Aspects of Western Philosophy
Dr. Sreekumar Nellickappilly
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Module - 39
Lecture - 39
Postmodernism
Major Trends and Chief Characteristic Features
Conceptions of Human Subject
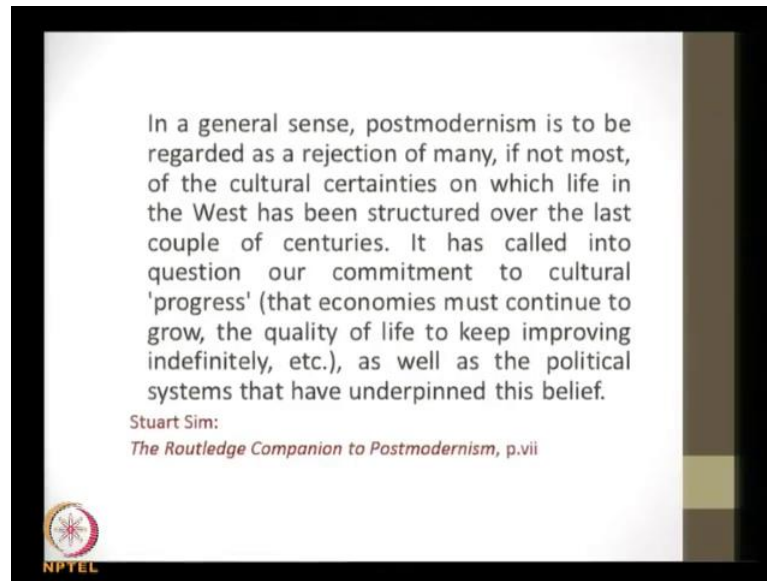**Different Postmodern Approaches**

Welcome to this lecture series on Aspects of Western Philosophy; Module 39, Lecture number 39. This lecture is on Postmodernism, and we are trying to understand postmodernism from a philosophical prospective; I mean from a philosophical point what is more important is something which we are going to treat in this lecture. Particularly conceptions like concept of subject which is a core of modernity's conception philosophical ideals.

So, we will take up some of these concepts in today's lecture, and try to understand what is postmodernism. Or some of the major approaches and fundamental positions adopted by philosophers who are postmodernists. Unlike other philosophical schools postmodernism is not a school of thoughts, it is an approach. It is a kind of historical social approach. It has been evolved; it has evolved as a result of several social cultural factors that were peculiar to 20th Century, particularly the latter half of 20th Century and also of 21st Century.

So we should situate, we should try to situate postmodernism in such a context to understand what it is. And it is not confined to philosophy alone. Postmodernism as I mentioned is an approach towards life, towards various aspects of life, factors of life. So, there are postmodern approaches in literature, art, architecture, philosophy, politics, painting and various other aspects of human life and expressions.

So, we will concentrate on some of the major characteristic features. To say that they are common to all postmodern approaches is also not correct, but something which is a common feature. Say for example; the rejection of meta-narratives by Lyotard which is actually postulated by Lyotard, but it is to some extent very common feature of all postmodern approaches. So, some of these things we will try to understand.

> In a general sense, postmodernism is to be regarded as a rejection of many, if not most, of the cultural certainties on which life in the West has been structured over the last couple of centuries. It has called into question our commitment to cultural 'progress' (that economies must continue to grow, the quality of life to keep improving indefinitely, etc.), as well as the political systems that have underpinned this belief.
> Stuart Sim:
> *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, p.vii

So, let us begin with a quote from Stuart Sim: The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism, I quote. In a general sense postmodernism is to be regarded as a rejection of many, if not most, of the cultural certainties on which life in the West has been structured over the last couple of centuries. It has called into question our commitment to cultural 'progress' - the economies must continue to grow the quality of life to keep improving indefinitely, etcetera. As well as the political systems that have underpinned this belief.

So, there are two issues that figure in this particular quote itself. The first one is; it question the cultural certainties on which the life in the West has been structured of the past two centuries, which means how modernity has structured human life. Second one is it calls into question the concept of progress that economies must continue to grow the quality of life keep improving definitely etcetera. So these aspects, these two things surface in this particular quote itself.

Let us see what is postmodernism. It is not just a philosophical trend but refers to various developments happened in culture in general and particularly in the realms of literature, film, architecture, art, etcetera. I have already mentioned it is not just a philosophical movement. It is rather certain developments happen in culture to which thinkers have given this name postmodernism, because you know it comes after modernity not just chronologically but also it opposes certain fundamental, features certain fundamental aspects of modernity. And it is reflected in different realms of life literature, film, art, architecture etcetera.

It exhibits skepticism, antifoundationalism and a dislike of authority; which is again very central to modernism or modernity. Actually modernity has been presented; we have already seen it in some of our lectures that it has been presented as reaction against pre modern world views particularly religious traditions and all that. And in philosophy modern philosophy comes if not a rejection or a reaction probably to scholasticism. But there are certain things which were common to both pre modern and modern world views that are this conception of foundationalism; if the pre modern world views were trying to articulate the unity of human life, by means of religious principles and concept of God. Modern philosophy was trying to do that with a notion of reason; universal rationality which is found in everyone every human being. But postmodernism is characterized by you know skepticism an antifoundationalism and dislike of all authorities which is foundational.

Again it is a criticism of the enlightenment project and reaction to modernism. Enlightenment project which aims at developing or constructing a rational society, the rationalization of society. So, this is something which the postmodernists they call into question, because as I already mentioned in the beginning there is a definite notion of progress which modernity advocates which postmodernism or postmodern approaches definitely opposed. Against the liberal humanist ideology that dominate culture since the 18th Century. So, this is to deal with the political, social and cultural aspects of modernity and opposing that particular aspect.

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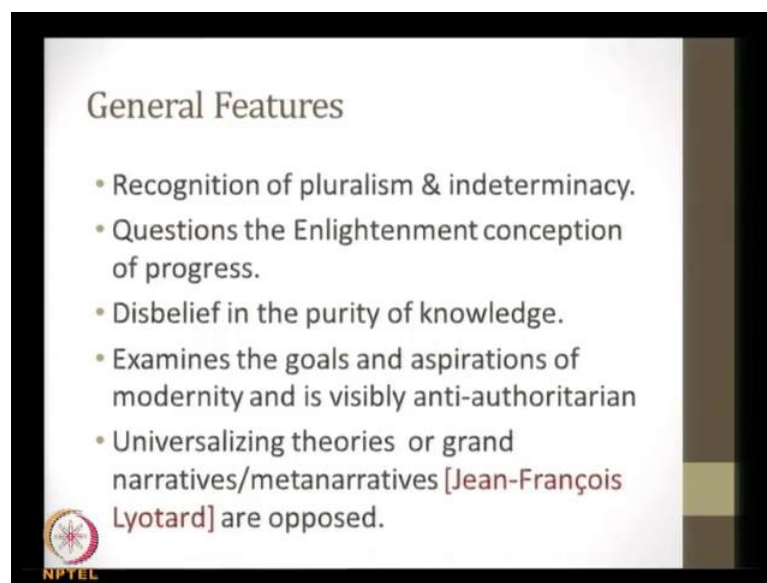
Now, when we come to the general features we come across there is a visible recognition of pluralism and indeterminacy. See, it is not just relativism or subjectivism that postmodernists would advocate. I mean that is a major misconception about post modernist, to see that you know you are a post modernist to say that you are a relativist no, not necessary. Of course, there are postmodernists who are relativists, but postmodernism per say as such does not advocate relativism. It only advocates pluralism, it also advocates indeterminacy because there is no foundation for our knowledge foundations of culture one particular foundation for knowledge or culture or truth or even human subjectivity.

So, in that sense we can say that it celebrates pluralism and indeterminacy. Then again it questions the enlightenment conception of progress. See enlightenment conception of

progress as I have already mentioned is not really different from; I mean there are certain fundamental features of this concept of progress. See, what we have to understand is that enlightenment philosophy is trying to secularize the ethical or moral framework of pre modern worldviews, because they cannot any longer accept the authority of tradition or authority of any religious text books; what Nietzsche would call the death of God.
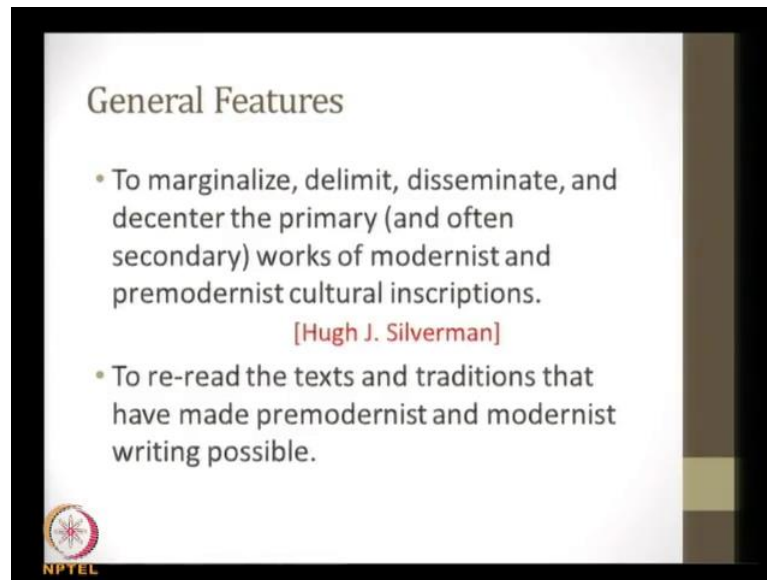
So, they were trying to secularize it and try to provide a rational foundation for our moral progress. So, they believe in universal rationality, they believe in the power the ability of human reason to understand this world, to have objective universal knowledge about this world, and based on that knowledge; I mean it is obviously it is scientific knowledge and scientific knowledge is a very peculiar form of knowledge. It involves the ability to make changes in the world. In other words we can say that there is a certain definite kind of control man gains over nature through scientific knowledge. And by means of this control you can change this world for your benefit for your favor. So, enlightenment conception of progress assumes that there is a definite way in which universal objective knowledge about the world is possible by means of recent human rationality. And this is innovatively going to take the entire humanity to better and better lives or progress.

So, this is something which has been questioned; questioned both by certain historical facts. See for example, the World Wars. The World Wars happened at a time when there was a lot of faith on scientific and technological abilities, or scientific knowledge, and technological knowledge to solve human problems and lead humanity to more and more progress. And the wars have actually demonstrated how human beings can use technologies in a demonstrating fashion, and this is actually resulted in a kind of moral vacuum. So, it is in the context of all these developments, social, political, and cultural developments the postmodernists come up and they question the enlightenment conception of progress.

Then again there is a disbelief in the purity of knowledge. It examines the goals and aspirations of modernity and it is visibly anti-authoritarian. So, that is again another very important feature because, for modernity there is a concept of authority because it replaces all authority of tradition and in the place of tradition it establishes the authority of reason and natural sciences. So, there is a process of rationalization which modern philosophers or modernity thought society can be led to more and more progress, but this process essentially involves certain form of authoritarian approaches. In all fields there is

one particular objectives, there is one particular goal and one way, one method, all these implies that it is shifting the authority from tradition to reason. And universalizing theories or grand narratives or metanarratives as Lyotard should use it are opposed.
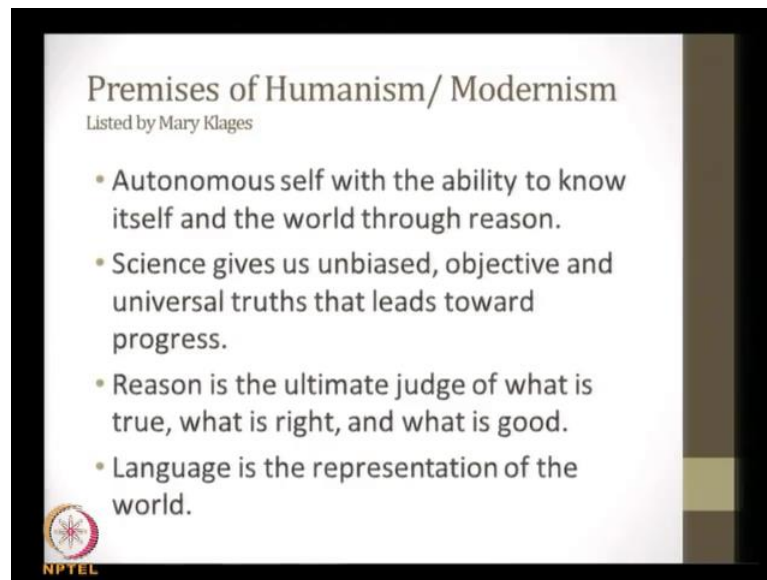
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And again, this is from Silverman: to marginalize, delimit, disseminate, and decenter the primary and often secondary works of modernist and pre modernist cultural inscriptions. This is what one of the things which postmodernism does is to do this. And again to reread the texts and traditions that have made pre modernist and modernist writing possible.

So, it involves a kind of analysis a kind of reexamination of one's own culture and tradition, one's own heritage in a very different way with an emphasis on (Refer Time: 11:47) differences, and gaps etcetera.

There are certain premises of humanism or modernism which is listed by Mary Klages. Actually she lists, the list is quite long. What I am trying to do is I am taking present a gist of it, trying to identify some of the most important features and club them together and try to present it here. I mean one of the most important premises of humanism is autonomous self with the ability to know itself and the world through reason. I have already pointed out this.

There is a conception of self which is universal which has this ability to rationally comprehend the world in an objective fashion. So, the autonomous self with the ability to know itself and the world through reason, and science gives us unbiased, objective and universal truths that leads towards progress. So, this is enlightenments conception of progress that this scientific knowledge which results from the rational comprehension with his methodical as well as methodological would ultimately lead to human progress.

And reason is the ultimate judge of what is true, what is right and what is good. All values; see for example truth, goodness, and beauty, these are the three fundamental value with which logic ethics and aesthetics would deal with in traditional philosophy. But all these three values according to modernism are controlled by or it is actually ruined by reason. So, reason is the ultimate judge in deciding what is true. There is a method by means this is decided. And again there is a way in which you divide right from wrong, good from evil. Again a rational method is employed for that who actually

distinguishes beautiful from the ugly. And all values; all evaluation are done from a rational prospective.

Then language is the representation of the world. So, when we come 20th Century or towards the end of 19th Century; when we come toward the end of 19th Century or to the beginning of 20th Century you can see that there is a certain development in philosophy which we already have seen it which we call linguistic turn. Language is conceived as the representation of the world or representation of reality, and it is a true representation. So, there is a one to one correspondent between languages. And the world and this again re establishes or reinstalls the place of reason.

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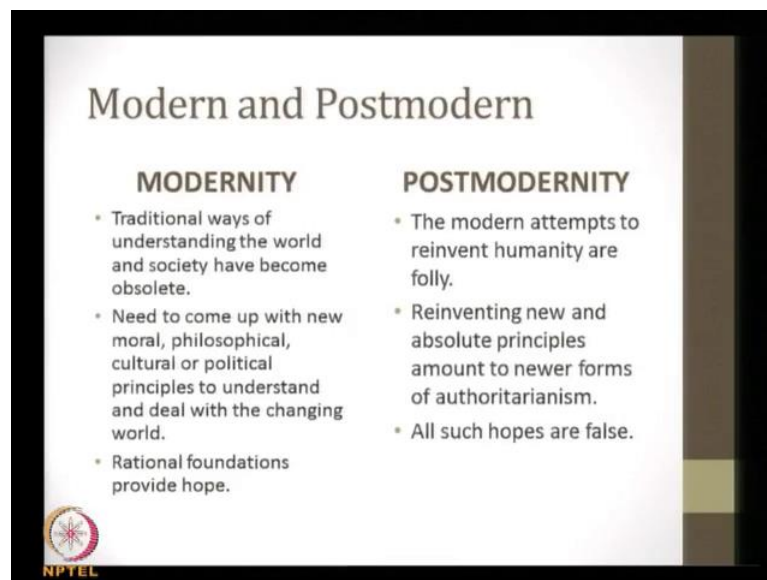
So, let us see modernity (Refer Time: 14:22) postmodernity. Traditional ways of understanding the world and society have become obsolete - in modernity. So, they reject all that is part of tradition, need to come up with new moral philosophical cultural or political principles to understand and deal with the changing world. Rational foundations provide hope towards this direction.

So, we can see this aspect of modernity that there is disbelief, there is a skepticism about the effectiveness and ability of handed down traditional understanding to lead humanity to progress, and there is a need for new methods. So, in politics for example, Marxism has been introduced as a new method to address some of the perennial philosophical problems and political issues and find solution to that.

But on other hand post modernity the modern attempts to reinvent humanity are folly they argue. And again reinventing new and absolute principles amount to newer forms of authoritarianism; so see for instance Marxism is the best example here, because Marxism claims that it has reinvented new and absolute principles. But this has ultimately lent to a different form of authoritarianism which we had already seen in many countries many so called communist countries including USSR and China which have become so authoritarian regimes where absolute rejection of human freedom is was visible. All such hopes are false.

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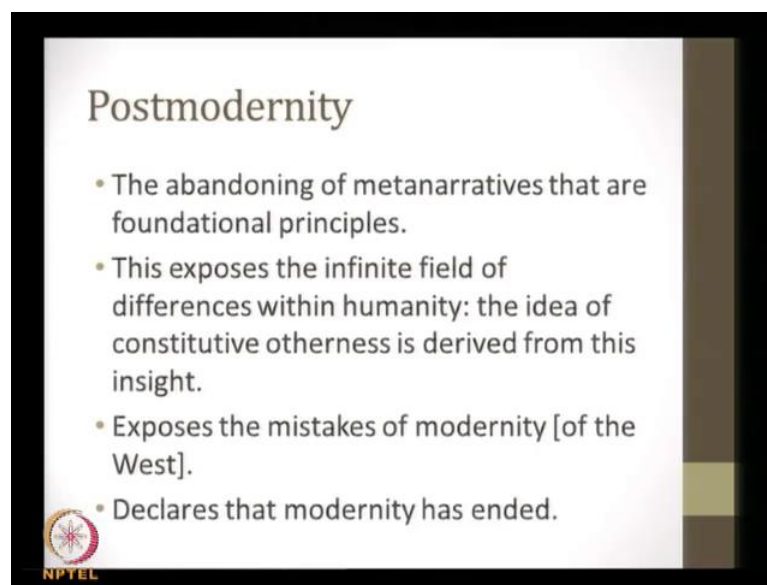
And postmodernity on the other hand, the abandoning of metanarratives that are foundational principles, I have already mentioned about metanarratives. It is a narrative which encompasses all possible narratives, it rejects the possibility of having a multiplicity of small narratives or local narratives which would be confining to certain space and certain times, certain types particularly, and reflecting the concerns of that particular space and that particular time and it has validity only within the context of that particular space and time. But a metanarrative is a narrative for all, for everyone and always. It is a universal narrative; you can have conceptions of truth universal reality etcetera as a metanarrative. Now postmodernism abundance the possibility of such metanarratives and questions them.

This exposes the infinite field of differences within humanity the idea of constitutive otherness is derived from this insight. Once the attention is shifted from a metanarrative which is all encompassing to local narratives which reflects the concerns of local particular communities or particularities, particular realities or local particularities we can. Then the differences between different groups or different approaches different perspectives surface up and these differences constitute what is called the idea of constitutive otherness is derived from this insight. Say for instance postmodernism deals with textual analysis, they talks about textual analysis and they sort of suggest that there are various ways in which one can read a text and they are rejects the conception of textual unity or one single meaning for the text.

The textual meaning according to a typical postmodern approach is not situated anywhere, it is not a foundationalist it is absolutely thoroughly anti-foundationalist. So, rather the postmodernists would try to highlight the incoherence between it, I mean all those factors that would reject the unity of the text would be highlighted, in order to show that there is a constitutive otherness. There is no textual unity, there is no textual uniformity all such conceptions are mythical which cannot be practically appropriated.

Exposes the mistakes of modernity of the west, so this is what (Refer Time: 18:39) does and declares that modernity has ended.

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Let us see, the two most important features of modernity, number one the idea of progress as I already mentioned reason and science leads to progress and modern institutions aim at this rational ideal you take any modern institution, whether it is an educational institution or business organizations or research laboratories any modern institution would reflect this concern that there is a rational ideal to be attained and all those things which they too, they perform ultimately contribute to gaining this rational ideal. And against metanarrative is the second one where that consumes all local narratives gives which actually comes up with a universal message.

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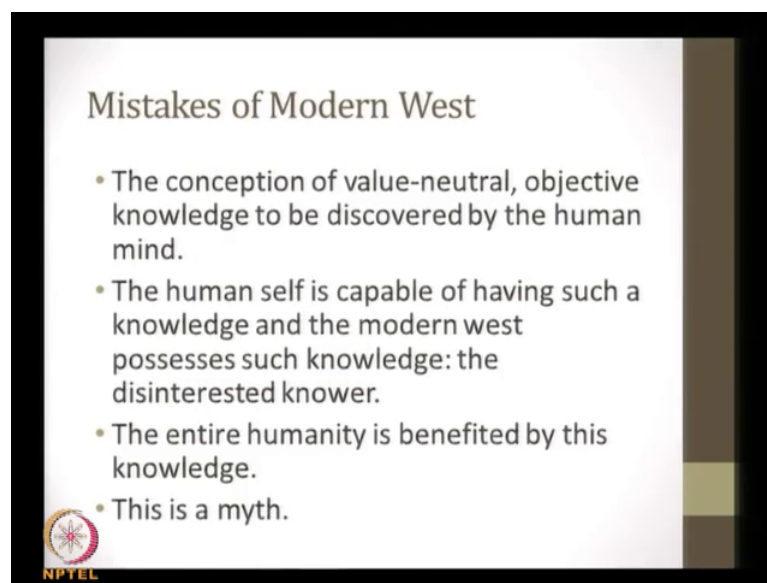
Now, let us see postmodernists were emphatic about the mistakes which modern western civilization or culture as committed. And what are those mistakes, the first one is the conception of value neutral objective knowledge to be discovered by the human mind. There is value neutral objective universal knowledge which human mind can discover. That universalism is something which homogenizes all conceptions about reality to one point, and this again calls for a methodologist something like Descartes had envisaged. Descartes for example, we have already seen is he would assert that all knowledge is essentially of the same nature and there is only one science in the ultimate sense of the term, all sciences are actually branches of that one particular universal science. And that particular universal science has only one conception of knowledge which is gained with the employment of a particular methodology, just one methodology everything is so

foundational in the modern scheme of things. That is something which is pointed out as mistake, a fundamental mistake.

The human self is capable of having such knowledge and the modern West possesses such knowledge, the disinterested knower or the science is the ultimate paradigm of knowledge for the west. There is a conception of the disinterested knower which modern science try to project and modern western civilization thought it possesses that knowledge. You can see that the history of modern west which is actually in which involves the whole of colonialism where the west went all over the world and concord different continents and different people and ruled them exploited them.

And argued that their mission is a socialization mission, they considered that the rest of the world is uncultured uncivilized and they alone are the custodians of the culture and knowledge. So, all these things are the result of modernity's conception of truth and knowledge. The entire humanity is benefited by this knowledge. This is what modernity thought, but which is actually a basic mistake, and which has been pointed out by many from a very peripheral sense we can we already know that this knowledge which modernity has produced has not necessarily resulted in human progress or benefited humanity. Because this it is the same scientific and technological knowledge that was used that is employed for killing of thousands of innocent people all over the world in the name of war and various other kind of things.

And also there are several serious questions like philosophers like Nietzsche would ask, whether this conception of scientific progress can be really termed as progress or not, he doubts Nietzsche would say that it can never be called as real progress humanity is actually not progressing But there is actually if you observe it from a different perspective you can understand that there is a decline in human history there is a decline. People like Nietzsche have pointed it out and this conception, the all these conceptions, all these optimisms of modern west is actually a myth. And there is this whole talk about the end of modernity.
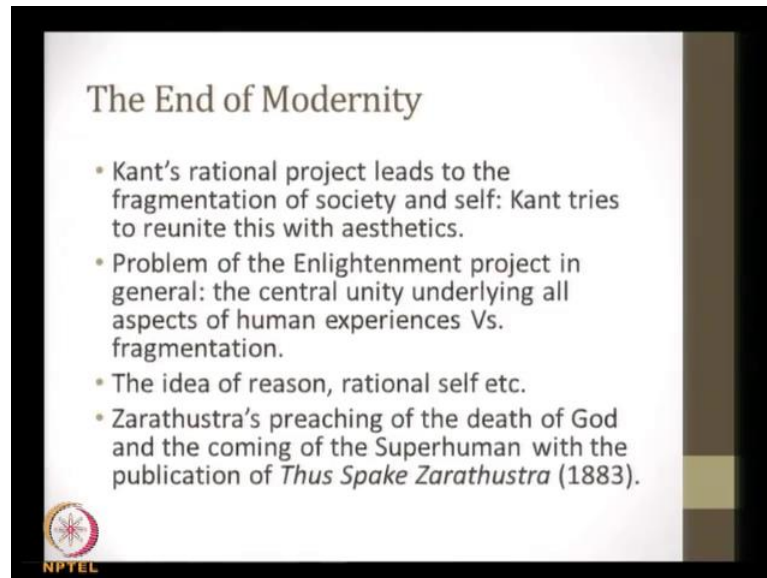
You can see Kant's rational project leads to the fragmentation of society and self and Kant tries to reunite with this, with is aesthetics. We have already pointed this out the critique of pure reason and the critique of practical reason, he was basically talking about two human aspects, two (Refer Time: 23:24) faculties, the pure reason and practical reason which have got very different objectives and goals and very different functions often do not meet these two functions often do not meet.

The ethical and the theoretical would go on parallel lines they will never meet, the concerns of the ethical is never communicated to the concerns of the theoretical or cognitive. This fragmentation of the rational faculty ultimately results in a fragmentation of the human self itself and also to the human society. This is actually created a problem actually it has raised certain very serious issues in the very project of modernity, very project of enlightenment and Kant himself was aware of this and he was trying to resolve, like proposing the aesthetics the critique of judgment, where the aesthetic judgment is expected to unite the practical and the pure aspects of human rationality and of human self and society.

Again the problem of the enlightenment project in general; the central unity underlying all aspects of human experiences verses this fragmentation. How to articulate it, how to recapture or how to reestablish this fundamental unity is was a perennial problem for modernity. And they try to do this with the idea of reason and with a conception of a

rational self, a self which is rational, which reflects or which is a manifestation of universal rationality, which is objective and that is the way they try to do that and we have seen that you know how Nietzsche when very important philosopher who proclaims ultimately the end of modernity, because Nietzsche's a philosopher who comes at the twilight of modernity, we can say we can put it in that way in the end of 19th Century he predicts the death of modernity.

Along with the death of God, he also predicts the death of modernity or rather he tries to argue that all these pre modern religious and modern. So, called modern world views have ultimately not resulted in anything good for humanity, it has never taken humanity to progress rather it resulted in a kind of regress it resulted in a kind of decline, which needs to be overcome.

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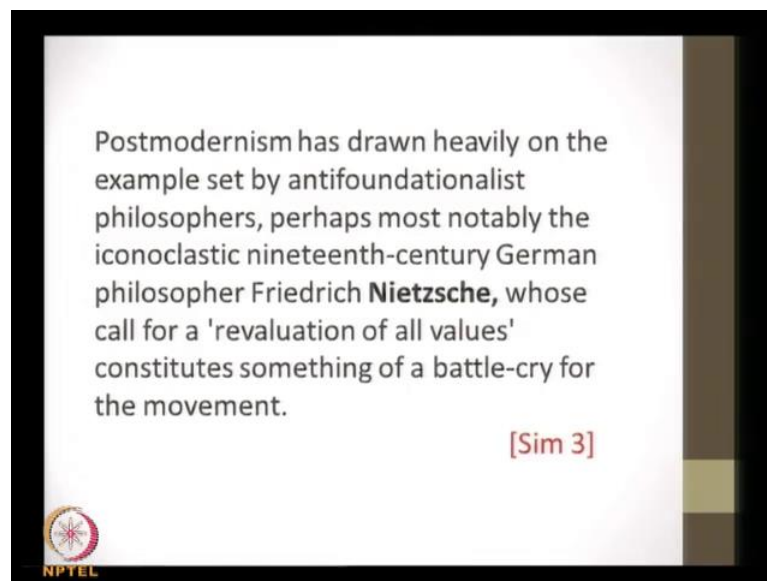
And there is a quote from Sims book. I read postmodernism has drawn heavily on the example set by antifoundationalist philosophers, perhaps most notably the iconoclastic 19th Century, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whose call for the re evaluation revaluation of values, constitutes something of a battle cry for the movement. So, Nietzsche's rejection of values or rather it is called as the revaluation of values which ultimately resulted in a proclamation of nihilism in Nietzsche's philosophy, just this cause for a kind of end of I mean it predicts rather the inevitable end of modernity in one sets.

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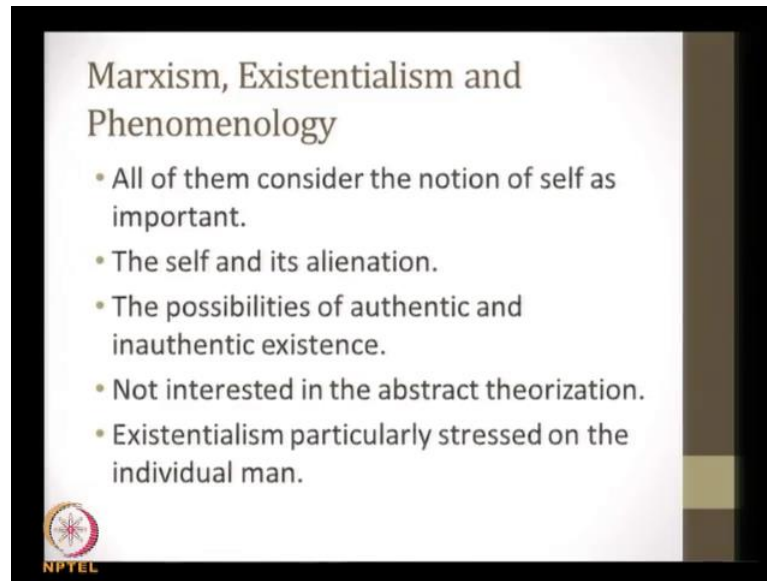
And then there are certain social political and other changes happened all over the world, the Post World-War II France is a typical example where we can see the emergence of various ideologies and philosophical schools like Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology and psychoanalysis have depicted how the individual is estranged from his or her authentic modes of experience and being. They are all concerned about the subject; the human subjects where Marxism or existentialism, phenomenology and psychoanalysis and they have shown that several of these factors in the society have ultimately resulted in a kind of isolation in a kind of alienation estrangement of the individual. And then on the other hand you have movements like structuralism and poststructuralism, philosophers like Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard initially belonged to the structuralist tradition, later on they deviated they denied it.

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And, but these schools of thought which I have already mentioned Marxism existentialism and phenomenology. They all for them consider the notion of self as important, in that sense we cannot say that they are very much modernists, they are very much modernist, they never deviated drastically from the modernist paradigm which considered the self the human subject as a universal substance.

All of them consider it has important, the self and it is alienation is a major concern for all of them they try to provide different solutions to this problem of alienation, the possibilities of authentic and inauthentic existence were discussed by all these philosophers of 20th Century, which had tremendous influence on the lives of people during the Post World War Europe not interested in the abstract theorization like what Hegel or Kant did. But they were concerned about the concrete individual his problems, we have already discussed this when we have discussed existentialism and Marxism and existentialism particularly stressed on the individual man who is often neglected by all philosophical traditions.
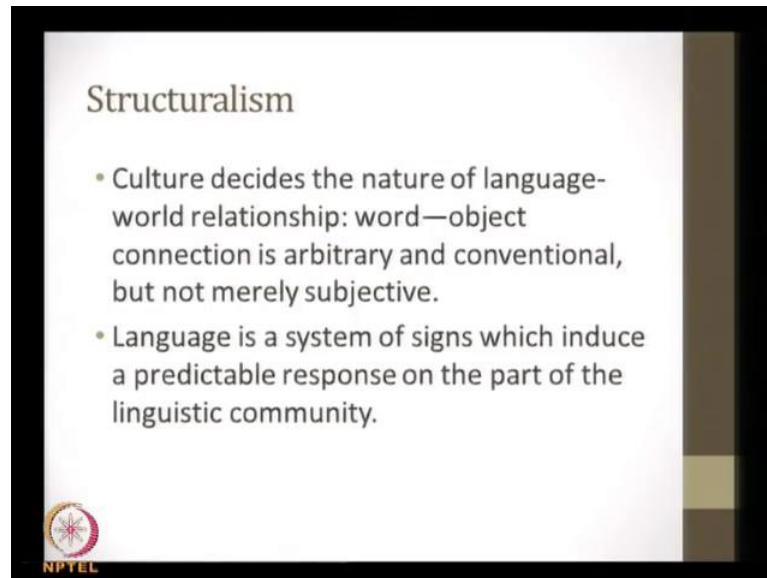
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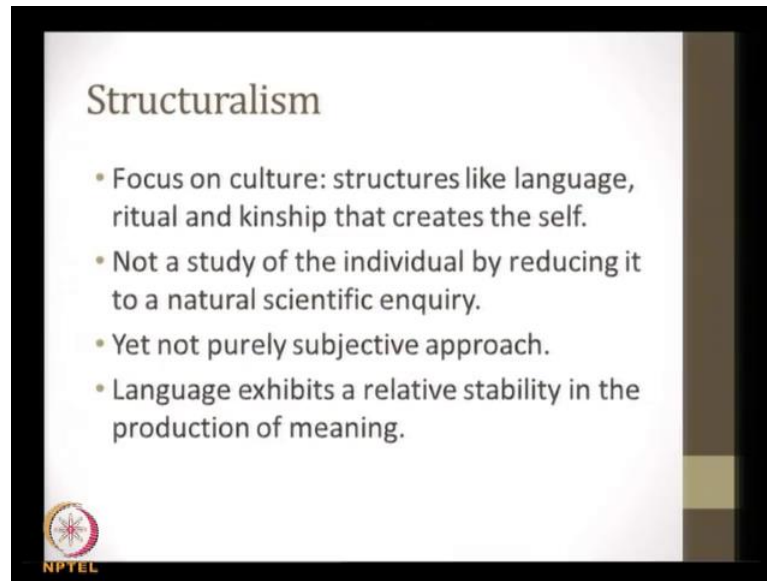
And then comes a very important school structuralism which is initiated by (Refer Time: 29:07) a focus on culture, structures like language ritual and kinship that creates the self the human subject is not studied as an abstract entity which is a historically present, but the structurilist would argue that the human self needs to be understood by relating it with culture or elements of culture like, language, rituals and kinship.

And this is a very interesting very drastically different and interesting aspect of structuralism, it is not a study of individual by reducing it to natural scientific enquiries, yet it is not a purely subjective approach because it depends a lot on language and the structurilist believe that essentially the self the human subject and the reality around us, everything is constructed through language, and language is not just an arbitrary kind of an entity, language exhibits some common, some universal structures. Since language exhibits these structures human subjectivity also would exhibit certain amount of stability according to them.

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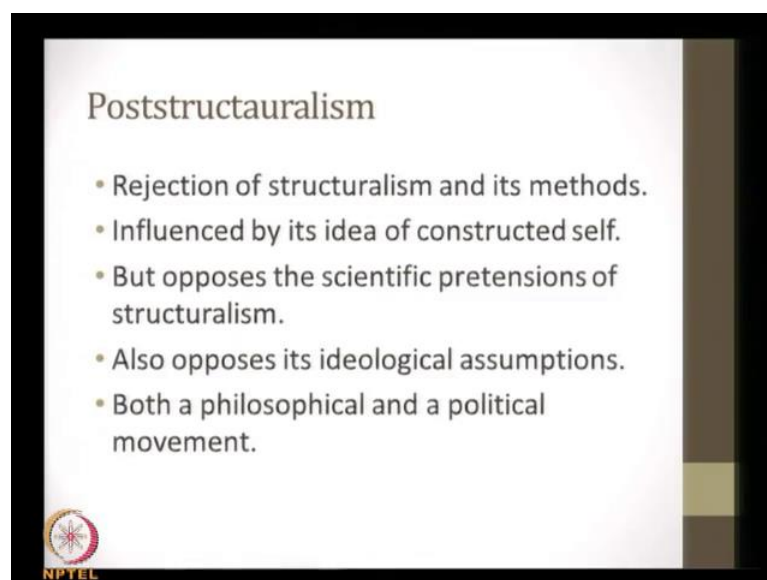
They thought that culture decides the nature of language world relationship word object connection is arbitrary and conventional, but not merely subjective, it is based on certain convention, certain inter subjective conventions and practices then again language is a system of signs which include a predictable response on the part of the linguistic community.

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There is a predictability possible, it is not just indeterminate in the case of structuralism which was not acceptable for the post structuralist they argued they rejected

structuralism and it is method and they were, but and the other hand on the one hand they rejected structuralism, but on the other hand they were influenced by the idea of constructed self propagated by structurilist. But again, further they oppose the scientific pretensions of structuralism that the concern of foundations for certainty also opposes the ideological assumptions of structuralism and in one sense poststructuralism is both a political moment as well as a philosophical movement.

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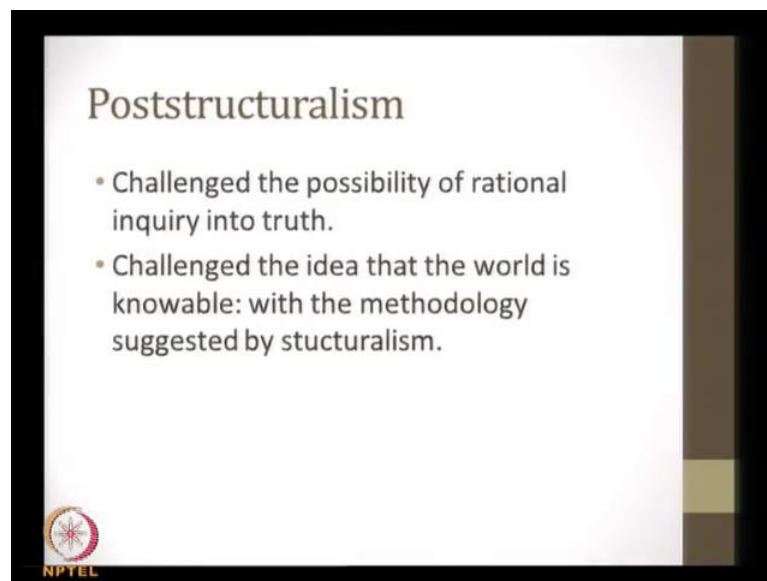
It is challenge by the possibility of rational inquiry into truth, and the possibility of a rational enquiry which is a modernist legacy that you can know the world and structuralism also does it, it believe that there are certain universal structures which can be grasped by reason by language challenge the idea that the world is knowable with the methodology suggested by structuralism the methodology suggested by structuralism is a form of language analysis by means of which you would get certain very important key information about the structure of language, which would ultimately point to the structures of reality, that is what the structurilist thought, but these people reject it.

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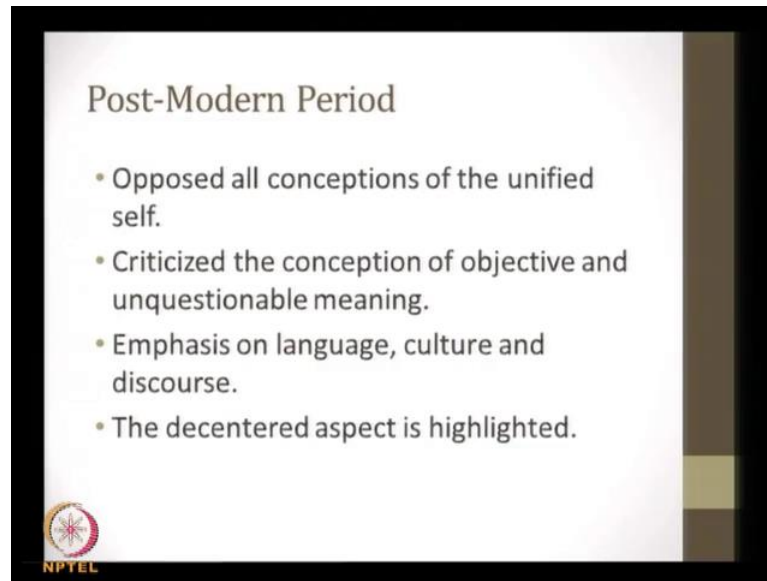
Again postmodernism opposed all conceptions of the unified self. There is no such unity, there is no such homogeneous self, there is no such universal which is foundational is rejected. Which is determined by universal rationality or human nature of whatever that has been rejected, criticized the conception of objective and unquestionable meaning emphasis on language, culture and discourse.

Language, culture and discourse, discourse keeps on changing. There is something discursive about it and human subject is also placed in these discursive practices, this is what an important philosopher of postmodern age Michel Foucault, the French thinker says. The decentered aspect is highlighted there is no centered self, self does not have a universal, so called rational, a historical center, but it is descriptive.
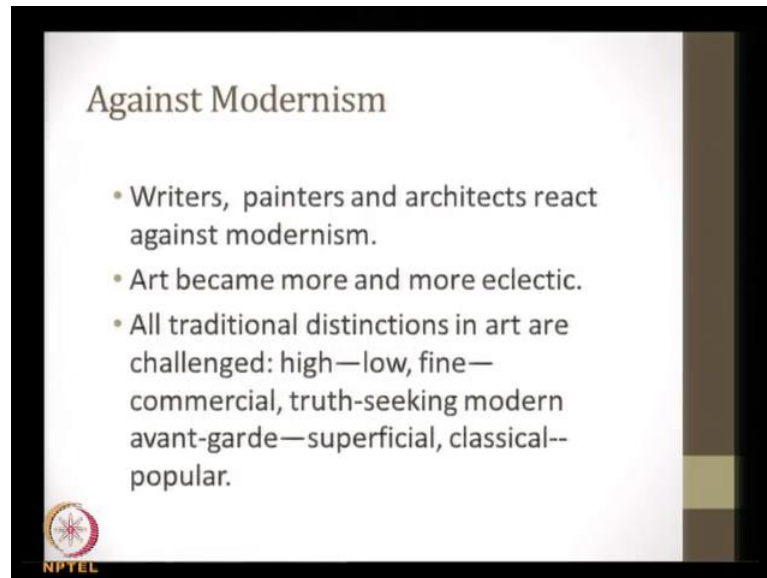
And writers, painters and architects reacts against this pretentions of modernism, this optimism of modernism, this foundationalism of modernism or art became more and more eclectic you can see one very peculiar aspect of this age, as I already mentioned postmodernism is not just a philosophical moment it is something which is reflected in human approaches to art and literature architecture science and various other things, building up of human institutions, organizations everywhere you can see the influence post modernism.

So, art became more and more eclectic, you can see that the traditional distinctions in art are challenge like high and low fine art and commercial art truth seeking modern avant-grade art, with (Refer Time: 34:04) the superficial art classical verses popular, all such distinctions have become invalid. Because when you make a distinctions let us take for example, the distinction between classical art and popular art, or classical music or pop music, when we say classical music things are rationally structured.

There are certain a scheme of ragas and talas and other things which would decide what music is and there is a certain way in which it needs to be appreciated instead the popular music invite everyone without any knowledge about how to appreciate music to appreciate it, you can also be part of the music, you can see that many of these popular music culture or popular songs are not sung by one person he or she invites even the audience to participate in singing it they are also part of the music, but a classical

performance is often, I mean it happens in a platform where everything is structured and planned and nobody else the audience are expected just to be there sit silently and appreciate.

They are not allowed to move beyond certain limits, they have to be there and just appreciate it silently, but in pop music you can all the part of it you can actually dance, jump and whatever and there are people who even how in between a song. All these things are permitted in popular art.

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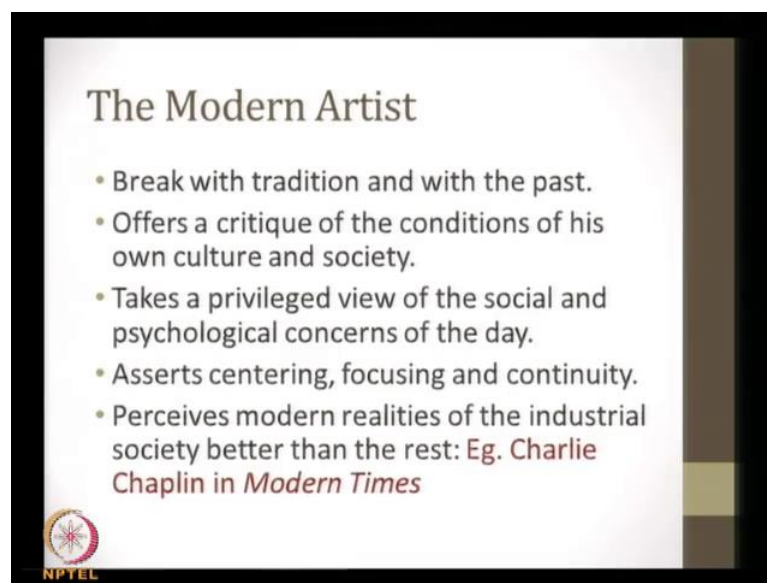
So, a modern artist is one who breaks with the tradition and with the past, as we have already seen modernity consist in breaking with the tradition offers a critique of the condition of his own culture and society. Modern artists often considers or often projects himself as a critique of society, the best example is Charlie Chaplin of modern times, the film Charlie Chaplin which actually modern times which actually critically tries to understand the industrialist civilization of modern west.

Here Chaplin as artist, part of it in the film he is a character in the film, but at the same time by depicting the character or characters in a certain way, the modern artist that is Chaplin tries to critically present is views about modern industrialized civilization. He mocks it, he makes fun of it, he criticizes it and finally, gives us a very strong message that there is something fundamentally wrong about this civilization and you have to have

a different way of life. Asserts centering, focusing and continuity perceive modern realities of the industrial society better than the rest example Charlie Chaplin.

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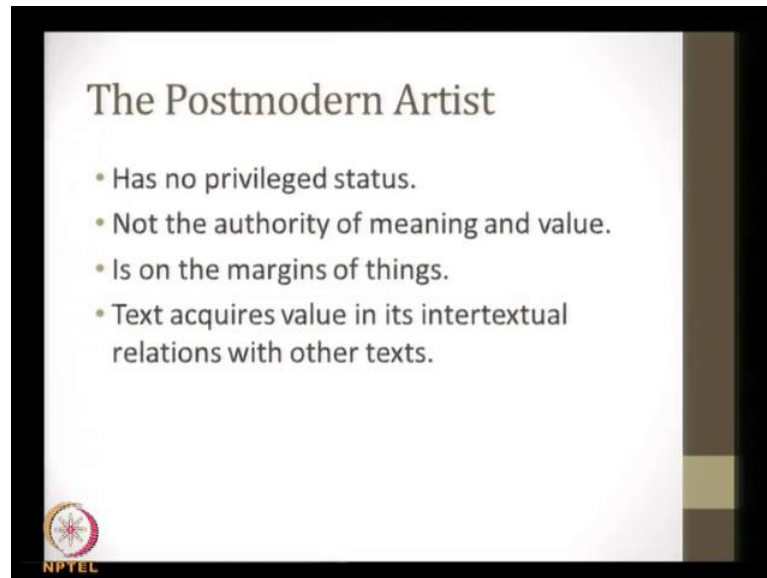
But on the other hand if you come to the post modern artist, the post modern artist does not occupy any privileged status or a privileged position. It is, he is not an authority of meaning and value it is even stated that the author is dead. One does text is written one the text is composed, the other vanishes from the scene the other has no role in it, the other is dead. So, one who tries to understand the meaning of the text needs to interact with the text, comes into context with the text, and negotiates with it there are often conflictual as well as very, I mean different forms of relationship one can have with the text.

And the textual meaning is not fixed to one particular aspect or entity or event, it is all different people might live different meaning in the text, all these are possibilities in a postmodern sense and it is not, it is on the margins of things see often the meaning of the text is sort in the margins of the things and text acquires value in it is intersexual relations with other texts, not that it exists as an isolated individual entity end in itself, as a unity in itself, but it is it essentially exists in a relationship with many other text.

And social and political changes end of European colonialism, which is very important aspect because colonialism was coming to end by 21st Century, by 20th Century mid 20th Century many European ex European colonies have got independence. And now that is another thing then development of mass communications and media culture this is actually an explosive aspect of contemporary civilization, contemporary culture that our culture is you know mass communication and media culture is so dominant in today's world

And growth of international marketing, instead of capitalist industrialize society to today we have a global market society with this new advancements in communication and internet in other technology have actually made this possible to unite the world to bring the world together and control it in different ways. End of cold war and possibilities of new wars, this is again contributed to this emergence of postmodern temperament, decline of Marxism the exposure of Stalinism and the recognition that the USSR was anti-individual freedom.

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USSR was a dream, USSR was to fulfill a dream, but ultimately it has proved that it is not a dream. It rather was a more authoritarian than any other European dictatorial regimes. Social and political changes, emergence of a post industrial society that is again a very common very visible feature, knowledge and information is important in economic life: not the production and control of materials. There is today's world we call it post industrial society which is controlled by knowledge and information a company's assets are understood not in terms of the land acquired by the company, or the number of employees who work in the company or the machinery which the company owns.

But the knowledge, the information, actually the knowledge which is the greatest asset. A revolt against authority, rationalism and liberal individualism were criticized and reinterpreted during this age.
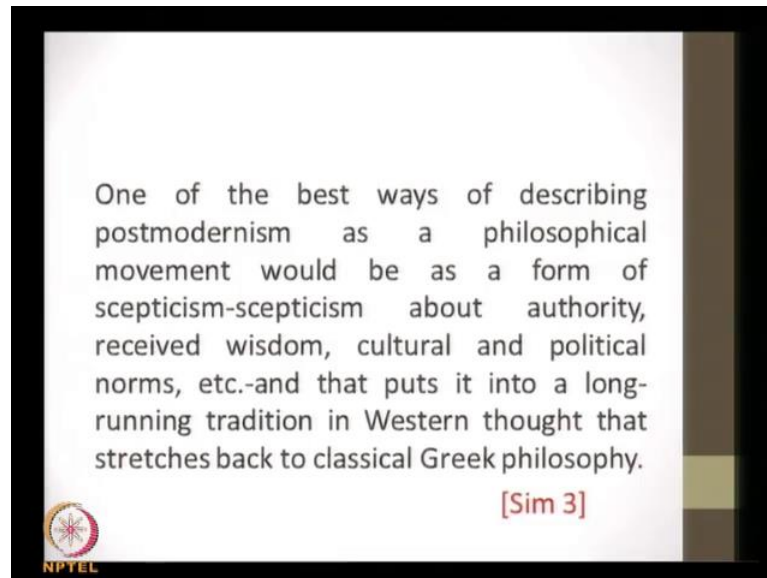
So, let us see this quote which is very relevant in this context, one of the best ways to describe of describing postmodernism as a philosophical movement would be as a form of scepticism-scepticism about authority received wisdom, cultural and political norms, etcetera. And that puts it into a long running tradition in western thought that stretches back to classical Greek philosophy, unquote.
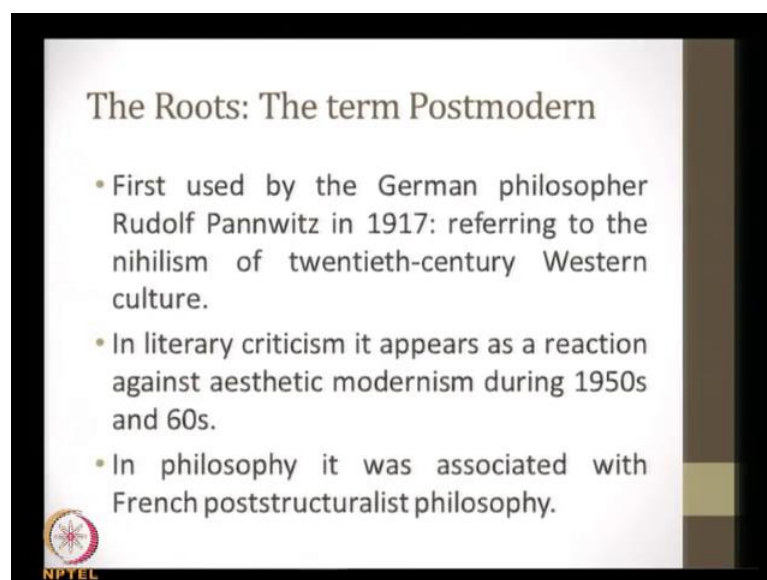
Now, when we try to understand the roots of postmodernism, just a historical interest, the term was first used by the German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz in 1917: referring to the

nihilism of 20th Century western culture. In literary criticism it appears as a reaction against aesthetic modernism during 1950s and 60s. And in philosophy it was associated with French poststructuralist philosophy about which we have already mentioned, and there are many thinkers like Derrida and Foucault, Lyotard. All these people have their own different, their own respective approaches and theories and postmodernism evolved out of these theorizations. It is a reaction against modern rationalism.

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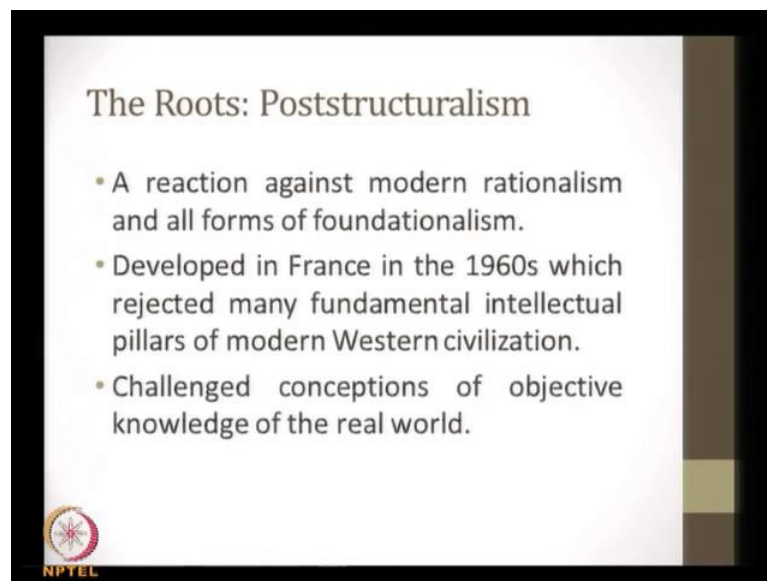
The Roots: Poststructuralism

- A reaction against modern rationalism and all forms of foundationalism.
- Developed in France in the 1960s which rejected many fundamental intellectual pillars of modern Western civilization.
- Challenged conceptions of objective knowledge of the real world.

And all forms of foundationalism developed in France in the 1960s which rejected many fundamental intellectual pillars of modern western civilization, I have already mentioned this with the emphasis on rejection of metanarratives and it is actually shattered some of the fundamental beliefs of modern civilization, challenged the conceptions of objective knowledge of the real world.

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And when we try to understand poststructuralism, it oppose the idea of a single textual meaning, I have already pointed out this, that there is no single textual meaning which can be located either in the others intentional life or the others historicity. Opposed conceptions of a historical human subjectivity against the notion of universal truth on the political front it promoted multiculturalism, feminism, identity politics etcetera.

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Let us see some of the important themes of postmodernism in very briefly, there is a kind of opposition between the notion of presence verses representation and construction and

then there is a conception of origin verses phenomena there is an emphasis on immanence of norms in opposition to what modernity is conception is transcendence of norms and unity verses plurality.

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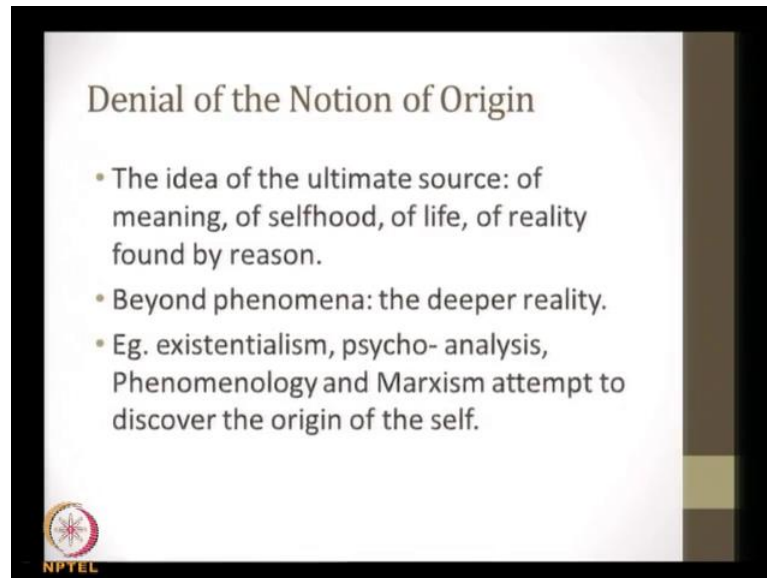
When you come to the denial of presence you have the notion of presentation in philosophy which is related to the foundations of knowledge, there are certain foundations which are more reliable and certain which directly and immediately given in experience example the perception or sensation of sense data they are directly given so they are more reliable, they are present not represented, but present.

But on the other hand there is an increasing emphasis on the idea of representation in postmodern age where everything is mediated by the human factor linguistic signs or language concepts and constructions and nothing is immediately presented.

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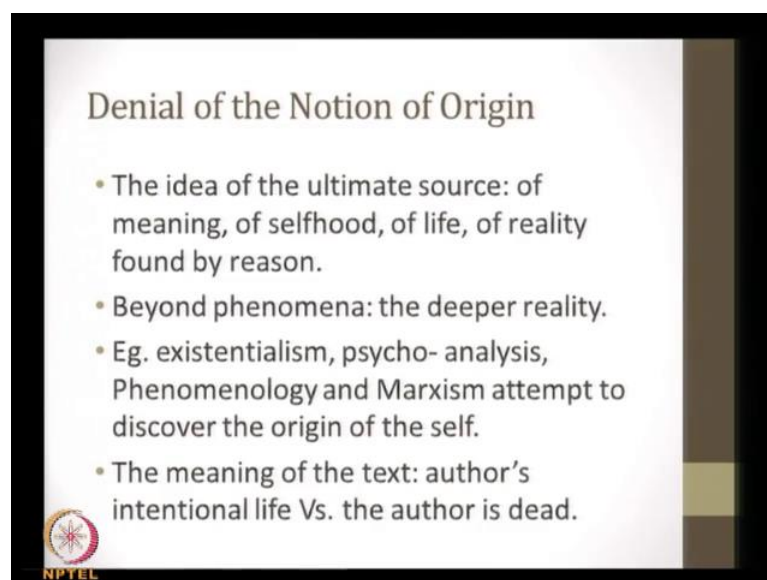
So, presentation verses representation then denial of the notion of origin, because origin suggests that there is one particular place from where everything comes up, everything emerges or meaning emerges from one particular a historical foundation. That conception is denied, the idea of the ultimate source of meaning, of selfhood, of life, of reality found by reason and again it is beyond phenomena a deeper reality.
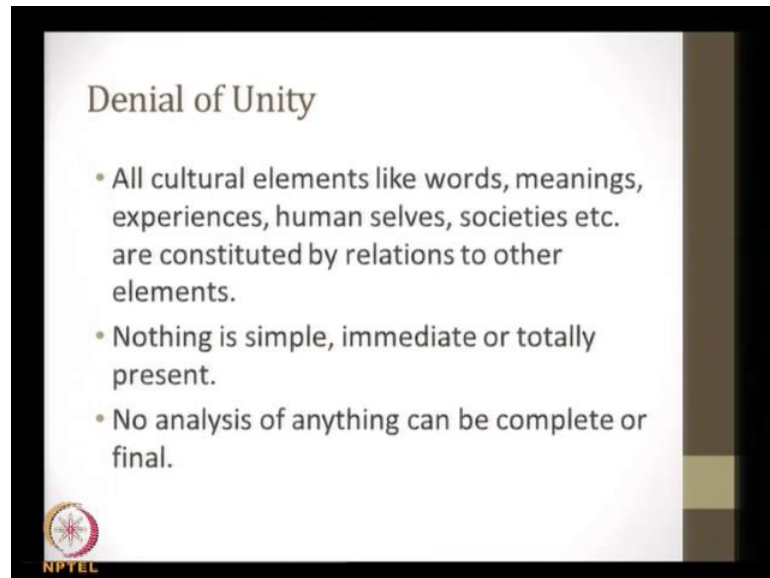
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You are trying to comprehend a reality which is not at the periphery which you do not experience, but something which is behind your experience, something which is the

foundation of your experience. And again here you can see existentialism, phenomenology, Marxism they all try to understand; they all try to reestablish the supremacy of the human subject, human self in a different way. And the meaning of the text is the author's intentional life versus the author is dead, I have already mentioned to this.

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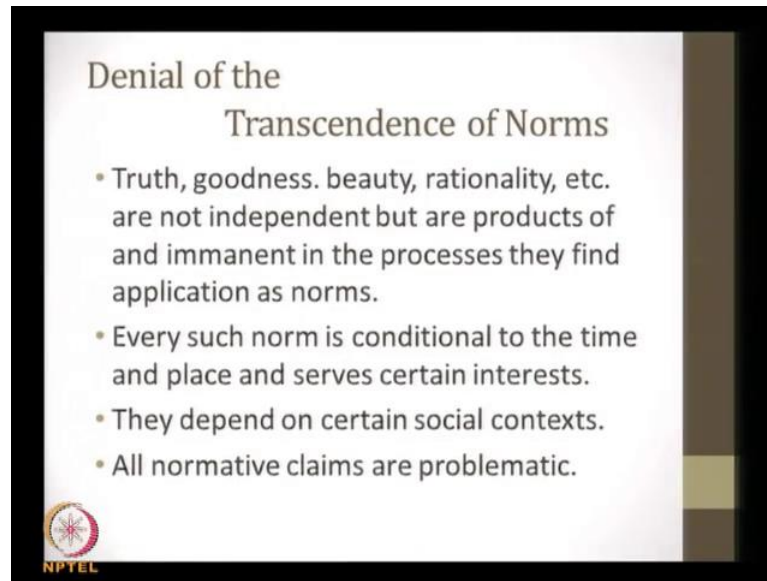
Denial of Unity

- All cultural elements like words, meanings, experiences, human selves, societies etc. are constituted by relations to other elements.
- Nothing is simple, immediate or totally present.
- No analysis of anything can be complete or final.

Now, denial of unity there is nothing all cultural elements like words, meanings, experiences, human selves, societies, etcetera. Are constituted by relations to one another, constructions by other things by language, by intertextual, by cultures etcetera, nothing is simple immediate or totally present. Everything, every entity, every cultural element is extremely complex and is constitutive of different entities human subjectivity is the best example to understand this. No analysis of anything can be complete or final.

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And there is no transcendence of norms, like truth, goodness, beauty, rationality etcetera. Are not independent, but are products of and immanent in the processes they find application as norms. And every such norm is conditional to the time and place and serves certain interests. For instance Foucault would relate knowledge with power, and Nietzsche we have already seen how power plays an important role in determining morality.

Everything is conditional to several other factors there is nothing which is simple, and all norms depend on certain social contexts. All normative claims are equally problematic because there is no foundation if there is a universal foundation like what the religious traditions would project as divine or rational secular tradition modernity would say as rational universal rationality; then you have non problematic criteria, but since such a foundation is absent everything is equally problematic.
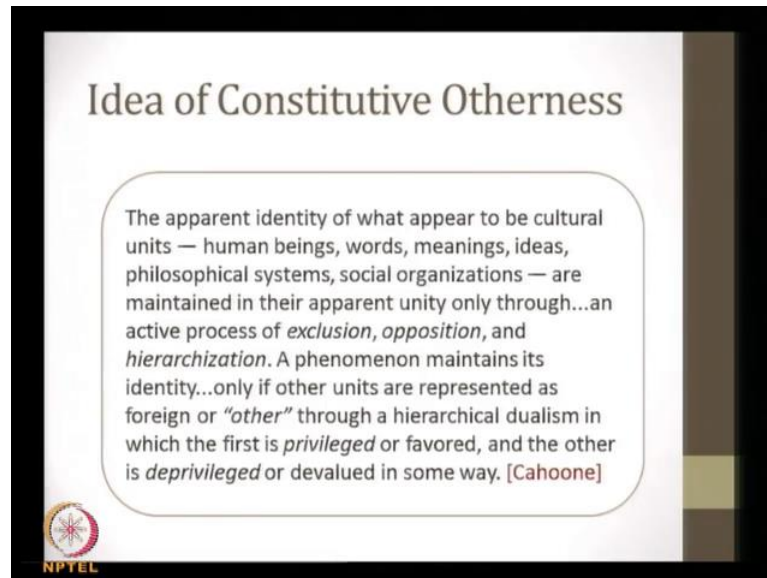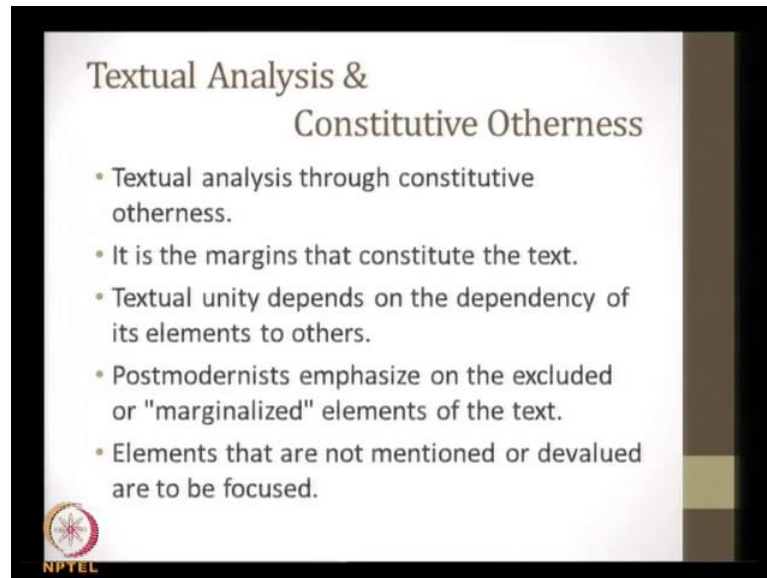
There is an idea of constitutive idea of otherness which these some of these postmodernists have talked about like they would say that, I quote the apparent identity of what appear to be cultural units like human beings, words meanings ideas philosophical systems, social organizations are maintained in their apparent unity only through an active process of exclusion opposition and hierarchization.

A phenomenon maintains it is identity, only if other units are represented as foreign or other through a hierarchical dualism in which the first is privileged or favored and the other is deprivileged or devalued in some way.

This is again very interesting like Richard Rotti points out like our conceptions about ourselves as ourselves as a community, something which is common, something which is fixed. It is often related to our conceiving ourselves as different from others. So, it is based on differences it based on f of a notion of exclusion and from this you know you can come to the notion of constituting otherness in textual analysis.
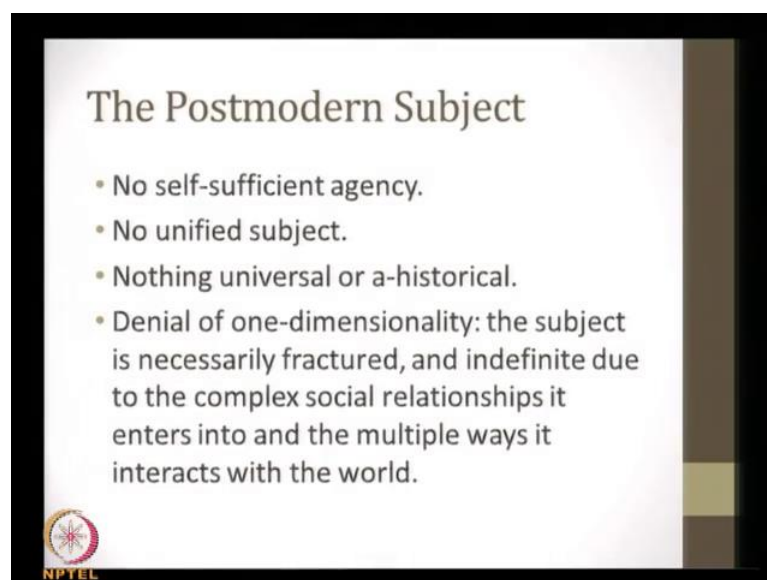
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When a text is analyzed it is believed that textual analysis has to be conducted through constitutive otherness, the margins of the texts needs to be examined that constitute the text. Textual unity depends on the dependency of it is elements to others and postmodernists emphasize on the excluded or marginalized elements in a text, elements that are not mentioned or devalued are to be focused.
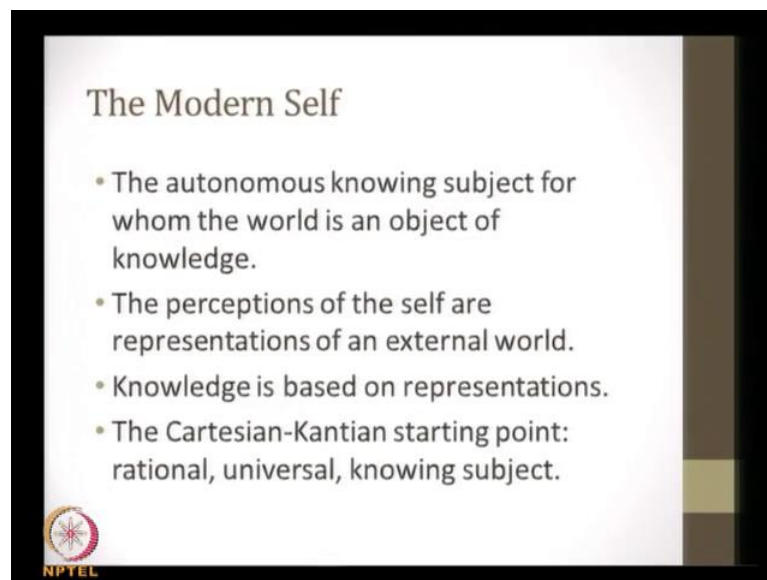
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This context we will also have a very brief mention about, the postmodern subject as I already mentioned subject is a central, I mean it is one of the most important concepts of

modern modernity of enlightenment in Europe, which understands the notion of subject in terms of universal rationality. But postmodern subject is a no self sufficient agency they do not accept a conception of a self sufficient agency, there is no unified subject nothing universal or a historical is admitted in to the scheme of the things by the postmodernists. Denial of one dimensionality the subject is necessarily fractured according to the postmodernists.
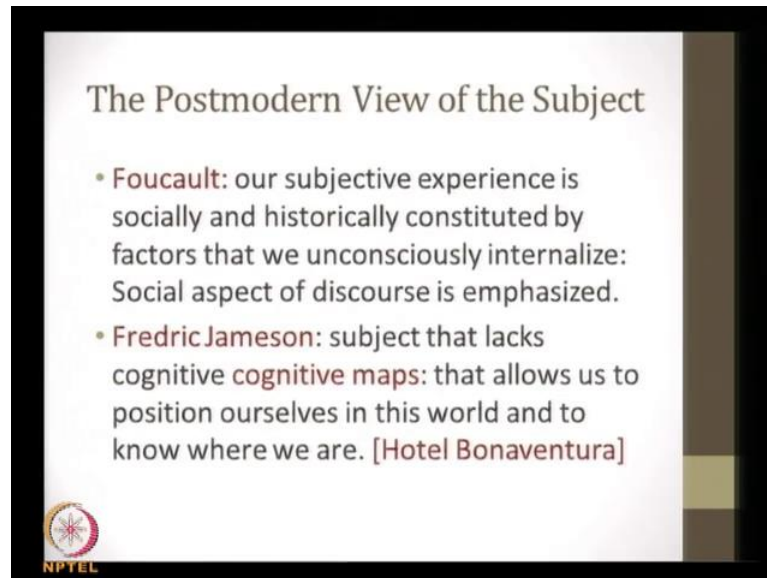
Because there are several factors which contribute in making the subject, some of them are even opposing to each other and indefinite due to complex social relationships it enters into and the multiple ways it interacts with the world.

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And, it is against the modern subject which is autonomous knowing subject for whom the world is an object of knowledge which we have already seen.

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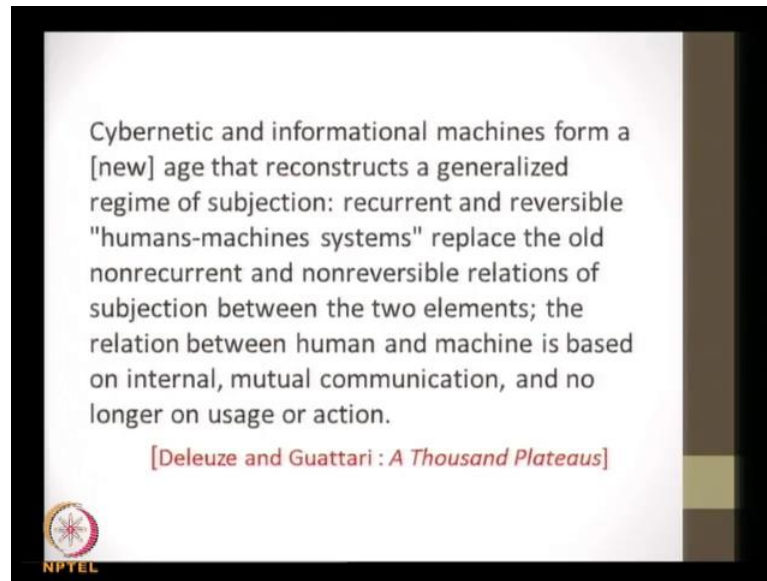

And here the post modern views of the subject; we will just very briefly examine a couple of philosophers Foucault for example, say is that our subjective experience is socially and historically constituted by factors that we unconsciously internalize.

In that sense we can say that, Foucault is emphasizing on the social aspect of the discourse. The discourse formations he emphasized on, there is no foundation; there is no essence of universal essence or a historical element that constitutes the subject. And when we come to Fredric Jameson it is very interesting here subject that lacks cognitive maps he says, there is a subject which lacks cognitive maps that allows us to position ourselves in this world and to know where we are.
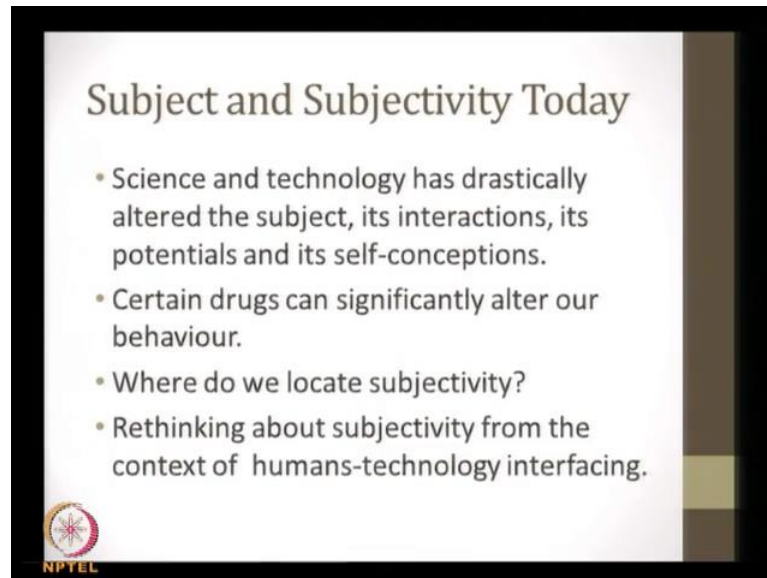
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> Cybernetic and informational machines form a [new] age that reconstructs a generalized regime of subjection: recurrent and reversible "humans-machines systems" replace the old nonrecurrent and nonreversible relations of subjection between the two elements; the relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication, and no longer on usage or action.
>
> [Deleuze and Guattari : *A Thousand Plateaus*]

He gives the example of this hotel Bonaventura, which is a huge hotel where you have everything, there are multiplexers, there are restaurants, there are hotel rooms, there are everything is in one place and you once you enter this hotel you lose your sense of peace and time. You save yourself from the risk of going to the streets. Of course, that is you save yourself, but at the cost of, you know sacrificing your sense of time and space your sense of belongingness where do you belong you really lose yourself in that context.

And this is from Deleuze and Guattari's book, cybernetic and informational machines from form a new age that reconstructs, a generalized regime of subjection recurrent and reversible human machine systems replace the old non recurrent and non reversible relations of subjection between the two elements. The relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication, and no longer on usage or action.

That radically reconstitutes the notion of subjectivity, in this sense we can say that the subject and subjectivity today science and technology has drastically altered the subject, it is interactions, it is potentials and it is self conceptions. There are very powerful drugs in the market which can actually completely change, completely alter subjectivity your nature of your subjectivity and your character. There is nothing which is foundationally there by nature present things are dependent on several other factors, certain drugs can significantly alter our behavior where do we locate subjectivity.

Rethinking about subjectivity from the context of humans-technology interfacing is a very interesting aspect and there are many philosophers who tried to understand human subjectivity in terms of this cybernetic new reality which is emerging.

And the political ramifications, we will conclude our discussions postmodernism with this slide, this also the postmodernism has also inspired or rather influenced. The political arena in this universe because it opposes oppressive ideologies including communism, which claim that there is one rational wave, one rational goal and instead it celebrates pluralism often we all know that societies are composed of very complex elements, I mean if you take Indian society, there is nothing like a pan Indian consciousness universally available.

There are several aspects which contribute to human what we call Indian for instance. Here there are various political initiatives like the feminist movement racial equality movements, homosexual rights movements, peace movements and anti-globalization movement etcetera. All these movements you can say you know they are based on a conception of difference, instead of uniting.

Say for example, the feminist would rather instead of instead of reinstating the unity of all human beings, the feminist would underline the factor that they are different women are different from men, since women are different from men their concerns are different, their interest are different there are several ways in which they can contribute which men cannot and on the other hand they would also argue for equal rights which have been denied to them for several centuries by most of the civilizations.

Again racially equality movements, on the one hand you say that everyone is equal, but that is not the case. There are several factors which make us unequal's like, race, caste, color of the skin, languages which we speak minority. I mean all kinds of politics is emerging today we have this identity politics and homosexuals, they also underline the differences instead of emphasizing on the commonalities all these movements would underline the differences. They all try to sort of highlight what lies in the margin. So, postmodernism in that sense is as I have already mentioned it as Lyotard says is something which opposes all metanarratives, something which opposes all homogenization, all attempts to unify and unite, and a historical universal perspective on reality and truth.

With this we will wind up this lecture.

Thank you.