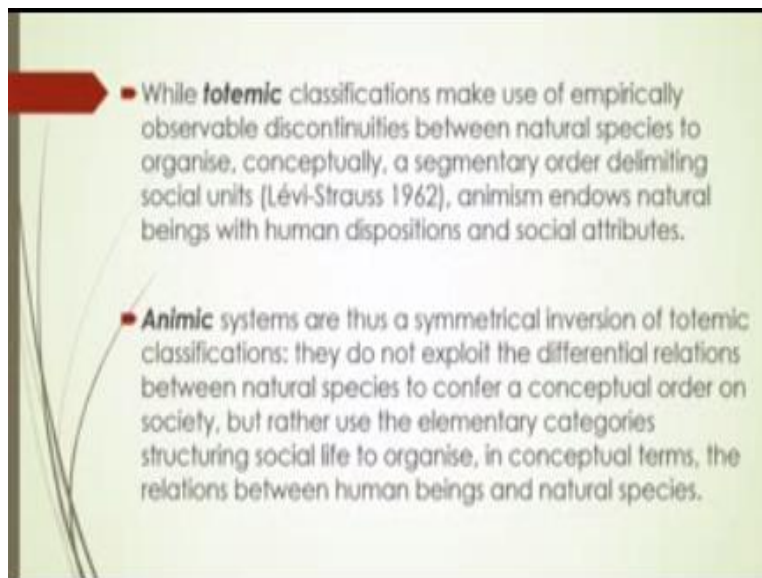
That is more to do with the actions and practices which we humans are usually and get into and if we tries to we need to sort of maxim's of the interconnections of how these actions are being produced, only by trying to you know wave together all these actions or the meanings at attach to that particular actions. Only can we have the meaningful patterns of how this knowledge is being produced.

Now therefore and properly should needs to reconstruct some of these mainly the non verbal mental models of practices, that is trying to stitch together the bits and pieces of how we tends to sort of maxim's of the universe, now again there are some sort of an opposition which usually and get exist between the totemic system and the enemy's system and which reflex in this sort of

modes of identification. That is how one identified this sort of differences in the two different systems.

Now what is this modes of identification them and why is it useful in this and suppose little understanding of nature and culture, this mode of identification in a way sort of Maxim's of the boundaries between the cells and other nests, in the way how we tends to treat the human and the non human, does by engaging in this mode of identification it allows or max make sense of the specific cosmologies and the social stenography. Therefore these modes of identification again are tools and methods, which allow us to have a much more in-depth and worse knowledge about our surroundings.

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Now what is totemic and what is animic, now before going to that let atomic classification as I talked about how the times tries to locate the first form of how belief or religious system evolves in many native societies, a totemic is something where a particular objects may be a plant animal or may be a stone a tree so and so forth, where in a particular culture would attribute some kind of conscious attribute them as separate.

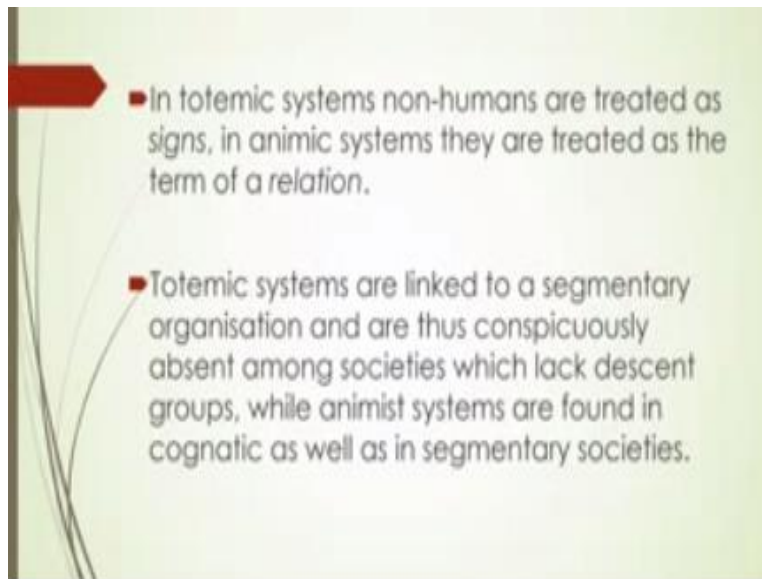
So by considering a sacred they might be not they follow certain kind of a list that is they don't and gives in the major consuming or if no harming that particular object. Now that sort of irreverence which is being shown to certain objects is source known to be more of animic believer, now in this animic classifications usually one make use of this empirically of observable is continuity between the natural species to organize in a more conceptual and in a more segment three order.

That is by delimiting the social unit this is what Levi Strauss has maintained and whereas in animism it allows the natural beings, with the human dispositions and social attributes, now what is any an animic or animistic belief now an animic in a way tends to and give in that sort of the belief system which is perhaps not of observables it is more to do with the kind of if not the spirits which sort of presume were perceived to be dwelling in maybe, let us say forests or maybe in a different setting which usually is unchanged.

Now therefore there is this sort of dualism which exists between the totemic and the animic and in the animic systems there is more of a symmetrical inversions of this totemic classification, because they do not really engage in exploiting the differential relations with is between the natural species. And which in a way is conferring a conceptual order on society but rather in animal systems they use the elementary categories by structuring the social life to organize, which means it has more of a societal implications and depending on the kind of structuring of the social order.

We are in a way trying to make sense of the sort of again the supernatural forces which is into play and this sort of immensely forms of categorizations has an overarching impact on the structuring of social life and it enables us to make us in a much more organized way. Now these relations between the humans and the natural species is much more systematized and organized in the systems in compare with the animic classifications, because in inter animic system as we have discussed there is a limitations in terms of the segment rate order of social units.

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Now what is the animic system? Animic systems are more of non-human and are treated as science or maybe we can say symbols may be a particular object can be sort of user assigned or a symbol, whereas in totemic system they are treated as the term of a relation that is it has more to do with the social order and social classification that is the most of understanding and interpretation is operational in the social order.

Now interest animic systems again they are more linked to the segment reorganization when we say segment 3 we are talking about how divisions are being built and that divisions can be based on let us say, the sort of how additions are being formed. That is the same plan might be sort of forming a different group or it may be in a different form like the more of different groups of clan members.

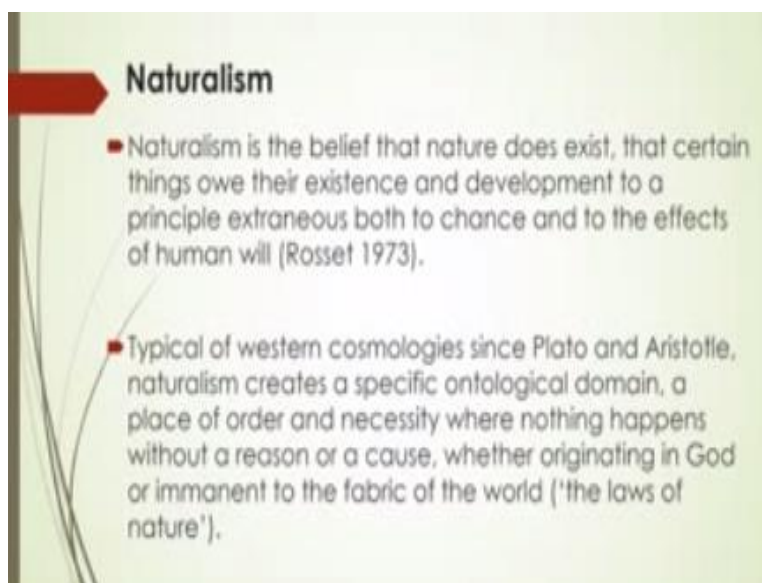
When we say a segment of society it is more to do with the cultural practices the way they tend to sort of trace their genealogy or the ancestry is same because they tend to perceive belonging to the same that line, so these totemic systems are more or less linked to the segment reorganization and are sort of more in absence among societies, which like the decent groups. Now it is more

with motivate and open societies wherein the society, which are not necessarily based on a decent when we say a decent group it is more to do with.

How social group in a way draws their genealogy from a particular off spring the same blood, whereas in the enemy system it is found that they are more of cognitive as well as segment in nature which is most closely knitted. Now therefore the total man and the enemy if you look at the enemy system is more closely integrated and the level of the solidarity is much more integrated and organized.

Now moving on from the totemic and the animic understanding there is also a different forms of belief system which is called naturalism. Now in naturalism what is a sponsor is the belief that nature does of course exist but there is certain things order existence.

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And development to a principle which is external that is extraneous both to choice and to the effect of the human guilt, that is there are things which exist we outside the domain of our social being that is which is not really within the control of the human. Now these are mostly typical to the Western cosmology, now beginning from maybe the pre enlightenment or the system of Plato

and Aristotle, they tend to have found this idea of naturalism in which they sort of created an ontological domain and they believe in that the existence of maybe anything, without a reason or a course that is that there has been always a causal explanation or more to do with a scientific explanation, that is there is nothing which exists or happened without original report.

That is whether maybe in terms or maybe anything, so that sort of you know ordering or questioning prevails, which means the laws of nature is pretty much integrated in this belief system that is in naturalism. Now why is that it is more of questioning which is embedded in this system that is the natural system, is because there is assist in the discourse, that is people normally do not subscribe to the totemic and the animal system or they do not really you know subscribe to those supernatural forces.

Man tends to you know move out of that and then it tends to sort of evolve, now if we go by the sort of the law of three stages, which was propounded by Augustus Comte, if you remember or if you are familiar with comes in a way tends to describe, three lower three stages of society or how the positivistic or positivism emergence. Now prior to the positivistic states there were two forms of stages, the first one was more of the religious if not the fictitious space, which of course is more to do with the totemic and the animistic spirit.

Where people normally do not question but subscribe to some kind of supernatural forces and through this sort of belief there was a unity is not a solidarity and after the fictitious order religious state or maybe in the regular state, maybe if you take examples of the angel king system. The kings normally tends to put it themselves to be the divine right that is they are in a way representing the God. So nobody really questions their authority or they have that underlying or overriding over again the subject.

Now secondly in the military state, it attempts to you know like move away from this sort of belief and people tend to start questioning and in a way by engaging in maybe, we can say the space of this naturalism that there has to be a reason for a force because nothing can exist in the background though, so this sort of sets of poisoning enemy in a way paved way to the positivistic

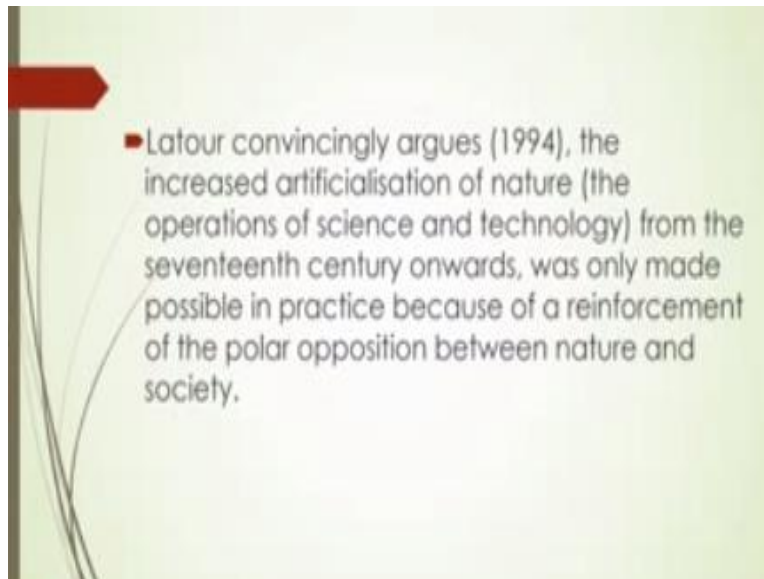
state. Now in the final stage that is positivism of positivistic states formed tends to give an idea that people stand to you know like all sort of belief in establishing and empirical understand.

And they tend to the more and rays in observations and in mechanisms of the universe, they rely more on objectivity rather than subjectivity. So that is how this for the scientific knowledge or the specific domestic kids emergence, now I am just going back to as a recap of for us to familiarize, what Comte has actually looked at? Now Comte does not stop here and he is sort of idealized by using this positivism in trying to make sense of the society or maximum of a human.

But because what he sees is the sort of the method of Natural Sciences which is being employed in not only studying the physical bodies or the physicality it can also be used in the study of society that is why, even in the social sciences we tends to use this idea of empirical study the method in away is small being replicated event in the study of society. Now therefore the kind of study which we and this even in the context of anthropology people tend to engage in quantifying things making sense and trying to look at the dualism or the dichotomy which exists between nature and culture.

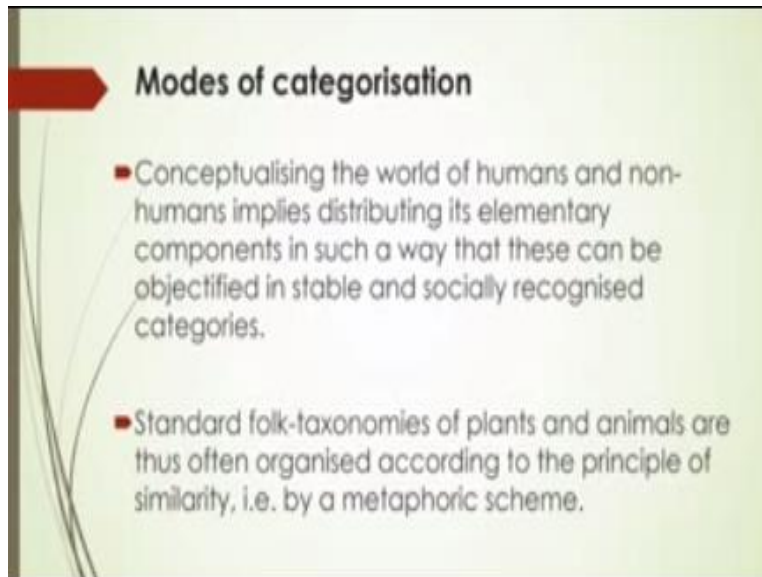
And through all these practices once tries to make sense of the society in tune with the nature. Now in this sense Latour in a way.

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Argue that this increased artificialization of nature that is the operations of these science and technology beginning from the 17th century, that is when the Enlightenment period begins, in a way was made portable in practice because of the rain for the reinforcement of the opposition between nature and society. Now therefore people stems too.

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And get more into poisoning the existence of King and if there is any kind of sort of things happening, there is a more of an engagement in looking at why it is sports scores and now we will try to move on looking at the most of categorization. Now this categorization is again how the world over the divisions and relations between human and non-human is being conceptualized by looking at this elemental components, that is a way that this can be objectified in a more stable and socially recognized categories.

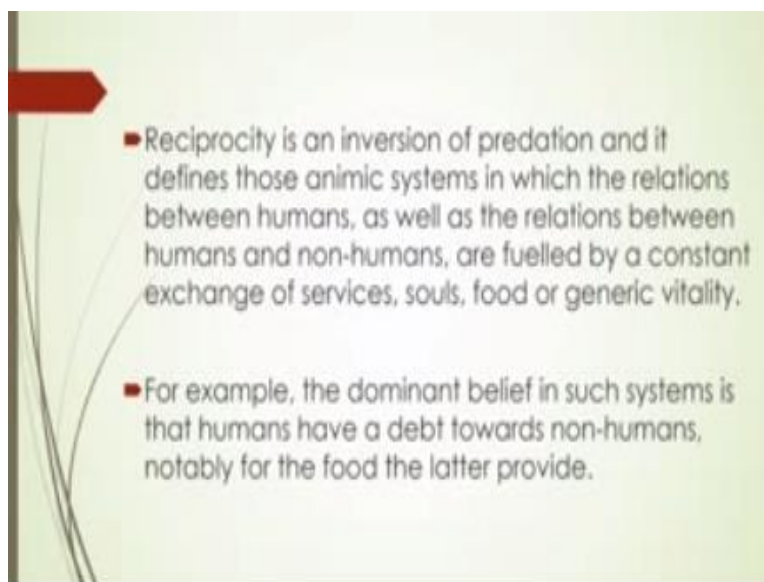
Now for example if you look at the standard folk taxonomy, what is taxonomy is more the science of classifications mostly used in the classifying or categorizing the plants and animals. Now what is this folk taxonomy extent it is it is more of the knowledge which is being embedded or practices by the folk societies or the native societies, how they tries to categorize the plants and animals and this often is organized according to the principle of similar that is by metaphoric skin.

Now what is this metaphoric skin? Because it is again based on the trial and error the kind of knowledge with these native societies Maxim is of plants and animals is sort of true the constant practices over a period of time, that is maybe the earth no medicine. So before this knowledge is

being stored they have constantly engaged in a sort of a trial and error method which is more of a practical in the unit, so there is this reciprocity which in a way is engaged in how the human and non-human sort of material life.

That is in the relations of between the constant actions of services souls put or generate vitality. Now what do we make understood in this constant exchange of services and souls.

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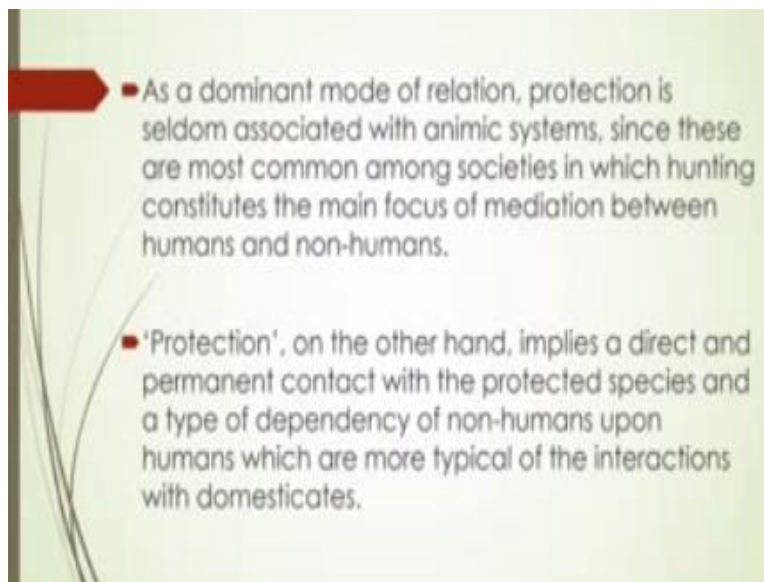
Now maybe if you look at the examples of the foraging practices in the hunting and gathering, now a group me usually and gives in a certain kind of resource and ceremony and in a way through these practices, that is balances of the ecosystem. Of how or what kind of practices we build into, now for example if you take the dominant belief in those systems that human in a way have sort of adapt towards humans not terribly for the foot the letter provide.

Now if you take the examples of let us say the native hunting these are those hunting in a way before going for a hunt they practice, a kind of rituals perhaps bring to the spirits of those animals for them to you know like supply them a foot. Now it is not just that they went out and then suit any kind of animals for that matter for their own conclusions but rather my this

functions of brain in away allows them to you know the animals voluntarily come and them surrender or sacrifices.

So that that sort of balances exist between them, so that sort of operations which exist between human and non-human in a way is seem to be more of an exchange of services. So therefore the human in a way has sort of an honest or adept which lies towards them.

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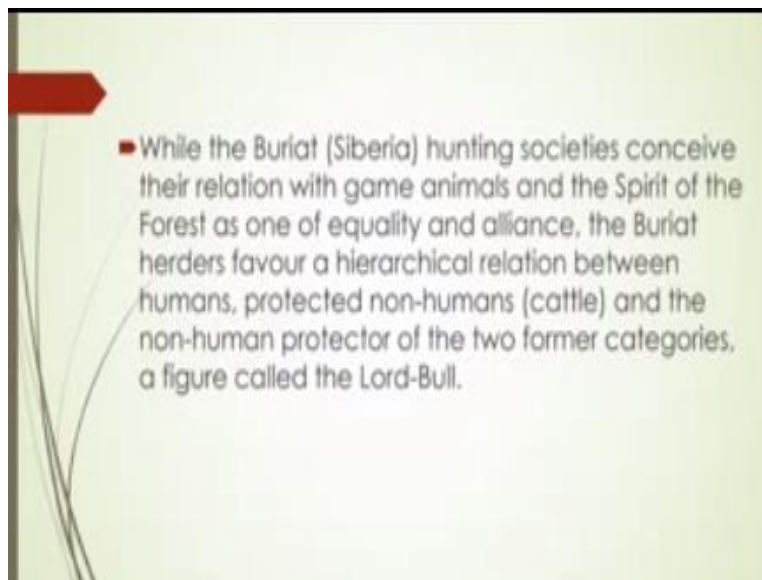


So therefore in return this sort of relations is seem to be in the context of protection. Now in this anemic and the totemic system if we bring in this idea of protection which of the two in a way protect and how the spills mediations takes place, may be how does the tumor get and because when there is a mediation generally there is an expectation that there will be a consensus or a kind of conditions which exist between the two.

Now in return let us say when the hunters come with and animals normally, the humans are at the more of advantage point, now in this context sort of a tenth giving is being replicated in that. Now this protection if you bring them there is a direct and appointment contact sort of with this protected species and a type of dependency, that is the dependency of the humans on the non

human, which are more to do with typical and interactions, so that for that sort of healthy relationship which exists between the two that is the human and non-human text place.

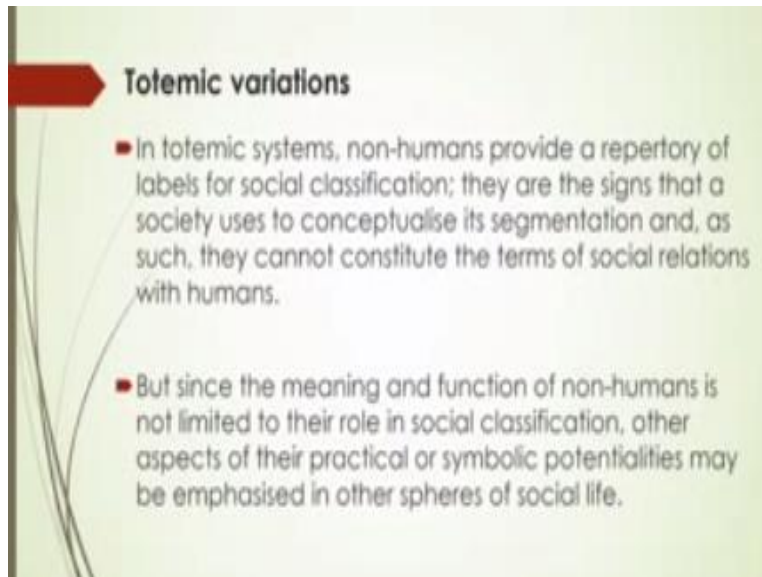
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Now if we look at the kind of hunting which takes place among the Buriat community in the Siberia, there is this sort of relations who exists between the animal which is being hunted and the spirits which dwells in the forest. He is more to be seen in terms of equality and Alliance this sort of relationship is being established between the hunters and animals, which in a way is being encompassed with a risk relationship with spirits of the forest.

Now in the different settings in this community which were more or less envious in pastoralist they maintain some kind of hierarchical relations between the humans and these protected non humans, that is the catalyst so this sort of hierarchy is again established in the context of these practice of pastorals. Now whereas in the context of these the hunters they do have a sort of maintain and equality and aligned.

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Totemic variations

- In totemic systems, non-humans provide a repertory of labels for social classification; they are the signs that a society uses to conceptualise its segmentation and, as such, they cannot constitute the terms of social relations with humans.
- But since the meaning and function of non-humans is not limited to their role in social classification, other aspects of their practical or symbolic potentialities may be emphasised in other spheres of social life.

Now let us move on to looking at what the totemic variation is, now in totemic system as we had discussed the one human innocence provides a sort of levels for social classification because these tonic totems are again signs that a society used to sort of conceptualize if segmentation and as such they cannot conceive the terms of social relations with humans, but since the meaning and functions of these nonhumans and are not limited to their role in social classification. The other aspects of the sort of practical are not the symbolic potentialities may be emphasized in other aspects of their social life.

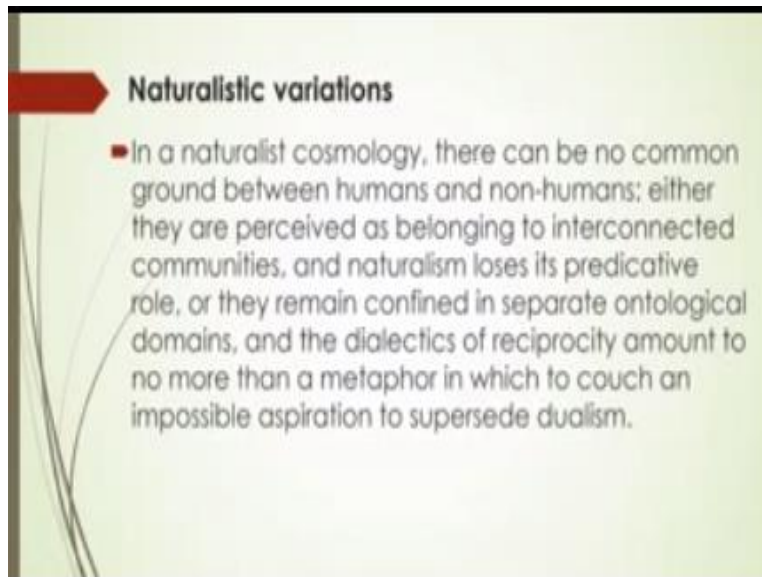
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Now there can be sort of a predictable relations which exist between these dynamic species possibilities, are there because since we are looking at the context of the foraging societies now in the context of these Australians of origin where hunting is normally not used as an exchange the product of this covenant, which exists between the humans and animals are rather to be seen as more of cultural mundane activity, which is sort of seen to be a method of procuring for the subsistence or maybe procurement of a food.

Now therefore this sort of relations which exists between in this context that is the reciprocal relationship between the human and non-human is, the possibility of more of predations because the atomic species which are more to be seen as a simple signifier of this social segment a shinned cannot in a way enter into a relationship with humans. However if you look into more of purely atomic systems rather there are exceptions or in the context of these the Austral and abortions that they are often clubbed together with the enemy system which allow the expression of a relation in amore reciprocity reciprocal if not the kind of relationship which they share with the nonhumans and tightest.

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Now as we have discussed in that naturalism and what then is this naturalistic variations in the this form of naturalistic cosmology, there is no common ground which exists between humans and nonhumans rather they are being perceived as more of being interconnected to communities and in the process the naturalism in a way losses is relative rules or maybe, they are more less confined into a separate ontological domain and this sort of dialectic which exists the reciprocity amount to no more than a metaphor in bits.

The impossibility of Peers our estimation tends to normally super this duality that is between the human and the nonhuman. Now this sort of a transcendental object or objectification, there is piece of conservationists movement if you look at even in the current world where in the as a visual of this environmental crisis there is movement maybe the conservation is the wild wildness movement or sort of protecting they tends to engage in questioning, this foundation of this Western cosmology and rather they tend to persuade reach perpetuate and look at the ontological domain of this typical modern ideology.

And through these ideas of conservationists' movement they tend to sort of isolate nature or tend to separate the humans from this ontological domain. Therefore the sort of divisions which is

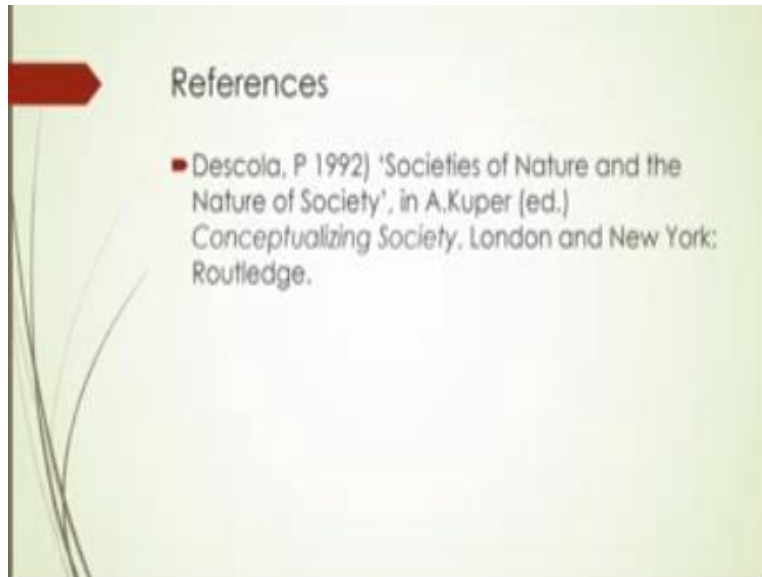
pretty much strong in the modern problem by sort of challenging this Western cosmology we tend to establish a different form of or more to do with the sort of the idea of an inescapable suppressants of nature, that is by doing so when we claim that we want to sort of the nature in isolation or to more of protecting if not conserving nature.

We are in a way are suppressing if not oppressing the nature and this sort of philosophical understanding which is guiding the Western world in away will sort of crumbled and it will eventually lead to uprising, so the idea is not to you know maintain a boundary or sort of teenager in isolation but the idea is to sort of form or to locate that symbiotic relationship which is being shared, because as we had discussed in the context of how a hunter is not simply engaging in sort of killing of the nonhuman entitled.

But rather there is healthy and alliance which is formed between the two and this sort of classifications of or ordering of things as separate in a way is more of hierarchical in nature. So when there is a hierarchy which is being usually established which means you are ordering things into more of trying to pop in indirectly propagating, that human in away is superior to the humans. So therefore in order to maximum or trying to bring in the dualism of this the nature of the human and non-human in a much more healthy manner it will be appropriate to see it as more of in a system of alliance.

That is to be part and then to be embedded with nature, now these are some of the references it is perhaps you can look at.

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The works of Descola on the societies of nature and nature of societies which will matter and this man in a much more meaningful way, the way we conceptualize nature and then how to different belief system that is in even in the totemic system the animic system and even in the naturalistic system. How these modes of ideas the way we perceive nature evolves over time and across different societies and which particular societies is with the native societies or it is the western world guided by Natural Sciences, Cosmology of Natural Sciences is adequate in a much more healthy or if not on this trip to our dwelling of this nature and culture so I will stop here.

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