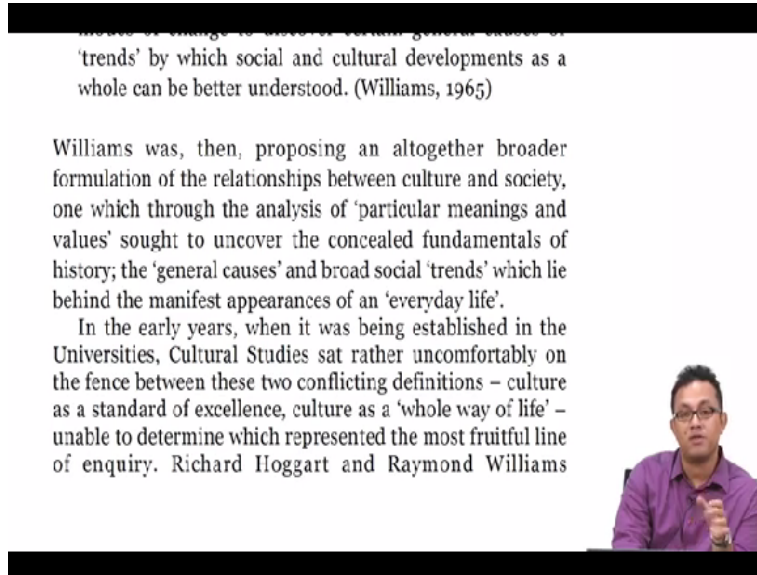


Introduction to Cultural Studies
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Lecture – 48
Dick Hebdige-Subculture the Meaning of Style - II

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So hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Introduction to Cultural Studies where we were looking at Dick Hebdige's book Subculture. We have already started with this book. We have had one lecture and we talked about the importance of this particular book, specially for the purpose of this course. And we have seen already how Hebdige talks about two different narratives of culture.

One, the Arnoldian narrative which looks at culture as nostalgic, conservative, aesthetic category, something which wants to recover, which looks at the past, it is a backward looking narrative which wants to retrieve all that was best and all that was beautiful, all that was harmonious in the world and looks at culture as a harmonious product, a product of civilization, a product of aesthetics, etc.

And is also a more socialist way of looking at culture which is what Raymond Williams formulates quite clearly and that is a forward looking, more anthropological, more topical, more

historical way of looking at culture which tends to historicize everything and which is sort of anticlassical to a certain extent because the entirety of making something classical is to invest a certain degree of timelessness to it.

Whereas the Williams' category of culture is very temporal. It looks at trends for instance. It looks at different micro categories which are important for understanding of culture as a narrative, as full as a structure and it engages in the structuralist way of looking at culture, as different kinds of structural activities which are connected to bigger structural activities. Now this point in the lecture, Hebdige talks about how cultural studies came into being as a discipline in Humanities.

And how that kind of discipline was born, how it emerged and how it came into being through different kinds of, other kinds of disciplinary investments from structuralism for instance, from psychology for instance, etc. So this is a point which we will start off in this lecture in the early years when it was being established in the universities. Cultural studies sat rather uncomfortably on the fence between these two conflicting definitions.

Culture as a standard of excellence, culture as a whole way of life, unable to determine which represented the most fruitful line of enquiry. So obviously the two narratives, the two definitions laid out the way a culture as a standard of excellence is an Arnoldian narrative of culture. The culture as a whole way of life which talks about the ordinariness of culture, the topicality of culture, that is the more Raymond Williams way of looking at culture and what Hebdige says away is interesting.

He says that when cultural studies came into being, when it was first introduced into the academia, it was somewhere stop between these two categories. It was confused between these two categories (()) (03:01) negotiates between these two categories of looking at culture.

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portrayed working-class culture sympathetically in wistful accounts of pre-scholarship boyhoods (Leeds for Hoggart (1958), a Welsh mining village for Williams (1960)) but their work displayed a strong bias towards literature and literacy' and an equally strong moral tone. Hoggart deplored the way in which the traditional working-class community – a community of tried and tested values despite the dour landscape in which it had been set – was being undermined and replaced by a 'Candy Floss World' of thrills and cheap fiction which was somehow bland *and* sleazy. Williams tentatively endorsed the new mass communications but was concerned to establish aesthetic and moral criteria for distinguishing the worthwhile products from the 'trash'; the



Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams very important figures. Both of them, Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams portrayed working class culture sympathetically in wistful accounts of pre-scholarship boyhoods, Leeds for Hoggart and Welsh mining village for Williams. So we have already seen in the case of Raymond Williams how he comes from a ray of modest Welsh mining background and how language becomes very important issue for him in the culture.

The war becomes very important issue because the war is not just for Raymond Williams. The war is not just the first world war or second world war. These phenomenon are not just acts of destruction, these are also acts of change, linguistic change. When they came after the war, I mean this is the episode which you have already studied Williams is quite clearly defines how language changes after the war.

When they come back to the university, everything changes, okay. So but their work displayed a strong bias towards literature and literacy and an equally strong moral one. So literature and literacy, morality just the contrary important biases to both Hoggart and Raymond Williams in their understanding of culture. Hoggart deplored the way in which the traditional working class community.

A community of tried and tested values despite the dour landscape in which it had been set, was being undermined and replaced by a Candy Floss World of thrills and cheap fiction which was

somehow bland and sleazy.

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tentatively endorsed the new mass communications but was concerned to establish aesthetic and moral criteria for distinguishing the worthwhile products from the 'trash'; the jazz – 'a real musical form' – and the football – 'a wonderful game' – from the 'rape novel, the Sunday strip paper and the latest Tin Pan drool' (Williams, 1965). In 1966 Hoggart laid down the basic premises upon which Cultural Studies were based:

First, without appreciating good literature, no one will really understand the nature of society, second, literary critical analysis can be applied to certain social phenomena other than 'academically respectable' literature (for example, the popular arts, mass communications) so as to illuminate their meanings for individuals and their societies. (Hoggart, 1966)

The implicit assumption that it still required a literary



So again there is certain hierarchical quality about culture and that Hoggart's understanding includes. So Hoggart is obviously a more in favour of high culture, more in favour of moral culture, the morality of the working class community, the tradition of the working class community and how the tradition is being undermined and replaced by a consumers, cheap consumers world of thrills and cheap pleasures and sleazy fictions which are low in hierarchy.

Low in the cultural scale compared to the traditions and the conservative qualities of the working class community. This is the Hoggart way of looking at culture. Williams tentatively endorsed the new mass communications but was concerned to establish aesthetic and moral criteria for distinguishing the worthwhile products from the trash. So Williams was seemingly more liberal. He was seemingly more inclusive, more welcoming.

So the new mass communications such as new modes of music, television, cinema, cinema was obviously there already but in a different kinds of mass communications came into being and Williams was a bit guarded in terms of his acceptance of these mass communications. So he had a sort of criteria for excellence, criteria for high culture, good culture compared to trash, right. So jazz, a real musical form and the football, a wonderful game from the rape novel, the Sunday strip paper and the latest in the Tin Pan drool.

So the distinction is quite clear in Williams' case. Jazz for him is a real music. Football is a wonderful game and compared to that the rape novel, the Sunday strip paper and the latest Tin pan drool has become trash. So there is a trash quality. There is a high quality of the culture that Raymond Williams retains in his socialist understanding of culture. In 1966 Hoggart laid down the basic premises upon which Cultural Studies were based.

And this is the quotation from Hoggart that Hebdige is offering us here. First, without appreciating good literature, no one will really understand the nature of society, second, literary critical analysis can be applied to certain social phenomena other than academically respectable literature, for example, the popular arts, mass communications, so as to illuminate their meanings for individuals and their societies.

So both Williams and Hoggart, they relied on literature quite a bit. So literacy, literature, literary studies, just became very important for them and they looked at literature as very faithful and authentic and complex reflections and refractions of culture and also as repositories of knowledge that one can draw on while formulating new cultural devices like mass music, mass entertainment, etc.


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illuminate their meanings for individuals and their societies. (Hoggart, 1966)

The implicit assumption that it still required a literary sensibility to 'read' society with the requisite subtlety, and that the two ideas of culture could be ultimately reconciled was also, paradoxically, to inform the early work of the French writer, Roland Barthes, though here it found validation in a method – semiotics – a way of reading signs (Hawkes, 1977).

Barthes: Myths and signs

Using models derived from the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure² Barthes sought to expose the



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requisite subtlety, and that the two ideas of culture could be ultimately reconciled was also, paradoxically, to inform the early work of the French writer, Roland Barthes, though here it found validation in a method, semiotics, a way of reading signs. So literature was seen as a privilege tool, a privilege instrument of study, a privilege instrument of examination, a very potent instrument of examination.

If one could acquire a literary skills, one could acquire literary reading skills, then obviously that would entail a better harmonic understanding of culture and cultural phenomena and that kind of instrumentality of understanding, that kind of a tool based understanding device, was something that Roland Barthes also incorporating, for Roland Barthes obviously writing a literature, it was semiotics, the study of science which was more important in terms of looking at culture and examining culture as a phenomenon.

So Barthes becomes also very important figure in cultural studies as understood by Hebdige and again we began to look how cultural studies, how the discipline draws so many other disciplines such as mythology, mythological studies, semiotics, structuralism, psychology, political science, literature, literary studies, etc.

All these things come to being so carefully and so complexly in the study of culture and cultural studies from reinception was very quick incorporate within all these different other disciplines and sub-disciplines.

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arbitrary nature of cultural phenomena, to uncover the latent meanings of an everyday life which, to all intents and purposes, was 'perfectly natural'. Unlike Hoggart, Barthes was not concerned with distinguishing the good from the bad in modern mass culture, but rather with showing how *all* the apparently spontaneous forms and rituals of contemporary bourgeois societies are subject to a systematic distortion, liable at any moment to be dehistoricized, 'naturalized', converted into myth:

The whole of France is steeped in this anonymous ideology, our press, our films, our theatre, our rules



Using models derived from the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, Barthes sought to expose the arbitrary nature of cultural phenomena, to uncover the latent meanings of an everyday life which, to all intents and purposes, was perfectly natural. Right, so Barthes was more important in terms of looking at the arbitrariness, the seemingly arbitrariness in everyday life of cultural phenomena.

And he did it for hidden depths, hidden structures, deeper structures to uncover the deepest structures which inform this arbitrary phenomena of culture, which naturalize culture and cultural activities. Unlike Hoggart, Barthes was not concerned with distinguishing the good from the bad in modern mass culture, but rather with showing how all the apparently spontaneous forms and rituals of contemporary bourgeois societies are subject to a systematic distortion, liable at any moment to be dehistoricized, naturalized, converted into myth.

So Barthes was more concerned unlike separating the good from the bad. Barthes was more concerned how every cultural activity could be dehistoricized, could be mythologized, and become a myth through different acts of distortion, the different acts of naturalization. And naturalization, distortion, dehistoricization and this conversion into mythology, all these for Barthes were very important phenomena which need to be studied, which were rituals of contemporary bourgeois societies and it relied a lot on distortion as the cultural activities.

And Barthes was more concerned rather than looking at to some difference from the good culture and bad culture, high culture and trash which was what Hoggart and Williams were more concerned with. Barthes was more concerned with distortion and dehistoricization in terms of semiotic changes.

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was not concerned with distinguishing the good from the bad in modern mass culture, but rather with showing how *all* the apparently spontaneous forms and rituals of contemporary bourgeois societies are subject to a systematic distortion, liable at any moment to be dehistoricized, 'naturalized', converted into myth:

The whole of France is steeped in this anonymous ideology: our press, our films, our theatre, our pulp literature, our rituals, our Justice, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks about the weather, a murder trial, a touching wedding, the cooking we dream of, the garments we wear, everything in everyday life is dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie *has and makes us have* of the relations between men and the world. (Barthes, 1972)



And that is something that he was trying to study in his early structural phase and this is a quotation from Barthes that Hebdige is offering us here. The whole of France is steeped in this anonymous ideology; our press, our films, our theatre, our pulp literature, our rituals, our Justice, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks about the weather, a murder trial, a touching wedding, the cooking we dream of, the garments we wear.

Everything in everyday life is dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie has and makes us have of the relations between men and the world. So the entire idea becomes a fantastic structure, right, this anonymous ideology. So the synonymous ideology is a fantastic structure, a structure of fantasy which informs all the activities of culture in the everydayness of culture, the bourgeoisie which the bourgeoisie has and makes us have of the relations between men and the world.

So in a way it is reminders of a text which we have already done and that is Hannah Arendt Idea of Action, action, activity, work where the whole idea is of negotiation between men, between

men and other men, between men and culture, I mean the world in which they live in. So the whole France according to Barthes obviously has both equality, about this definition about what he is saying us, this is anonymous ideology which this grand narrative of culture which is basically an act of imagining, as a fantastic imaginary which informs and invest.

It is invested under everyday activities of life, right, representation, distortion, meaning makings, so all these things, actions, different kinds of actions and rituals. So all these things are basically acts of structural investments, actual structural imaginary which the bourgeoisie has and makes us have of the relations between men and the world, right. So this becomes a grand narrative ideology, which we internalize all the time to different kinds of fantastic investments and fantastic consumptions.

And he used fantastic quite literary the way, an act of fantasy which is what informs us grand narrative of culture according to Barthes.

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Like Eliot, Barthes' notion of culture extends beyond the library, the opera-house and the theatre to encompass the whole of everyday life. But this everyday life is for Barthes overlaid with a significance which is at once more insidious and more systematically organized. Starting from the premise that 'myth is a type of speech', Barthes set out in *Mythologies* to examine the normally hidden set of rules, codes and conventions through which meanings particular to specific social groups (i.e. those in power) are rendered universal and 'given' for the whole of society. He found in phenomena as disparate as a wrestling match, a writer on holiday, a tourist-guide book, the same artificial nature, the same ideological core. Each had been exposed to the same prevailing rhetoric (the rhetoric of common sense) and turned into myth, into a mere element in a 'second-order semiological system' (Barthes, 1972). (Barthes uses the



Like Eliot, Barthes' notion of culture extends beyond the library, the opera-house and the theatre to encompass the whole of everyday life, right. So it sounds just limited like Eliot, Barthes due to some limit himself, a limited study of culture inside the academic's phase but he moves outside of this realm, and he moves out of the theatre, moves outside the opera house and it encompasses the whole of everyday life, the wholeness, the daily discourses that inform everyday life.

But this everyday life is for Barthes overlaid with a significance which is at once more insidious and more systematically organized. Starting from the premise that myth is a type of speech, Barthes set out in *Mythologies* to examine the normally hidden set of rules, codes and conventions through which meanings particular to specific social groups that those in power are rendered universal and given for the whole of society.

So what Barthes does in this very important book of *Mythology*, he took and he looks at the codes, the very code of system, the very code of quality through which meaning making happens, the very code of quality which constitutes the hidden set of rules which are invested in making power and making hegemonic meanings and making dominant understanding of life and dominant understanding of culture, etc.

So mythology has become a bit of an act of decoding. So it is like looking at the code, looking at different mythical codes, local myths which are, and obviously by mythologies, Barthes does not mean the ancient mythologies. Only he talks about the mythologies of power, the fantasy of power, the way in which certain sections of people become a powerful, certain sections of society become a powerful, certain discourses become dominant.

This dominance, this powerfulness, this power, this authority, it always a mythology. So all these really have no logical sense but they become consolidated through this mythical investments, right, through this imaginary investments, through this codal investments, the codes and conventions in which meanings in particular the specific social groups are rendered universal and given for the whole society.

So how does it grand narrative become common to being. It is obviously every grand narrative is a mythology, every grand narrative become to rule above is mythological formation because it just takes into certain codes and makes into some kind of system which then becomes unquestionable. It becomes a given in the certain set of time. He found in phenomena as disparate as a wrestling match, a writer on holiday, a tourist guide book, the same artificial nature, the same ideological core.

So in if you read role of Barthes mythology which is a really interesting book for structuralism, you find that he talks about all kinds of random references. He talks about the wrestling matches. He talks about writers. He talks about tourist guide books. He talks about fishing ships. He talks about (()) (15:49) novels. So in a way he finds what Barthes does, he looks at certain set of codes, certain set of structures which are running parallel, which are invested.

And each of these appear apparently disparate cultural activities such as wrestling, find fishing ships, going on a holidays, writing tourist guide books. So all these seeming disparate categories of existence of activities, they have certain structures, certain recurring structures, certain recurring codes that Barthes seeks to unpack and discover through this particular book, okay. And also has certain the same ideological core.

The ideological core being that of tends into hegemonization, tends into becoming a grand narrative. So this tends into a structuralization towards hegemonization. He has become same kind of, these one across the different kinds of cultural activities that Barthes examines in this particular book, Mythologies. Each had been exposed to the same prevailing rhetoric, the rhetoric of common sense and turned into a myth, into a mere element in a second order semiological system writes.

We will talk about common sense little later as well when we read Catherine Belsey's book Critical Practice after this. But the point is common sense becomes an ideology, the common sense becomes imaginary ideology which is invested in each of these categories and Barthes would parts discovers quite interestingly. It is that each of these activities like wrestling, going on holidays, writing tourist books, find fishing ships.

These are apparently disparate activities but each of these activities are all invested into what we call common sense, the rhetoric of common sense, the rhetoric of consolidation, the rhetoric of conservative consolidation and then in the process turn into myth into a mere element in the second order semiological system. So you can see how semiology, semiotics, meaning making, myth making, code making, all these come into being in Barthes use, Barthes' understanding of

culture.

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example of a photograph in *Paris-Match* of a Negro soldier saluting the French flag, which has a first and second order connotation: (1) a gesture of loyalty, but also (2) 'France is a great empire, and all her sons, without colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag'.)

Barthes' application of a method rooted in linguistics to other systems of discourse outside language (fashion, film, food, etc.) opened up completely new possibilities for contemporary cultural studies. It was hoped that the invisible seam between language, experience and reality could be located and prised open through a semiotic analysis of this kind: that the gulf between the alienated intellectual and the 'real' world could be rendered meaningful and, miraculously, at the same time, be made to disappear.



So for example Barthes use example of a photograph in Paris-Match of a Negro soldier saluting the French flag, which has a first and second order connotation. A gesture of loyalty but also France is a great empire and all her sons without colour discrimination, faithfully serve under the flag. So Barthes studies iconic images, hardness, so the images become iconic in quality, certain visual images become important for Barthes.

And this particular study of photograph in Paris match of a black soldier saluting the French flag, black soldier is presumably from Nigeria or some French colony saluting the French flag. It has two degrees of connotation. First and second order. First is that a gesture of loyalty, as a loyalty towards the empire, loyalty to the French national flag.

But also it is an acknowledgement of France being a great empire, of the empire that is demands loyalty from all the sons irrespective of colour, does not discriminate between people on the basis of race and colour which obviously is a fantasy. With that fantasy, the grand narrative is something which is being visually and iconically articulated in this particular image in the Paris match that Barthes studies.

So Barthes' application of a method rooted in linguistics to other systems of discourse outside

language, fashion, film, food, etc., opened up completely new possibilities for contemporary cultural studies. So he takes this code of quality, this structural quality which is rooted in linguistics because remember he drew on Saussure, the Swiss linguist but he took that kind of structural study and applied that into series of other things, other phenomena outside of language for instance fashion.

How does fashion is structural. How trends in fashion is structural in quality. How was fashion coded in quality? How the mythologist come into being in fashion? How does something become high fashion? something becomes out of fashion. So these are all mythological decisions. These are all mythological systems which seemingly operate in random logic but actually it come guise of common sense, where a fashion, film, food, so all these have become very structural activities for Barthes and all these become very important cultural categories for Barthes.

And these structural study, this semiotic study of fashion, film, food, drawing on language, drawing of the coded quality of language and applying that, mapping that on to this broader structures, opened up completely new possibilities for contemporary cultural studies. It was hoped that the invisible seam between language, experience and reality could be located and prised open through a semiotic analysis of this kind, that the gulf between the alienated intellectual.

And the real world could be rendered meaningful and miraculously, at the same time, be made to disappear.

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Barthes' application of a method rooted in linguistics to other systems of discourse outside language (fashion, film, food, etc.) opened up completely new possibilities for contemporary cultural studies. It was hoped that the invisible seam between language, experience and reality could be located and prised open through a semiotic analysis of this kind: that the gulf between the alienated intellectual and the 'real' world could be rendered meaningful and, miraculously, at the same time, be made to disappear. Moreover, under Barthes' direction, semiotics promised nothing less than the reconciliation of the two conflicting definitions of culture upon which Cultural Studies was so ambiguously posited – a marriage of moral conviction (in this case, Barthes' Marxist beliefs) and popular themes: the study of a society's total way of life.

This is not to say that semiotics was easily assimilable within the Cultural Studies project. Though Barthes shared the literary preoccupations of Hoggart and Williams, his



So this kind of a study which is very optimistic study, this world of Barthes way of looking at culture as a semiotic code, as system of semiotic structures which was very hopeful because then that would not discriminate between high culture and low culture at all. It would treat a novel by (()) (20:57) equally important as that of a wrestling match. Because if you look at both activities as set of codes which have to be decoded through certain semiotic systems.

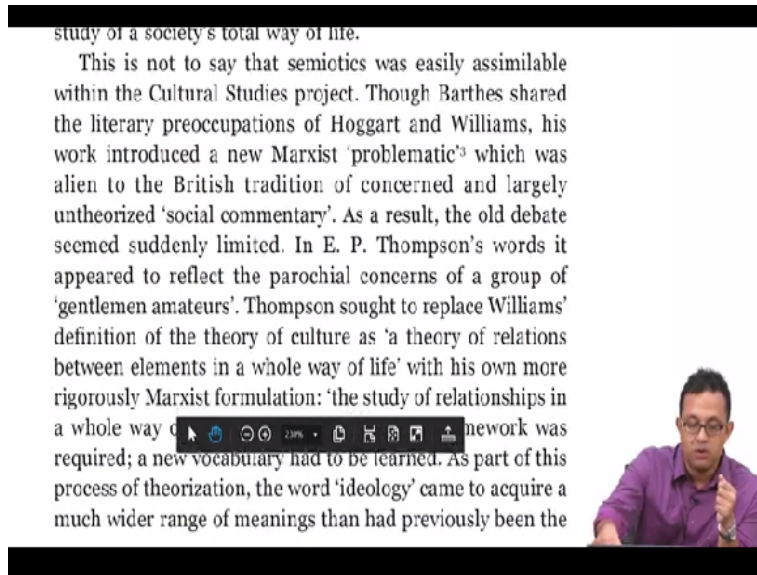
So in that sense, it will be a very universal, democratic way of looking at culture. So that was a very optimistic energy that Barthes drop in into cultural studies. It was hoped that the gulf between the alienated intellectual and the real world could be rendered meaningful and miraculously be done away with. Moreover, under Barthes' discretion or direction sorry, semiotics promised nothing less than the reconciliation of the two conflicting definitions of culture upon which Cultural Studies was so ambiguously posited.

A marriage of moral conviction, in this case, Barthes Marxist beliefs, and popular themes, the study of society's total way of life. So this dichotomy with which Hebdige opens this particular book that according to the Arnoldian way of looking at culture is a way of life as certain kind of a conservative aesthetic system which was to be appropriate. And then more socialist way of looking at, and the anthropological way of looking at culture.

That kind of a gulf voice supposing in, bridge supposedly done away with in Barthes

understanding of culture. So this kind of a quoted study of culture which was often the Barthes structuralism seem to promise to do away with all kinds of dichotomies in cultural studies, okay.

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This is not to say that semiotics was easily assimilable within the Cultural Studies project. Though Barthes shared the literary preoccupations of Hoggart and Williams, his work introduced a new Marxist problematic which was alien to the British tradition of concerned and largely untheorized social commentary. As a result, the old debate seemed suddenly limited. In E. P. Thompson's words, it appeared to reflect the parochial concerns of a group of gentlemen amateurs.

Thompson sought to replace Williams' definition of the theory of culture as a theory of relations between elements in a whole way of life with his own more rigorously Marxist formulation, the study of relationships in a whole way of conflict. So this is more a Marxist way of looking at culture. So Thompson brings in the idea of conflict in understanding of culture.

He moves away from the Raymond Williams' way of looking at culture as a whole way of life rather than he is more interested in the confidations and the conflicts and the tensions and the fault lines which mark culture and cultural activities. A more analytical framework was required, a new vocabulary had to be learned. As part of this process of theorization, the word ideology came to acquire a much wider range of meanings than had previously been the case.


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case. We have seen how Barthes found an 'anonymous ideology' penetrating every possible level of social life, inscribed in the most mundane of rituals, framing the most casual social encounters. But how can ideology be 'anonymous', and how can it assume such a broad significance? Before we attempt any reading of subcultural style, we must first define the term 'ideology' more precisely.

Ideology: A lived relation

In the *German Ideology*, Marx shows how the basis of the capitalist economic structure (surplus value, neatly defined by Godelier as 'Profit . . . is unpaid work' (Godelier, 1970)) is hidden from the consciousness of the agents of production. The failure to see through appearances to the real relations



We have seen how Barthes found an anonymous ideology. So ideology becomes a very important point in cultural studies. So the ideology becomes a very open word, sometimes the (()) (24:03) into fire, sometimes subverses into fire. It became a very lowly term. So and then Hebdige says that in Barthes we found that how he uses the term anonymous ideology in terms of looking at cultural activities.

And the anonymous ideology of common sense which makes every activity into a grand narrative, which makes every act into myth, every act of domination into a myth, the myth of domination, the myth of the active, the myth of common sense. All these become invested with an anonymous ideology and Roland Barthes's structural study. So that kind of anonymous ideology, penetrating every possible level of social life, inscribed in the most mundane of rituals, framing the most casual social encounters.

But how can ideology be anonymous and how can it assume such a broad significance? Before we attempt any reading of subcultural style, we must first define the term ideology more precisely. So this definition is important because we have already spent as you remember in the beginning of this course, we have spent a considerable amount of time looking at ideology as not just like ancient old system.

But also an activity, a consolidating activity, sometimes a subversive activity but you know it is an activity, is an afterthought. But what Hebdige is offering over here is the more complex definition of ideology which is fundamental in the understanding of culture and equally and by extension fundamental in any understanding of, in any study of culture, true culture. Studies ideology becomes a very important category, a very important phenomena, a very important term and a very important code.

If you draw in Barthes to be understood and examined in any similar study of culture not least if we engage in cultural studies. So we stop at this point in the lecture today and move on in the next lecture to understand the ideology as offered by Dick Hebdige. So this concludes this lecture and I will see you in the next lecture. Thank you for your attention.