

Introduction to Cultural Studies
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Lecture - 18
Judith Butler Gender Trouble - I

Hello and welcome to this Introduction to Cultural Studies lecture on NPTEL and we are just about to begin a new text today in this particular lecture and the text which we will submit today is on your screen, it is called Gender Trouble, Feminism and a subversion of identity by Judith Butler. So we just finished a series of text looking at the different configurations of culture and cultural identities in postmodern conditions in colonial conditions etc.

So this particular lecture is going to be really interesting because it is going to take off a new direction in terms of cultural studies and the way in which cultural identities are produced and reproduced and generated or manufactured through gendered identities. So this collusion between culture and gender are something that this particular book does very well, examines very well I think.

And we are going to look at it quite closely in great details in terms of understanding how gender becomes a very key concern, a very key issue in cultural studies. So Butler, just before I begin with this particular text, a few sentences, a few lines on Butler and Judith Butler is one of the figures, one of the seminal figures actually who straggled postmodernism, poststructuralism as well as gender studies and gender identities.

And she is someone who people heavily draw on in terms of looking at masculinity, femininity, masculine identities, feminine identities and the production of identities through gendered medium in popular culture, in you know discursive situations etc. So she is famous for many terms and she has pioneered and revolutionalized. Performativity is one of the key terms that she keeps, you know going back to, performativity is obviously one of the one of those terms again which connect postmodernism with poststructuralism and then of course with general studies as well.

So this particular book will be a really key text for us in terms of looking at how gender is a cultural construct, in terms of how gender is a cultural reproduction, a cultural process of production and reproduction and what this book highlights among many things is the artificiality of the entire idea of gender. So how gender is basically a process or performance which attempts to conform to certain codes which are topical to that particular culture, particular space time.

So this particular book you know gender trouble and of course the very title is quite provocative, trouble is a very provocative term and Butler deliberately uses it and at some point in the book, and we will look at that particular section, she explains her choice of the word trouble and why does she chose the word trouble. To what extent is gender trouble, to what extent can we trouble the idea of gender, the accepted idea of gender which is obviously what Butler sets out to do in this particular text.

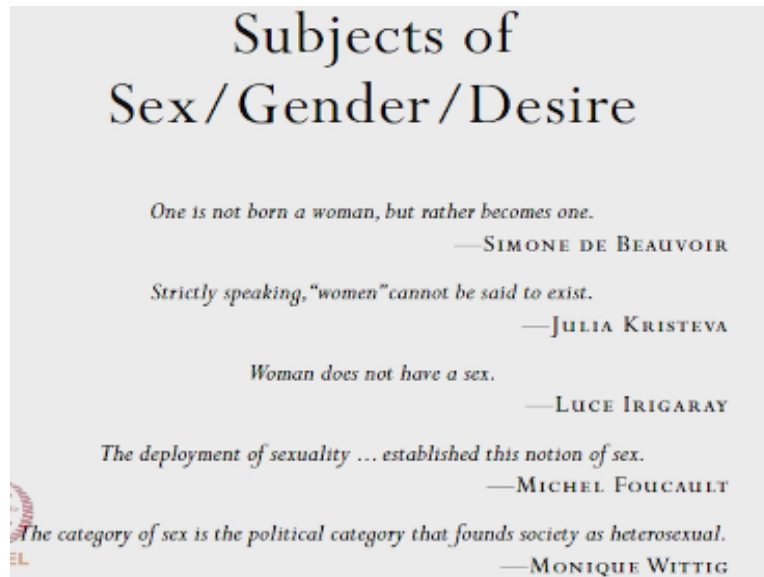
So this particular book could be seen, could be read as a very delicious deconstruction of the idea of gender, the normative idea of gender and examination, a very urgent examination how gender is constructed and produced and manipulated to a certain kind of cultural codes and of course the cultural codes depend on a series of factors including but not limited to race, economy, language, you know religion etc.

And again we are back to this one of the key things that we have been running through this particular course and that is looking at culture as an entanglement, an asymmetric entanglement between abstraction and materiality. So gender too fits the bill in terms of you know it being an entanglement between abstraction and materiality. It is a very material and it is self-determinant, a very material component of gender which includes a series of factors which is the body, language etc.

And is also a sort of abstract component of gender which is part of the discursive design in which gender is sort of operates. So this book is really interesting and very crucial for any serious study of culture and we will look at it in close details in this particular lecture and the series of lectures coming up. So let us begin and the very beginning of this particular book, Gender Trouble by Judith Butler.

So at the very outset Butler talks about how to what extent is gender a category you know. So what is the sort of the ontology of the category of gender and there is a series of quotations that she offers in the very beginning and it should be on your screen at the moment.

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So it is Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Michel Foucault, so these are the thinkers, these are the intellectuals that she draws on and also critiques at various points of this particular book. And one of the really key things of this particular book is a very thorough examination of different sort of different definitions of gender at different points of time by different philosophers including Kristeva, Irigaray, and Foucault.

And she looks at the differences in terms of you know the idea of gender as defined by these thinkers and she draws on and critiques as well as sort of deconstructs the different definitions of gender across different points of time by various thinkers and of course Monique Wittig also features quite heavily in this particular text.

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I. "WOMEN" AS THE SUBJECT OF FEMINISM

For the most part, feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued. But *politics* and *representation* are controversial terms. On the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women. For feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represents women has seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of

Now at the very beginning she talks about you know two very key terms which are sort of germane to entire, the entire umbrella term of culture studies and the 2 terms are politics and representation, right and then she goes on to sort of define the difference between the two terms; so what is politics, so what is representation and of course representation as you know is a really crucial category and then we have read Powell, we have read you know series of other sort of thinkers and writers where representation becomes a very key thing.

I mean Leotard too talks about representation in a very in a postmodern kind of a way. But over here Butler sort of sets out to define the very sort of difference between you know ontological difference between politics and representation in terms of their location and gender studies. So she goes on to say on one hand representation serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects.

On the other representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of woman. So we have this apparent dichotomy in the description and definition. So on the one hand representation is the legitimizing process you know it is the process through which a particular subject is legitimized, is made visible you know and the representation of woman can be seen as a process through which woman emerges political subjects.

So that is the positive definition of representation you know something which address legitimacy to woman, something which gives visibility, address visibility to woman and something which invest this entire subjectivity of woman as political subjects. But on the other hand representations also are normative function which is set to reveal or distort what is assumed to be true about the category of woman.

So representation is really you know a very complex process because in one hand it can be an emancipatory factor, it can be an emancipatory process which offers agency to the subject. It has an agentic function. It offers (()) (07:25) agency, legitimacy etc. But on the other hand representation can also be constricting in the sense that you know it can restrict the subject to the normative function that is defined by you know the dominant categories of knowledge.

And it is also used sometimes selectively to reveal or distort what is assumed to be true about the category of woman. So the word assumed over here is very interesting and very important. So there is a set of assumptions, an economy of assumptions, an economy of expectations which sort of invested into this normative definition of woman and representation can sometimes consolidate that economy. It can reveal that economy, it can distort that economy. It can also consolidate that economy.

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sensation or, indeed, liberation, but there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women. The domains of political and linguistic “representation” set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended.

Foucault points out that juridical systems of power *produce* the subjects they subsequently come to represent.¹ Juridical notions of power

So representation becomes a very crucial term for Butler in the very beginning of this particular book. So it is a two-way process. It can be emancipatory, it can be legitimizing, it can also be restrictive, it can also sort of confirm to the codes of, the dominant codes of conduct, the dominant codes of sort of ontological codes which define the woman. So representation can be liberating as well as constricting.

Representation can be a positive term, it can be revolutionary, it can offer agency, it can offer legitimacy but at the same time it can also be restrictive. So it is a very interesting term that you know Butler sort of offers us throws at us at the very beginning of this particular book and one of the things which we have noticed about this book is that it is very provocative. It is almost designed to be provocative and therein lies the radical nature of this particular book.

The radical quality of the book lies precisely in its provocative quality and you know Butler makes it very clear and we just read (()) (09:02), we just read Frantz Fanon where also provocation you know the idea of being provocative becomes discursive you know strategy in that particular book. So you know Fanon is very provocative and he makes his dissent very clear. He makes his sort of resentment very clear and he makes his subject position, the subjectivity very clear throughout the particular book.

And therein lies the radical nature of *Black Skin, White Masks* which we just finished. Now if we look at Butler she considers language she takes the language very seriously in terms of a component of gender. So language becomes a very crucial component of gender and again you know we are looking at the entanglement between abstract apparatus and material processes.

So how to use language, how do you sort of confirm to language and how is language itself a gendered quality, a gendered process, a gendered category. So these are things which are examined in great details in a very radical way in this particular book. If you look at this highlighted section in the screen which should be on your screen in the moment where she says, the domains of political and linguistic representation set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject.

In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must first be metanarratives before representation can be extended. So we are immediately into a very controversial zone and she says representation can only come after legitimacy. So a subject must confirm, must meet the standards, must meet the expectations you know of a particular category before representation can be extended. So representation becomes part of the legitimizing process.

However, representation is oftentimes more often than not part of the dominant discursive strategy and when I say dominant discursive strategy I mean that the human subject must confirm to the dominant discourse before it can be represented, before it can receive representation. So representation become sometimes quite collusive with the dominant discourses of you know knowledge, dominant discourses of gender, dominant discourses of politics etc.

So representation can become you know more often than not a part of status quo, a part of the dominant codes. So the first expectation of the subject, the first sort of aspiration of the subject in a very normative sense would be to satisfy or meet the expectation after which only after the subject is acknowledged as a subject can representation can come into being. So representation is a post acknowledgement process.

So subject must be acknowledged first as a subject if subject must confirm first as a subject only then can representation can come into being as a process. So we I mean Butler is very cautious, is very guarded in terms of looking at representation as a purely liberational kind of a process. So she says no often that not representation is an extended process of legitimization. Representation is an extension of status quo, extension of dominant discourse etc. because the subject must first confirm before it can be represented. So representation more often than not is part of the dominant strategy.

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contingent and retractable operation of choice. But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures. If this analysis is right, then the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. This becomes politically problematic if that system can be shown to produce gendered subjects along a differential

And then she talks about regulation and how regulation becomes a very key term, a very key category in terms of gender, in terms of gendered identity, in terms of gendered representation and she goes on to say that the subject is subjected to this ideas of regulation, regulation of structures. They are subjected to them from defined and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures.

If this analysis is right then a juridical formation, the juridical formation of language and politics that represent woman as a subject of feminism is a self-discursive formation and the effect of a given version of representation in politics and a feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation.

So at the very beginning of gender trouble she is looking at how the idea of liberation, the idea of emancipation can sometimes be consumed within the codes which inform the dominant discursive strategies. So she goes on to say that you know the very act of subjectification is actually part of the discursive system. So the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted at the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation.

So the very political system which supposes which is supposed to emancipate or facilitate the emancipation of woman is actually you know part of the discursive strategy. So you know you cannot really escape discursivity. That is the key message in this particular highlighted section.

So discursivity becomes the hegemonic condition and so the entire idea of feminism, entire idea of feminist subjectivity can actually sometimes more often than not be consumed by the discursivity which informs the particular process.

So true liberation can actually come with the questioning of the discursivity and more often than not the feminist subjectivity is actually part of the dominant discursive strategy and you cannot escape and it cannot escape the discursivity which over determines its subjectivity. So discursivity becomes a very important qualification, a very important category in Butler and she looks at the ways in which discursivity should be questioned.

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The question of "the subject" is crucial for politics, and for feminist politics in particular, because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not "show" once the juridical structure of politics has been established. In other words, the political construction of the subject proceeds with certain legitimating and exclusionary aims, and these political operations are effectively concealed and naturalized by a political analysis that takes juridical structures as their foundation. Juridical power inevitably "produces" what it claims merely to represent; hence, politics must be concerned with this dual function of power: the juridical and the productive. In

And how discursivity oftentimes consumes any efforts to emancipate, any effort to sort of liberate and how all this liberational strategies, emancipatory strategies are actually embedded by discursivity, by dominant discursivity. So it becomes part of the status quo rather than being truly radical you know radicalism can actually sometimes become reified and become extensions of status quo, become extensions of dominant strategies, okay.

And then of course she moves on to the question of the subject. So the question of subject is obviously crucial in terms of looking at feminism in terms of looking at masculinity, in terms of looking at patriarchy etc. and subject is a very key term in cultural studies in general. So we are very interested in a subject or subjectivity or subject position or subjecthood or the formation of

subjects in cultural studies because that is what I mean related to subject we have this entire area of other components such as agency you know liberation, hegemony, power, knowledge etc.

And then she goes on to say, the question of the subject is crucial for politics and for feminist politics in particular because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not show once the juridical structure of politics has been established. In other words, the political construction of the subject proceeds with certain legitimating and exclusionary aims.

And these political operations are effectively concealed and naturalized by a political analysis that takes juridical structures as their foundation. So the key words over here I mean what are the things which we should be really interested in looking at Gender Trouble is that you know Butler's use of verbs are very important and then she places the greatest emphasis on verbs that part of speech that she is most interested in.

Because for her the (()) (16:08) of gender is the process of becoming, unbecoming, rebecoming. So verbs become very important in Butler's discourse. So you know we need to examine the verbs very carefully and any description that Butler offers us. So if you look at this particular section and highlighted in yellow where she talks about the idea of naturalization, construction and then you know concealment etc.

So all these are verbs and this is exactly the way in which she argues you know a real legitimizing function, real emancipatory function are actually defaced away and then she goes on to say that every subject or every subject formation proceeds or operates with certain codes and those codes are concealed, those codes are exclusive, those codes are you know not part of the you know not foregrounded actually because then obviously the whole point of being a dominant discourse is to conceal the codes.

So every subject formation, every act of subject formation is basically a sort of confirmation to certain codes. But those codes itself are concealed. Those codes are naturalized and the process of naturalization is very important in Butler's analysis because if you cannot naturalize the codes

then obviously it is very difficult to be hegemonic. So the whole idea of something becoming hegemonic is by process of naturalization. So naturalization entails acceptance.

Naturalization entails acknowledgment. Naturalization entails legitimacy. So naturalization is something which cannot be questioned right. So if you naturalize something you take it for granted, you assume it without questioning it. So that conceals its constructed quality. So that is the whole idea that Butler is trying to foreground and highlight over here. So she argues how the whole idea of creating a code which becomes hegemonic you know operates through concealment and naturalization.

So concealment and naturalization become really crucial categories in Butler in terms of looking at how gender identities are produced and reproduced and consolidated, right. So we have this idea of hegemonic gender which is oftentimes more often than not heterosexual in quality. So this entire heterosexual dominant hegemonic gender operates through acts of concealment and through acts of naturalization which make it make other kinds of gender identities marginalized, right.

So the whole idea of something becoming hegemonic is through a process of naturalization and concealment and these are very crucial categories in Butler's analysis and then she goes on to say, a juridical power inevitably produces what it claims merely to represent. Hence politics must be concerned with the dual function of power, the juridical and the productive. So when you are looking at, when you are questioning the entire you know discourse of power we need to examine the juridical quality of power as well as the productive quality of power.

Because what she says over here, juridical power inevitably produces what it claims merely to represent. So production and representation are often merged in dominant discourses. You produce certain rules, you produce certain laws, you produce certain codes and then those codes are used to represent human subjects. So again we are back where we began at the very sort of outset in this particular book how representation actually becomes extensions of power, extensions of productive power etc.

So representation and production often merge together in dominant discourses. So the rules which are produced, the codes which are produced are then used for representation. So those codes themselves become the codes of representation. So the codes of production, the codes of representation often merge in hegemonic discourses and that is something Butler goes on to define in the very beginning of this particular book.

So representation, production, concealment, naturalization these become very crucial categories for Butler and you know she looks at these categories over and over again in terms of how these are used very effectively in terms of defining hegemonic gendered identity. So gendered identities obviously produce. So production becomes a very important category in gender identities. Gender identities are represented.

So representation becomes a very important category in gender studies. Now the point is Butler will argue over here very effectively and this is part of the radical thing that she does in this particular book that is the codes of production the way in which she produced certain codes, the hegemonic codes and the codes of representation they often merge in terms of looking at gendered identities. So gendered identities are often produced and represented simultaneously through a certain you know hegemonic and dominant codes.

And therein lies the process of construction of hegemonic gender identities which is obviously naturalized, right. So if we can naturalize the process, if we can conceal the constructed quality of the process then obviously you would not notice the difference between production and representation. You know, you look at it as the same thing, you look at it as one part one given one you know dominant given which happens which operates without any active construction, right.

And this is exactly the triumph of any dominant discourse and that it manages conceal its constructed quality right by merging its active production and its active representation, right. So this merge is very important and Butler spends some more time on this sort of examining this particular merge.

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sively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.

The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. Where those various contexts

Now, obviously as I mentioned verbs become very important in Butler’s analysis and then you know she is very interested in looking at how certain codes are concealed, certain codes are smuggled into what become you know hegemonic and dominant in due course of time through acts of repetition, through acts of representation, through acts of concealment. So concealment, representation, repetition, naturalizations all these become very important processes in Butler’s analysis of gender and in gendered identities.

Because you know we are back again where we started, where we mentioned in the very beginning of this particular course that production is a very crucial term in culture and cultural studies because cultural identities or culture itself is an act of production, right and also an act of representation. So you know and obviously this process of production happens through very materialistic ways. It incorporates a lot of material apparatus.

It incorporates a lot of abstract apparatus and is a process of entanglement or materiality and abstraction. However, for culture to become consolidated, to become hegemonic it must naturalize its process. It must naturalize its constructed quality. You know its constructed quality must be concealed in front of the subject. So a subject just consumes the hegemonic structure without realizing it is a construct.

And it can only happen if the process of production and the process of representation merge together and to becoming one given one automatic assumption, one automatic given which is consumed and received without questioning, okay. Now and Butler says, part of the process, part of the success of dominant gendered identities happens because or takes place because or becomes impossible to separate our gender from the political and cultural intersections in which they are invariably it is invariably produced and maintained.

So this is on your screen highlighted in yellow where she says that you know part of the process in which this entire idea of dominant gendered identities become possible or become successful is by making it impossible to separate out gender from the politics of representation and the politics of production, right. So it is I mean gender is obviously produced, gendered identity is obviously produced with certain very you know coded acts and very coded configurations.

However, this act of production merges seamlessly into an act of representation and this seamlessness is a very crucial thing in dominant gender identity. So you know the seams must never be exposed, right. So it is impossible to separate gender from the political and cultural intersections and which is inevitably produced and maintained, right. And Butler says it is part of post structuralist discourse, it is part of the deconstructed, deconstructions discourse of looking at gender.

You know we should examine precisely these cultural configurations, these cultural productions, these cultural constructedness which inform the process in gender identity. So unless we can do that no serious study of gender is possible and then she goes on to say, the political assumption that must be, that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination.

The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. So Butler over here reminds us of the risk of universalization. One of the dangers one of the pitfalls

of universalization lies precisely in its you know doing away with the topicality of discourses, the spatiotemporal, the contextual quality of discourses.

So she warns us against looking at patriarchy as a metaphenomenon or femininity as a metaphenomenon or masculinity as a metaphenomenon and she reminds us that we must be critical of the tendency that totalize, of the tendency to universalize these discourses, right. So the entire idea of having a universal idea of feminism, a universal idea of masculine identity, patriarchal identity etc. or even the narratives of oppression you know.

So these actually to Butler are very risky categories because that what it does is it does away with the topicality of the evil, the topicality of the subject position, of the subjectivity of subject position which then becomes a reified category and a universalizing discourse. The universalizing is a tendency that Butler warns us against in this particular book very crucial.

And then of course I mean the whole idea is to look at gender as a process which is tied to a particular you know cultural condition, is tied to a particular spatiotemporal condition.

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and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two.⁸ The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one.

Unless you can do that we run the risk of reification. We run the risk of totalization which obviously will be concealed very quickly by the dominant discourses which operate on totalizing tendencies as well, okay. So totalization or universalization are tendencies that Butler warns us

against, right. So and then again she goes on to say and this is on your screen at the moment highlighted in yellow, the presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors or is otherwise restricted by it.

So again we, now she is talking about the biological idea of gender and the cultural idea of gender and then she talks about how the presumption of a binary gender system you know male, female, heterosexual, homosexual implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex. So gender and biology they are sort of mimetically related indominant discourses according to Butler and that is something that she questions.

When they constructed status and gender is theorized as radically independent of sex gender itself becomes a free floating artifice with a consequence that a man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one and woman and feminine are male body as easily as a female one. So this is a very interesting use of poststructuralism that Butler uses over here and thus looking at gender studies.

And she says over here that we must be we must be very interested, we must be examining the idea of biology, biological sex and gender which is more of a cultural category and we must see to the fact that you know man and masculine might be easily applicable to female body you know as much applicable to female body as the male one and woman and feminine can be applicable to a male body as easily as a female one.

And this can only happen if you look at a non-binary, a non-mimetic way of looking at gender. So if you take gender as a non-mimetic and non-binary term only then can we look at masculine and feminine is not overdetermined by biology. So therein lies the difference between the gender and biological sex to Butler because being a man or a woman has nothing to do with being masculine or feminine.

Because masculinity and femininity I mean these are constructions, these are cultural constructions or behavioral construction which pertain to certain codes of conduct and according to Butler the codes are very important and the codes actually sometimes do not rely on biological

gender and biological sex whether you are male or female does not matter in terms of looking at masculinity or femininity.

So the terms masculinity or femininity can be applied to anyone irrespective of the biological sex and this is a very crucial category, a very crucial examination that Butler offers in *Gender Trouble* and she sort of develops the idea she develops this argument throughout this particular book as we move on.

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Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire

ings are only externally related. But “the body” is itself a construction, as are the myriad “bodies” that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender; the question then emerges: To what extent does the body *come into being* in and through the mark(s) of gender? How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will?¹⁵

So already we are in the domain of construction. We are in the domain of performativity. We are in the domain of mimesis and performativity becomes a very important category in Butler and she goes on to say very crucially that you know biological sex and gender you know have often times no relation at all to each other and we must look beyond a very binaristic understanding of gender.

And look at gender as a more pluralistic, plastic, performative idea whereby maleness or femaleness or femininity or masculinity these can operate independently of biological sex and this is a very radical thing that Butler sets out to state in this particular book. So and then she goes on to say highlighted in yellow on your screen that, the body is itself a construction as are the myriad bodies that constitute the domain of gendered subjects.

Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender. The question that emerges, to what extent does the body come into being and through the marks of gender. How do we conceive, how do you reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will. So body becomes a very crucial site for Butler, a very crucial space for Butler.

It can be a potentially a subversive site, it can be a confirming site, it can be a site where which confirms certain codes, it can be a site which questions the codes etc. So the body becomes a verb to Butler. So the body is being, the body is a process to Butler's discourse. So this is again part of what I just said that we need to be aware, we need to pay a very careful attention to the way verbs flow in Butler's works and especially in Gender Trouble.

So the body becomes the verb, the body becomes a process being and becoming, rebecoming, unbecoming through different discursive formations. So it is a construction Butler goes on to say. The body is itself a construction as are the myriad bodies that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. So you know gendered subjects are constructions you know constructions to certain bodies, apparatus. So discourses through our bodies in quality.

So bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of the gender, right. So it is erroneous Butler would argue that bodies are prediscursive, right. So bodies are discursive in quality. So the discursivity of body is something that Butler highlights over here. So question that emerges to what extent does the body come into being and through the marks of gender. So the bodies come into being through certain markers of gender.

Those markers of gender are obviously culturally constructed, discursively constructed. So the body becomes feminine and masculine as sometimes irrespective of biological sex and this is again a very poststructuralist way of looking at gender. So body is coming to being through certain markers mediated by this markers which are obviously culturally constructed and the second question which follows from this naturally is how do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will.

So how can we look at body as not a passive site but an active site of interrogation, an active site of contestation and this is according to Butler the very radical way in which we can question the codes of conduct which pertain to dominant discourses of gender by making the body an active site of contestation, an active site of questioning rather than a passive medium of you know receiving discourses, receiving the codes of conduct, receiving the dominant codes which are constructed culturally.

So rather than being a passive receptacle to the codes, the body can potentially become according to Butler a site of questioning, a site of contestation and therein lies the subversive potential of gender, subversive potential of performativity. So performativity is a very embodied phenomenon which questions the very constructed quality of gendered codes, gendered identities and the very codes of conduct which are culturally constituted and constructed.

So this concludes the first lecture on Butler's Gender Trouble and we begin to look at the way in which gender becomes a construct which can be deconstructed through play, through trouble, through sublimating the entire idea of you know binaristic way of looking at gender and to make gender less and less seamless, more and more constructed in quality. If you can do that according to Butler you know then we can look at gender as what it really is, a set of codes which the body performs and confirms through at different points of time.

So I conclude the first lecture on Butler's Gender Trouble with this and we will continue with this in the next lectures to come. Thank you for your attention.