

Sociological Perspectives on Modernity
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Lecture – 23
Deconstruction of Modernity: Towards Cultural Studies I

Welcome to the 23rd lecture of the course on Sociological Perspectives on Modernity. We are in the midst of the 6th module of the course that is deconstruction of modernity ok. In deconstruction of modernity we have the feminist challenge to the central pillars of modernity.

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Deconstructing Modernity: Towards Cultural Studies

History of social thought as a differentiation:

- Philosophy / History split (Greeks)
- birth of modern Political Science (Machiavelli)
- Economics / Anthropology in modern senses (enlightenment)

Each simultaneously addresses itself to specialised category of human experience and attempts to project this as account of the whole.

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Then we have towards cultural studies and then we have the post modernist challenge to the critical modernist paradigm in sociology ok. In the last two lectures we have already discussed the feminist challenge to critical modernism and in this lecture today we are going to discuss deconstruction of modernity through the lens of cultural studies. How cultural studies emerged?

Cultural studies is based on few theoretical perspectives. It struggles between Marxism, feminism, post modernism and the perspectives so of the marginalized sections of the society ok, Thereby it challenges, it poses key challenge to critical modernism ok. In these in this lecture I mean in cultural studies response to critical modernism we are going to discuss three authors: one EP Thompson; the poverty of theory, Raymond

Williams to I mean towards 2000 and thirdly Mitchell Foucault ok, but again we will discuss Mitchell Foucault yield in detail in the post modernist challenge.

E P Thompson and Raymond Williams these two ok, they represent socialist humanism within cultural studies and Mitchell Foucault represents a radical post structuralism ok. I am just giving you some kind of background that within cultural studies what we will find; socialist humanism as well as radical post structuralism. Socialist humanism is represented by EP Thompson and Raymond Williams and whereas, radical post structuralism is represented through Mitchell Foucault's works ok. Keeping this in mind we are going to discuss deconstruction of modernity through the lens of cultural studies ok.

Let us first see how cultural studies emerged as a part of social theory or social thought political thought ok. History of social thought as a differentiation when we mentioned. If you look at this differentiation history of social thought as a differentiation from the perspective of cultural studies ok. Now there are three important thought currents which have which have become the hallmarks of cultural studies ok.

What are those three thought currents? One is based on the way there is a split between the way the split between philosophy on the one hand and history on the other. One which treated, was examined by the Greeks ok, Greek philosophy. And an important political theorist Machiavelli's through Machiavelli we always say that it is Machiavelli's works. In fact, marked the birth of modern political science and the way industrial revolution critical thinking, rationality, reasoning capacity, critic to religion and the whole project of enlightenment ok.

The way it treated, it started treating economics, anthropology, sociology, history and so on in modern senses philosophy, history everything. These three thought currents are extremely important in the context of cultural studies as a part of history of social thought ok. Now why such split occur that between philosophy and history or you may say economics and anthropology. Why such splits? These splits are also historically conditioned ok. Philosophy initially which divided into two parts. One natural philosophy and two moral philosophy ok. Natural philosophy is alternatively known as science in the modern sense. Science the term science was coined by Wavell in 19th century.

Earlier science was known as natural philosophy and moral philosophy the way we today the way today we treat moral philosophy, I mean I mean philosophy as a whole that needs to be considered moral philosophy. I mean not ethics the world of ethics ok. That is why when we when we look at philosophy of science and so on ok.

We tend to combine natural philosophy as well as moral philosophy ok; I mean epistemology as well as ethics ok. And why I said that Greeks the way they treated or the way they examined the split between philosophy and history must be understood in this context ok.

History again is based on very important, theoretical as well as empirical investigations ok. Now, cultural studies does not want to see such kind of artificial split between philosophy and history on economics and anthropology, but sociology ok. And why I have I have emphasized more on birth of modern political science by Machiavelli ok.

This is very important in the sense that the concept of the state, the concept of the citizen, nation, nation building, nationalism and so on, civil society ok. All these things emerged through I mean in the mode in the in a more modern modernist science ok.

These things emerged in a more modernist science through the works of Machiavelli ok. These three important philosophical thought currents must be understood while examining cultural studies response to critical modernist paradigm in the sociology. Each of these three, simultaneously addresses itself to specialized category of human experience and attempts to project this as account of the whole ok.

Human experience is very important ok. It is not any structure or agency or something, but it is always we and in the way the proponents of or the theorists of cultural studies. They try to bring about the critic to the linear view of modernity. Human experience is the most significant aspect when you when you examine modernity and its constituents ok. There are series of attempts to reverse this of course, reverse this process.

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- Series of attempts to reverse this process: Marx and Weber are classic examples. Both link politics, economy and culture (as class consciousness / ideology in Marx; status / religion in Weber).
- In (later) critical versions the emphasis has generally been on political economy as the central link; culture gets reduced to ideology / status symbols, etc. (In structural functionalism the reverse happens and things are abstracted to the point where "values" appear as an explanation of everything.) Critical political economy is then itself specialised to accounts of the institutions of the formal economy and of the state.

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Suppose for example, Marx and Weber are classic example. Both link I mean both Marx as well as Weber; they link economic, quality and culture. So, far as human experience is concerned ok. Human experience for Marx or Weber cannot be examined in a isolation. Human experience must be examined, should be examined in terms of our economic cultural and quality, I mean societies. For example, class consciousness, ideology in the case of Marx ok. In the case of Weber you may say status, religion, culture and so on ok.

In later critical versions the emphasis has generally been on political economy as the central unique. Culture is reduced to ideology, status symbols and so on. For example, in structural functionalism ok, the reverse happens and things are abstracted to the point, where values appear as an explanation of everything. Critical political economies then itself specialized to accounts of the institutions of the formal economy and of the state. I mean in structuralism what we find that suppose the state, the structure the society on the whole they determine our actions, they determine our human experience.

But critical political economy suggests no, our institutions are built and we continue to revise our institutions on the basis of human experience ok. I mean it is the relationship between practice in norm, which is prior. Practice or norm; practice is prior to do not for the proponents of critical political economy. For the proponents of structuralism or structural functionalism ok, norms are prior to practices ok.

But for the proponents of cultural studies, feminists, Marxism, critical political economy ok, practices are prior to the formulation of norms. Once norms are formulated ok, what the proponents of cultural studies they argue, for the proponents of Marxism they argue; that once I mean practices, human experience it leads to the evolution of norms and once norms are formulated now, it is also try to regulate our practices. Norms try to at times dictate our practices ok.

And when our practice is undergo change, we also tend to make certain changes in our norms ok. There is a dialectical relationship between practice and norms. For the proponents of cultural studies, feminism, marxism and critical political economy ok. But for structural functionalists for structuralists ok, norms are prior. Norms always try to regulate our practices ok. It is always norm. It is a it is it is the normative framework which guides our practices.

Practices do not determine what kind of norms we are going to have in structuralist case. But in the case of cultural studies and so on practices are prior, practices lead to the evolution of norms, designing of norms and so on. And there is a dialectical relationship between practices and norms ok.


Once that is why nothing is static. Even our practice undergoes change and those change, changed and changing practices they also try to transform our norms. That is the norms are also not static. Norms are also dynamic. Nothing is static in this world ok. Everything is dynamic, but for the proponents of cultural studies marxism and so on ok. This is very important..

Then if this is so, that that there is an attempt to deconstruct modernity, I mean deconstruct one singular view about modernity or put if I have to put it very succinctly that that while making an attempt to deconstruct modernity, these three perspectives that we are discussing feminism, cultural studies and post modernism ok. Cultural studies joins, suppose we have we discussed earlier ok, there is an analogy between feminism and Marxism.

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“Cultural studies” joins feminism in the attempt to:

- (1) broaden the categories used,
- (2) include culture without reductionism;
- (3) thus generate a more adequate holism.



Now we are going to discuss how cultural studies makes an attempt to join feminism in the attempt to broaden the categories used we will discuss one by one ok. When I say cultural studies joins feminism in the attempt to broaden the categories used, I mean what are those category? May be gender, may be religion, may be region, may be caste, may be class. Now we must broaden the these categories. We cannot reduce everything to one particular category. We must widen the scope and ambit of these categories ok.

Now the way normally in general the way the poor suffer economically poor people they suffer ok. Now, there if I have to reduce everything to economically poor sections of the society ok, cultural studies objects this ok. Cultural studies maintains that you see economically poor people, they constitute one of the marginalized sections of the society ok. In this case, then women also constitute one of the marginalized sections of the society..

Heals it also constitutes one of the marginalized sections of the society, religious minorities they also constitute one of the marginalized sections of the society. Many categories can be created not simply economic consideration, but also many social considerations, political considerations, cultural considerations and so on ok. They must be we must try to I mean cultural studies always makes an attempt to broaden such categories.

Cultural the proponents of cultural studies make an attempt to include culture without reduction is. What is this? Now whatever we suggest whatever we do or human experience, it must be culturally mediated ok. But I cannot just say that everything is reduced to culture. No. Suppose people very often say no, everything is reduced to economic, everything is reduced to polity.

No. Cultural studies scholars drawn from cultural studies they do not try to reduce everything to culture. They try to include culture in their attempt to broaden such categories without any reduction is ok. And by doing that the proponents of cultural studies they tend to generate a more adequate holism or totality ok. This is very important.

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Let us look at 2 influential sources for cultural studies:

1. EP Thompson / Raymond Williams - socialist humanism
2. Foucault – radical post-structuralism

Very different accounts, but surprising similarities...

- Marginal status:
 1. perspectives more than theories
 2. Haven't founded coherent schools
 3. but have taught people to think and work in new ways

The slide features three small images at the bottom: a portrait of EP Thompson on the left, a book cover for Raymond Williams' 'A Short History of the Twentieth Century' in the middle, and a photograph of Michel Foucault on the right. A small number '245' is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Then in this lecture we will look at 2 influential sources for cultural studies. Two influential sources, but 3 influential thinkers ok. Those 2 influential sources of for cultural studies, I mean one is socialist humanism and the other radical post structuralism. Socialists humanism is very often seen or is represented through the works of EP Thompson and Raymond Williams.

And radical post structuralism is represented through the works of Michele Foucault. I mean there very different accounts, when there is a there is a difference between socialist, humanism on the one hand and radical post structuralism on the other. But we will also try to look at certain similarities between socialist humanism on the one hand

and radical post structuralism on the other. I mean why we are using the that are marginal status ok.

These two perspectives they have been given marginal status in social theory political theory. Why? Precisely because they look at that they both these two perspectives I mean socialist humanism as well as radical post structuralism ok. They tend to provide perspectives rather than theories, I mean perspectives are more than more important than theories.

What is a perspective? Ok. A perspective refers to a set of symbols which human beings used to select from all potentially observable aspects of nature. When I say nature it includes both natural and social phenomena. Thereby I tend to widen the scope and ambit of nature and I mean the perspective is above all view point. What kind of a viewpoint? The perspective is a viewpoint which enables us in selecting ok; 1 in selecting, 2 organizing our perceptions and 3 in guiding our actions ok. There are three important things in a in a perception: selection, organization of perceptions and thirdly it must guide our actions ok..

When I say this selection, organization of perceptions which guide our actions ok, people may say that you know perception and perspective are same? No. Perception is different from perspective. Perception when I say it is the immediate contact that individuals have with nature. But when we tend to organize my perceptions then I tend to arrive at a perspective. Perception becomes perspective only when perceptions are organized ok..

That is why I say the perspective refers to a set of symbols which human beings used to select from all potentially observable aspects of nature. I repeat, I reiterate this point when I say nature. It includes both natural and social phenomena. A perspective is above all a viewpoint that helps us in selecting, organizing our perceptions and guiding our actions ok. We do not tend to look at everything, we tend to select.


Suppose this is your room, I can select something to you. You can you may not select that you may select something else ok. let us say it is up to us it is up to our perspective that we use these things. We tend to select ok. In this sense the proponents of cultural studies they tend to emphasize more on perspectives than theories ok. Cultural studies as a school of thought it has not been able to establish, any coherent school ok. Suppose

like functionalism marxism there are not yet been able to formulate these things I mean cultural studies, no ok..

Though cultural studies has not yet been able to establish any coherent school, it has taught people to think and work in new ways. It has taught people to think in and through a problem. It has taught people to think and work in novel ways ok. This is very important. That is why there are there they I mean both socialist humanism, as well as radical post structuralism ok. They are very different accounts, but you will find surprising similarities because both these schools of thought both these perspectives rather ok.

They I mean they have been accorded marginal status within social and political theory precisely because they tend to stress more on perspectives than theories. They have not been able to establish coherent schools, but they have taught people to think and work in new ways ok. Now let us see socialist humanism and then we will move on to radical post structuralism ok. Now let us first see very I mean let us examine in detail the what kind of response that socialist humanism gave, two critical modernist paradigm in sociology through the works of EP Thompson and Raymond Williams. Ok?

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Thompson / Williams

- Derived from Western Marxist tradition but informed by (lower middle-class / working class) background and grassroots political activism post-CP.

Refusal of Base / Superstructure model

Arguments:

- separated "levels" cannot be isolated like this
- Politics and Economics are also cultural (EPT), culture is material (RW)
- central importance of "whole way of life" / "whole way of struggle".

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Ep Thompson and Raymond Williams what we generally find: Their works are mostly derived from the Western Marxist tradition. Their works are derived basically from Western Marxist theoretical trajectory ok. In western marxism we what we have

discussed, in the works of Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci and Alan Turing ok. This is very important that that EP Thompson and Raymond Williams they were very much influenced by Western Marxist intellectual trajectory.

But their works are informed by lower middle class, lower middle class or working class background and grassroots political activism in the post communist party regime. Then their arguments, the way they are made ok. I mean suppose for Marx there was your base and the superstructure, economy was the base for Marx and the superstructure that that Marx suggested. That all these polity, religion, ideology everything will we will be dictated by your economy ok.

But Raymond Williams as well as EP Thompson they did not buy this argument. For them there is nothing called the base of superstructure model ok? At times economy may be base, at times culture may be base, at times religion may be base, at times polity maybe based base, state maybe the base, nationality maybe the base ok. Not simply economy and superstructure can also vary ok..

The arguments in favor of the refusal of base superstructure model that EP Thompson and Raymond Williams provided; that your economic culture polity religion region ok. They cannot be isolated like this. They must examine in terms of their intersectionality ok. Separated levels cannot be isolated like this for EP Thompson, even our politics or economics are also cultural. For Raymond Williams even our culture is materially conditioned right.

It is very important to see ok. For EP Thompson as well as Raymond Williams ok, I mean importance must be given to whole way of life or whole way of struggle. For Marx what was more important? If economy was the base and all religion and ideology and so, on there they constitute superstructure. The importance in the Marxist tradition was given to move the products. Whereas, in the tradition of cultural studies importance has been given to whole way of life, whole way of struggle ok. That is why for EP Thompson politics and economics are also cultural. Whereas, and for Raymond Williams culture is material culture is materially conditioned ok.

Now, then what is this culture all about ok. For EP Thompson and Raymond Williams we will discuss one by one, I mean in the context of social movements, holism or totality and then reflexivity and rationality ok, all four we will discuss.

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Culture [i.e. social movements]

EPT:

- class culture (development of "class consciousness" idea)
- close attention to "anthropology" of popular culture (language and ritual, needs and expectations, formation of resistant popular agency)
- experience as junction concept between domination / exploitation and formation of political / cultural resistance (class as relation or as experience).

RW:

- culture in lived experience: place, community, kinship, etc.
- close analysis of formation of cultural production as material institutions and not simply disembodied "authors"
- recovery of class experience within language.

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I mean in the context of culture, there is social movements for EP Thompson as well as Raymond Williams because politics and economics are also cultural and what is then the culture is also material ok. Then for so, far as social movements are concerned, how did how do EP Thompson and Raymond Williams try to capture culture ok. For them, for EP Thompson it is always culture is always related to certain classes. That is class culture ok. For Thompson when we said class culture it is the development of class consciousness idea ok.

There is close attention to anthropology of popular culture ok. I mean language and ritual needs and expectations, formation of registering popular agency, formation of registering popular agency. What is this popular culture? Popular culture is represented by the masses mass culture ok. High culture is represented through elites whereas, popular culture is represented through socially, economically, politically, culturally marginalized sections of the society ok. That is why Thompsons examination of anthropology of popular culture ok. May be made through language and ritual, needs and expectations, formation of registering popular agency and so on.

For EP Thompson human experience as a junction concept between domination, subordination, subjugation and exploitation on the one hand and formation of political and cultural resistance on the other ok. Human experienced also tends to move away from domination move wants to move away from human experience always wants to

move away from exploitation, subjugation, subordination and so on ok. But when it moves away ok, what does it lead to? It leads to the formation of organized intellectually and politically more consoles registers; political and cultural all resist.

I mean then that class culture development of class ok. If you can slightly recall Marx as notion of class, classes are manifestations of economic differentiation ok. For Weber classes are represent I mean there are two components of class; one is life chances, the other causal components. There are different ways to look at classes. For Thompson in his the poverty of theory that he is suggested that, that class culture ok.

The development of class consciousness idea must be located or must be situated in the world of human experience ok. That is why classes relation or as experience. That is why when Marx said classes are manifestations of economic differentiation, what does he mean? What did he mean by that? I mean classes are constituted not on the basis of income that one earns, but on the basis of the position that one occupies or the functions that one performs in the process of production ok.

Then there is a relationship between different classes. The relation is not simply of relation of domination and subordination, but exploiters. That is why class as a relation must be experienced ok. Class culture and human experience must be understood together ok. For Raymond Williams as he mentioned that you know culture is material.

For Raymond Williams culturing lived experience, human experience or lived practices, lived experiences and so on. It may include place, community, (Refer Time: 31:36) and so on ok. There must be a close analysis of formation of cultural production as material institutions and not simply disembodied authors ok. For Raymond Williams ok, I mean the formation of analysis of formation of cultural production as material institutions and not simply disembodied authors. I mean that that lived experience cannot be isolated from culture, from our economy, from our quality so on.

They cannot be they are very much embodied not disembodied ok. Raymond Williams also emphasized on the recovery of class relation or class experience within a particular language. That is why some language, some forms of language they dominate other forms of language ok. Some languages you I hope you all of you know that certain languages they dominate others ok. I mean in India, English has been able to dominate all other languages right? Ok.

And the time that that particular languages ok, the weight produces and reproduces different class relations or class experiences ok. And it then when you tend to make concerted political and cultural resistance against such domination, against such exploitation then cultured becomes so very important variable is to bring about social movements ok.

Now, now when we when we come to the I mean EP Thompson I mean socialist, humanist response to critical modernism through the works of Thompson and Williams ok. When you look at how holistic explanation that that, Thompson and Williams rewind. For EP Thompson there is a distrust of over list of sophisticated abstractions as and exercise in intellectual closer ok.

And that is why there we must understand the dialectical relationship between experience and thought. Theory cannot be generated in vacuum. Theories have never been generated in vacuum on their own. Theories have been generated only through human experience. If there is no human experience then we cannot generate any theory. If there is no human experience we cannot generate any form of knowledge. And EP Thomson's the poverty of theory ok, is a classic example where he mentioned that as the capitalist relations of production as the kernel of society ok.

They are very important dimensions of society that that the mode of production has brought about. When EP Thompson emphasizes more on I mean emphasizes particularly on capitalist relations or production I mean as a mode of production, Raymond Williams immediately says suggests that no it is not mode of production, but it is a whole way of life, whole way of struggles. That is why there is a distrust of specialization for Raymond Williams and that aims for looser but more encompassing concepts lose, but cohered ok.

Now, I mean in towards 2000 he wrote that from mode of production to way of life ok.

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EP Thompson's work I mean *The Poverty of Theory*, Raymond Williams *Culture and Materialism* and so on ok.

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Rationality / Reflexivity:

EPT:

- artisan model of "determination" by material (data) of theory etc; interaction, "working with" the material;
- sharp refusal of inductive analytic reasoning in abstraction from lived experience of subjects;
- (implicit) identification with subjects and relevance to present-day struggles;
- (loosely) dialectic rationality - not aiming at or claiming neutrality but interacting with "material" and using it in present-day context.

Strategy of "circularity" between material and concepts in *Poverty of Theory*.

Question of whether this is a search for "truth" or (more likely) a search for (present-day) "meaning" in history.

Now EP Thompson so far as reflexivity and rationality are concerned, ok. Thompson emphasizes more on artisan model of determination by material data of theory. I mean an interaction working with the material Thompsons and he refused Thompson refused such inductive analytic reasoning in abstraction from lived experience of subjects ok, sharp

refuge ok. I mean from particular instances to general or statement that is inductive reasoning ok..

There is an implicit identification with subjects and relevance to present day struggles and EP Thompson emphatically mentioned what is rationality that must be dialectic rationally and we will we will discuss Raymond Williams how he used. He said no it is not dialectic rationality, but synthetic rationality. We will discuss ok. I mean what is this dialectic rationality? Dialectic rationality does not aim at or claim neutrality.

Dialectic rationality always attempts to interact with material and in culture, culture is material. And using it in present day context and EP Thompsons strategy of circularity between material and concepts in the poverty of theory ok. The central question of whether this is a search for truth or more likely a search for present in meaning in history this is very important.

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RW:

- Frankfurt School-influenced critique of "dominative mode": attitude to world, others, self as "raw material".
- Need to connect with "lived experience" of emotion, etc. Refusal of "specialised" rationality
- (Implicit) reliance on "fully human" nature of writer
- Synthetic rationality / reflexivity in refusal of separation between private emotion and public analysis, private feeling / culture and public economy / politics.

"Humanism of both": radical use of language of "fully-developed human being" and of human needs / meaning versus systems of domination and exploitation. Human commonality and (class) difference. Analysis implicitly grounded in shared humanity and shared (class) struggle.

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For Raymond Williams of was very much influenced by the Frankfurt school in Germany ok. I mean that critique of dominative mode, attitude and to world other self as the raw material. For Williams there is a need to connect with lived experience reflexive position; lived experience of emotion and so on ok. I mean there is nothing called the rationality for Raymond Williams or EP Thompson. For Thompson it is dialectic rationality ok.

For Raymond Williams it is synthetic rationality. I mean refusal of specialized rationality. There is an implicit reliance on fully human nature of the author or writer or the self or the individual ok. That is that synthetic rationality or reflexivity in refusal of separation between private emotion and public analysis, private feeling and culture on the one hand public economy and politics on the other ok..

The this is cannot be separated just like that ok. There must be a relationship. Then we must provide synthetic rationality or reflexive. And what we generally find that you will, you will tend to find humanism or socialist humanism in both the works of in the works of both Thompson as well as Williams ok. That that humanism in both cases socialist humanism in both cases, I mean there is a radical use of language of fully developed human being and of human needs. I mean meaning versus systems of domination and exploitation. Human community and class difference must be understood ok.

And there must be an analysis of implicitly grounded in said humanity and said class struggle ok. In, so in this lecture we have discussed deconstruction of modernity through the lens of cultural studies, through the works of EP Thompson and Raymond Williams and in this I mean we have covered only one part of cultural studies that is socialist humanism ok. In the next lecture we are going to discuss radical post structuralism through the works of Mitchell Foucault.

Thank you.