Sociological Perspectives on Modernity
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Lecture – 19
Modernity and Social Theory III

Welcome to the 19th lecture of the course on Sociological Perspectives on Modernity. In the last lecture we have discussed Immanuel Wallenstein reflections on synthesizing modernity and social theory, and then we have discussed the distinctions between modernity on the one hand and post modernism on the other. And such distinctions between modernism and postmodern I mean such distinctions between modernity and post modernism have significant implications for the ways in which Anthony Giddens and Jurgen Habermas have tried to reflect on critical modernist paradigm in sociology.

When we look at let us first taught with Giddens, then we will move on to Habermas; this I mean these themes; these distinctions between modernity and post modernism.

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I mean that the kind of themes that we have already discussed in the last lecture. These themes are illustrated through discussions of various kinds of social forces, micro politics and so on. Although, there is still a curiously abstract level to the district discussion is especially about active or reflexive selves.

Because for modernists the self is active and reflexive, but for post modernists thus the self is dissolved and dismembered.

The implications for sociology are drawn in such a manner, I mean sociology is part of the reflexivity of modernity, but it needs to be deformed to take into account the time space manipulations, time space distanciations and dimensions of late modernity ok.

For example, we need to look beyond the nation state as a model of society, I mean processes of; differences nation state why I say that it is a model of society precisely because such nation states where also conceptualized against the backdrop of the process of decolonizes anti colonial movements and anti imperil movements.

Processes of differentiation that have been identified by earlier theorists need to be replaced with concepts of embedding and dissembling which would widen into account of the whole subsequent dialectic operating between risk and trust faceless and face to face commitments, ok.

In this context, Giddens is extremely important Giddens notion of the problem of order what is the problem of order the problem of order is also the problem of modernity the constituents of modernity it is the problem of order is one of the constituents of modernity the problem of order for Giddens is one of time space distanciation in that time and space are ordered it ordered in modernity to connect presence and absence.

Secondly, these time space separations or distanciations produce disembodying of traditional forms of relationships dismembering of traditional forms of relationships as standard and abstract dimensions of space and time come to as a standard. And abstract dimensions of space and time come to order and rationalize activities in the place of local contexts examples include the use of a time table to coordinated a to coordinate going on a journey by car or plane such organizations also clearly involved reflexive accounts of past activities and disembedding both lifts out social relations from local contexts of interaction and restructures them across indefinite spans of time and space.

And this is a better way of describing what has happened compared to concepts of social differentiation which are evolutionist in nature suppose we have we have been discussed in the context of Weber. For example, selection is based on cultural relevance, but if our cultural artifacts will change our selection processes will also undergo transformation, thirdly such dis-embedding mechanisms require the creation of symbolic tokens require certain representations through what especially through wealth through money defined as

mechanisms to control time and space they also I mean such dis-embedding mechanisms also lead to the establishment of expert systems and this these dis-embed further because they provide abstract guarantees of expectations across time and space and water.

What do I mean by this I mean these impersonal tests and public forms further stretch social systems; they also imply a different kind of trust.

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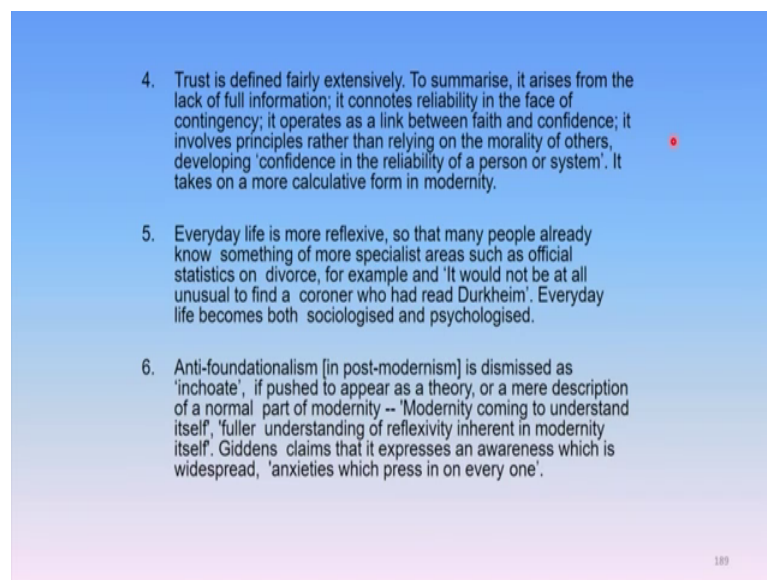
Then what is trust for Giddens trust is defined fairly extensively to summarize it, trust arises from the lack of full information absolute information lack of absolute information trust connotes reliability in the face of contingency trust operates as a link between faith and confidence trust involves principles rather than relying on the morality of other trust develops confidence.
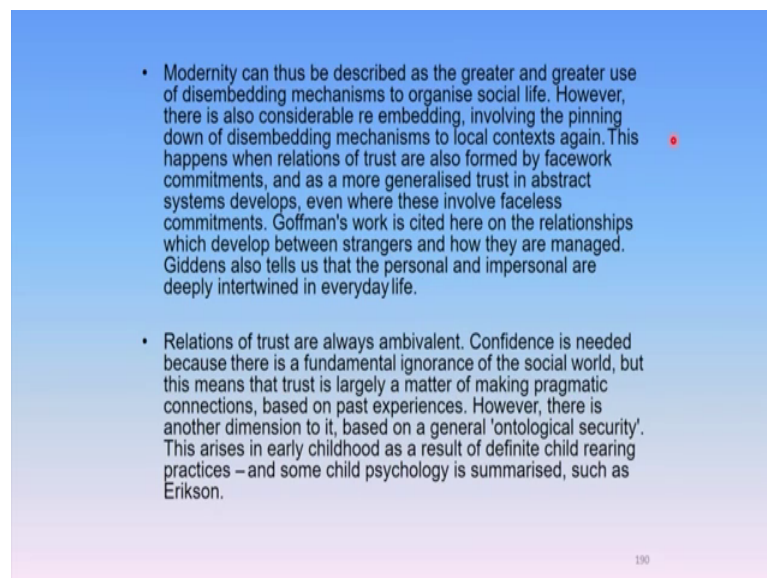
In the reliability of a person or system, trust takes on a more calculative form in modernity everyday life is more reflexive forgiveness. So, that many people already know something of more specialist areas such as official statistics on divorce for example, population for example, and it would not be at all unusual to find the coronal who had read Durkheim, I mean organic solidarity mechanical solidarity what is solidarity for Durkheim; Emily Durkheim solidarity means assemblies of people in the performance of rituals that is solidarity. And if I say assemblage of people in the performance of rituals refers to solidarity then everyday life becomes both socialized as well as psycholized, therein lies the significance of the term difference that we have

discussed in the last lecture when I mean difference by deride not difference, but difference that is a French term coined by the Deridhm I mean that is a central concept in Dherida's deconstruction that is a critical outlook concerned with the relationship between text and meaning or everyday life becomes socialized as well as psycholized.

That the relationship between text and meaning that is how difference also refers to conceptual differentiation and deferral of meaning in processes of signification difference also refers simultaneously to the entire configuration of its meanings and for according to Antony Giddens anti foundationalism or epistemological crisis in post modernism is dismissed as innovative inchoate if push to appear as a theory.

Or a mere description of a normal part of modernity for Giddens modernity coming to understand itself or fuller understanding of reflexivity inherent in modernity itself Giddens further claims that it expresses, it expresses an awareness which is widespread I mean anxieties which present on everyone this is very important that epistemological crisis is dismissed.

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- Modernity can thus be described as the greater and greater use of disembedding mechanisms to organise social life. However, there is also considerable re embedding, involving the pinning down of disembedding mechanisms to local contexts again. This happens when relations of trust are also formed by facework commitments, and as a more generalised trust in abstract systems develops, even where these involve faceless commitments. Goffman's work is cited here on the relationships which develop between strangers and how they are managed. Giddens also tells us that the personal and impersonal are deeply intertwined in everyday life.

- Relations of trust are always ambivalent. Confidence is needed because there is a fundamental ignorance of the social world, but this means that trust is largely a matter of making pragmatic connections, based on past experiences. However, there is another dimension to it, based on a general 'ontological security'. This arises in early childhood as a result of definite child rearing practices – and some child psychology is summarised, such as Erikson.

Modernity according to Giddens can thus be described as the greater and greater use of dis-embedding mechanisms to organize social life. However, there is also considerable re embedding involving the pinning down of dis-embedding mechanisms to local contexts.

Again how does it happen this happens when relations of trust are also formed by face work communicate commitments and face to face commitments and as your more generalized trust in abstract system develops even where these involve faceless commitments governments work is cited here on the relationships which developed between strangers and how they are managed Goffman is Goffmans method is known as dramaturgical approach it is a micro sociological theory micro sociological approach to understand society in our day to day life.

Even our accents even our even if we do not speak still we can relate to each other suppose I am delivering a lecture now and some students they just lean forward and they nod their head then it reflects even if they do not say anything, but it reflects their seriousness and at tent attentiveness for Giddens sorry not for Giddens, but for Goffman's dramaturgical approach, Giddens also tells us that the personal and impersonal are deeply intertwined in everyday life and relations of trust are always and even confidence is required because there is a fundamental ignorance of the social world.

But that implies that trust is largely a matter of making pragmatic connections based on past experiences. However, there is another dimension to it based on a general ontological security which arises in early childhood as a result of definite child rearing practices and some child psychology is summarized such as Erikson if somebody wants to study on child psychology and so on child rearing ontological security and so on please go through Erikson's readings writings.

For Giddens traditional and modern cultures can be contrasted in terms of how they create environments of trust and risk Giddens shows how the traditional social bonds such as kinship community and religion can be seen as devices to organize environments of trust while the characteristic environments of modernity are seen as personal relationships abstract systems future oriented counterfactual thinking and a perception of threats not from nature war or the gods, but from the greater reflectivity of modernity as we have part of it we are not isolated from this from our economic culture and quality that is why there is a greater threat.

Threat from the from the greater reflexivity of modernity industrialized war and personal meaninglessness I mean the chance is missed here perhaps to sketch there dangers of its excessive reflexivity. This is very important I mean the way Gidden tries to project his argument that that traditional and modern cultures can be contrasted in terms of how they create environments of trust and risk, I mean the characteristic environments of modernity are seen as personal relationships abstract systems future oriented counterfactual thinking and a perception of threats not from nature or war or the gods supernatural forces but from the greater reflectivity of modernity industrialized to our personal meaninglessness and so on.
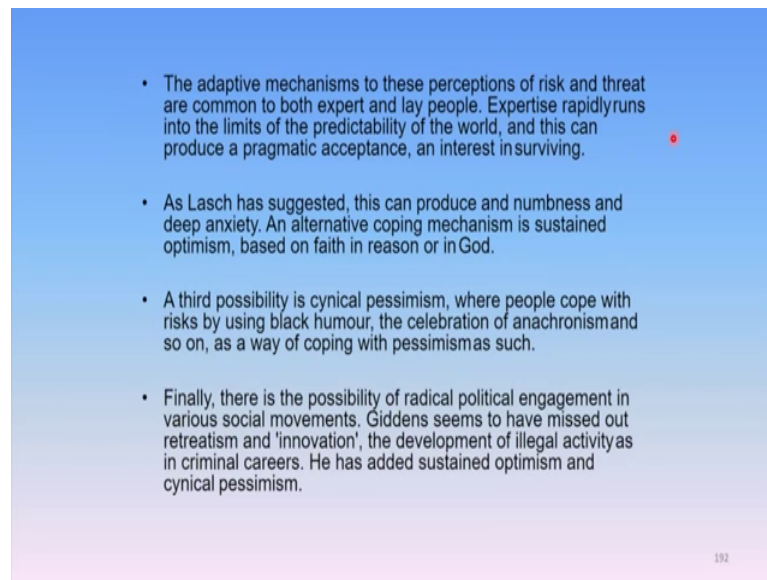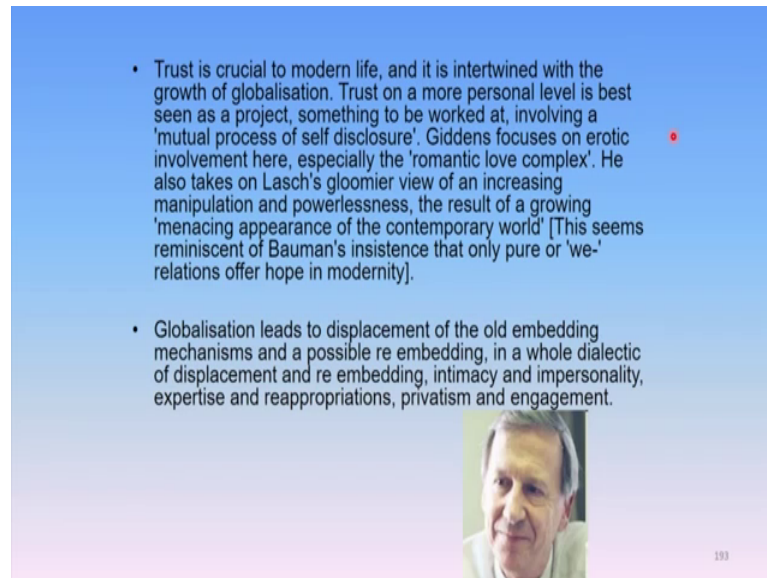
In this context according to Giddens, the adaptive mechanisms to these perceptions of risk and threat are common to both expert as well as laypeople expertise rapidly runs into the limits of the predictability of the world and this can produce a pragmatic acceptance and interest in surviving as last has suggested that that this can produce some kind of numbness and deep in anxiety within an alternative coping mechanism is sustained optimism based on faith in reason or in god or supernatural either reasoning capacity or superstition.

And the third possibility is cynical by symmetry where people cope with risks by using black humor the celebration of anachronism and s, on as a way of coping with pessimism as such. And finally, there is the possibility of radical political engagement in various social movements Giddens, since to have missed out retreat regiment and innovation of course, the development of illegal activities as in criminal carriers he has added sustained optimism and cynical facility.

And for Giddens trust is extremely important trust is crucial to modern life ok.

Trust is very important to modern life and trust is interfering with the growth of global edges trust on a more personal level is best seen as a project something to be what that involving a mutual process of self disclosure Giddens focuses on erotic involvement here especially the romantic love come to complex. Now he also takes on lessons gloomier view of an increasing manipulation and powerlessness the result of a growing menacing appearance of the contemporary world they seems reminiscent of Bauman's insistence that only pure or me relations offer hope in modernity moment if somebody wants to read please we can go through moments writings ok.
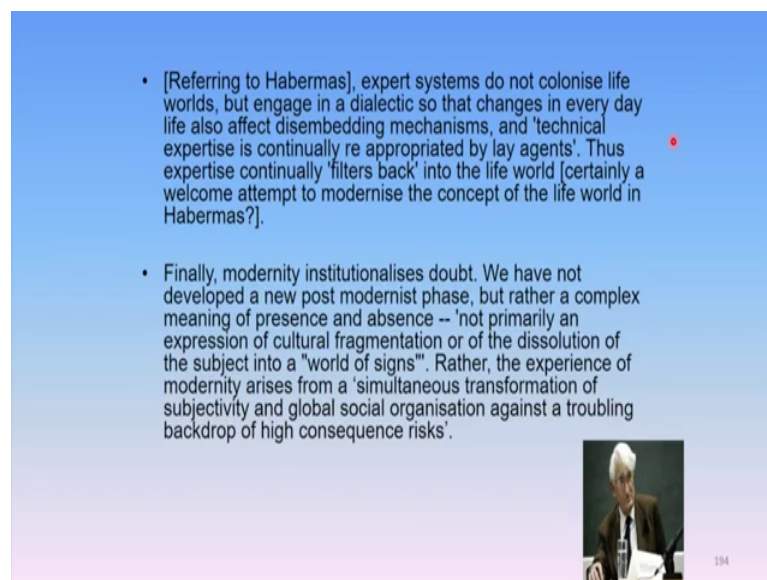
According to Giddens globalization leads to displacement of the old embedding mechanisms and a possible really embedding in a whole dialectic of displacement and re embedding intimacy and impersonality expertise and re appropriations private aging and engagement. These are the characteristic features of critical modernist paradigm in sociology for Giddens, I mean globalization leads to displacement of the old embedding mechanisms and a possible re embedding with our economic culture and quality the self active and reflexive self and so on.

You know a whole dialectic of displacement and re embedding intimacy and in personality expertise and re appropriations private agent and engagement referring to heaviness where we are going to discuss you can have a mess a little while later I mean

within 5-10 minutes referring to Habermas what Giddens suggested that expert systems do not colonize life waltz in Habermas tournament is known as a Leben's world continually, re appropriation by legions thus expertise continually filters back into the life world certainly a welcome attempt to modernize the concept of the life holding Habermas. Finally, for Giddens modernity institutionalizes the world of doubt not certainty that is very important I mean the proponents of theology the proponents of metaphysics they always try to introduce an alleged certainty ok.

Now, we have made a transition from the world of certainty to a world of doubt for similarly for Giddens modernity institutionalized is not certainty, but doubt we have not developed a new post modernist phage.

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- [Referring to Habermas], expert systems do not colonise life worlds, but engage in a dialectic so that changes in every day life also affect disembedding mechanisms, and 'technical expertise is continually re appropriated by lay agents'. Thus expertise continually 'filters back' into the life world [certainly a welcome attempt to modernise the concept of the life world in Habermas?].

- Finally, modernity institutionalises doubt. We have not developed a new post modernist phase, but rather a complex meaning of presence and absence -- 'not primarily an expression of cultural fragmentation or of the dissolution of the subject into a "world of signs"'. Rather, the experience of modernity arises from a 'simultaneous transformation of subjectivity and global social organisation against a troubling backdrop of high consequence risks'.

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But rather a complex meaning of presence and absence the problem of order the problem of time and space distanciation not primarily an expression of cultural fragmentation or of the diesel dissolution of the subject into a world of science rather the experience of modernity arises from a simultaneous transformation of subjectivity and global social organization against a troubling backdrop of high consequence risks it is very important to look at the time space distances and I mean when what is the relationship between structure and agency we have discussed in the context of Marx, in the context of Weber, in the context of Levi Strauss and in the context of Western Marxists and so on, what is the relationship between structure and agency for Giddens? Therein lies the significance

of Structuration theory. He talked talks about the way he dwells upon the relationship between structure and agency I mean structure in the agency do not constitute some sort of dualism rather they constitute some sort of duality. Duality of the structure means practices human practices or practices of the agency are both the medium as well as the outcome of the structure that we have and thereby he tries to place the place agency on a higher pedestal visibly structure.

This is one way to understand one way of reading structures, but if you ask Giddens, Giddens is alive even today. I mean he is almost 90-91 years old, earlier he was the director of the London school of economics and political science and the great theorist of his generation and the way he tried to work on the contributions of Durkheim Weber and Marx, I think it is a seminal work in the nineteen seventies when he was barely 30, 32-32 years old, he wrote capitalism and modern social theory ok.

I mean comparing in the works of Durkheim Weber and Marx and it is a seminal work that I mean, it is widely read cited reference book not simply in India or Great Britain, I mean united kingdom, but across the continents you go to any library you will find a copy of capital measurement modern social theory any library in the world Giddens reflections on modernity there Giddens reflections on modernity can be examined through his reflections on time space distances duality of the structure the problem of order and so on.

If this is so, then now we are going to move on to how to synthesize modernity and social theory by Jurgen Habermas.

Jurgen Habermas of course, belongs to the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism when I say critical theory I refer to the Frankfurt school the theorists of Frankfurt school in German, they are essentially they are known as new Marxists Hebermans also is clubbed under new Marxist school of school it is very important I mean somebody may say that what is that big what are the differences then again between Marxism and neo Marxism neo Marxists especially tried to operate at the level of a critique to positivism scientism critic tools positive which is magnetic to scientific a critic to economic that that any argument any phenomenon cannot be reduced to positivist positivism cannot be reduced to science cannot be reduced to only economic ok.

There cannot be positivistic reductionism that cannot be scientifically scientistic reductionism or there cannot be economically reductionism that is the critical and when I say pragmatism I means it is American tradition of pragmatism where I mean which is based on practical experience of human agency and he is Habermas is noted for his work on the; I mean the structural transformation of the public sphere Habermas is work focuses on the foundations of social theory and epistemology, you know body of knowledge or theory of knowledge the central political philosophical questions which epistemology addresses.

I mean what is knowledge how what counts as knowledge how is known is produced and so on. And Habermas is work focuses on the foundations of social theory and

epistemology the analysis of advanced capitalist societies and democracy the rule of law in a critical social evolutionary context and contemporary politics particularly German politics Habermas is theoretical system is devoted to revealing the possibility of rationality I mean the possibility of reason emancipation and not simply rationality but rational critical communication latent in modern institutions and in the human capacity to deliberate and pursue personal interests.

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Habermas is known for his work on the concept of modernity particularly with respect to the discussions on rationalization originally set forth by whoever whilst influenced by American pragmatism structural functionalism and even post structuralism an I mean post modernism many of the central tenets of Habermas is thought remain broadly Marxist in nature.

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Habermas is constructed a comprehensive framework of social theory and philosophy drawing on a number of intellectual traditions number of theoretical traditions namely the German philosophically thought of Immanuel Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Dilthey, Edmund Husserl and Gadem the Marxian tradition both the theory of Karl Marx himself as well as the critical neo Marxian theory of the Frankfurt school that is Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and so on the sociological theories of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and George Herbert Mead.

The linguistic philosophy and speech act theories of Wittgenstein, Austin, Strawson, Stephen and the development psychology of Piaget and Kohlberg the American pragmatist tradition of Charles Sanders Peirce and Dewey the sociological systems theory of Talcott Parsons and Lumen and Neo Kantian thought, we have already discussed neo Kantianism Marxism and so on. I have discussed Weber I mean what is Neo Kantianism I mean or knowledge of this social world is a constructed one which involves selection and interpretation we have discussed most of the things, but I am not going to discuss all these philosophies of Cant or Schilling or Hegel Del T whose will get Emer and so on, because it will take this is your this will be a completely different course ultimatel.

What I am trying to focus on here is that how Habermas considers his major contribution to the to be the development of the concept and theory of communicative reason or

communicative rationality which distinguishes itself from the rationalist tradition by locating rationality in structures of interpersonal linguistic communication rather than in the structure of either the cosmos or the knowing subject this is very important and Habermas is social theory advances the goals of human emancipation while maintaining an inclusive universalistic moral framework and such universalist inclusive universalistic moral framework rests on the argument called universal pragmatics that all speech acts have an inner entity launch Telos I mean that it must have a goal it must have an end ok.

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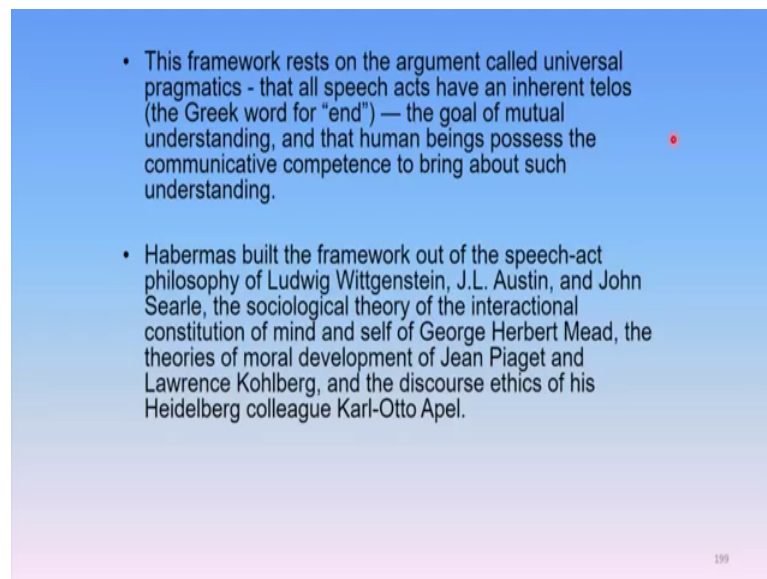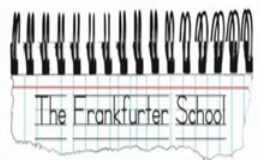
I mean the goal of mutual understanding that and that the human beings possess the communicative competence to bring about such understanding Habermas built the work of war a framework out of the speech act philosophy of Wittgenstein Austin and certainly the sociological theory of the interactional constitution of mind and self of mead and the theory of moral development of pure jet and cold war and the disclosure ethics of his Heidelberg colleague Apel Karl Otto Apel, I mean to give you give you an example suppose what did would gain stains suggest what can be said at all what can be expressed at all can be expressed very clearly and what I cannot talk about I must pass over in silence.

Then the significance of communicative rationality is very important communicative competence is very important to bring about such mutual understanding.

Habermas is wants rezone, it within the traditions of Kant; Immanuel Kant and the enlightenment and of democratic socialism through which I mean through his emphasis on the potential for transforming the world and arriving at a more human just and I mean equitable and egalitarian society through the realization of the human potential for reason in part through discourse ethics while Habermas has stated that the enlightenment is an unfinished project.

I mean this what is that enlightenment why is it an unfinished project precisely because the enlightenment the way Habermas tried to visualize or foresee it must be the enlightened must be must aim at a more human just equitable and egalitarian society why have a Habermas is stated that that the enlightenment is an unfinished project he argues that it should be corrected and complemented not discarded in this he distances himself from the Frankfurt school criticizing it as well as much of poor post modernist thought for excessive pessimism misdirected radicalism and exaggerations ok.

This is important and within sociology Habermas is contributions I mean Habermas is major contribution was the development of a comprehensive theory of societal evolution and modernization focusing on the difference between communicative rationality and rationalization. On the one hand and strategic and instrumental rationality and rationalization on the other instrumental rationality who said Max Weber communicative rationality Habermas. There why Habermas tried to look at the distinction between communicative rationality and rationalization.

On the one hand and strategic or instrumental rationality and rationalization on the other this includes a critic from a communicative standpoint of the differences. And based theory of social systems developed by lumen a student of darker forces his is Habermas is defense of modernity and civil society has been a source of inspirations to inspiration to others and his considered a major philosophical alternative to the varieties of post structuralism.

He has also offered an influential analysis of late capitalism Habermas ok.

When I say late capitalism late modernity and so on its interesting I mean to see these developments when we look at this Habermas perceives the rationalization humanization and democratization of society in terms of the institutionalization of the potential for rationality that is inherent in the communicative competence that is unique to the human species this is very important.

What is so unique to human species, I mean the perception of rationalization humanization and democratization of society in terms of the institutionalization of potential for rationality how is it found how can it be found it can be found in the way in which we try to conceptualize communicative competence.

For mutual understanding greater mutual understanding Habermas contains that communicative competence has developed through the course of evolution, but in contemporary society it is often suppressed or weakened by the way in which major domains of social life such as the market the state and organizations have been given over to or taken over by strategic or instrumental nationality. So, that the logic of the system supplants that of the lemon salt or life therein lies the significance of I mean when Habermas tries to deviate from instrumental rationality to communicative rationality and rationalization ok.

Therein lies the significance of or therein lies the beauty of the ways in which he tried to dwell upon science for him, it is not simply science.

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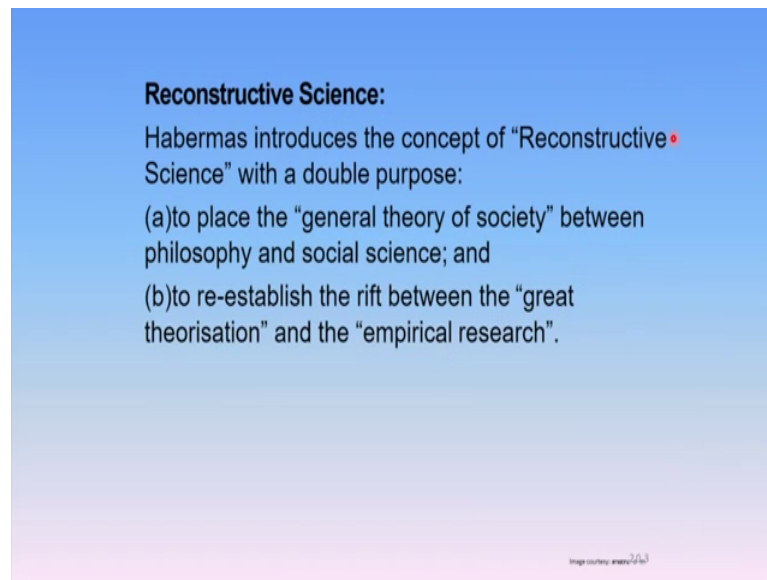
But reconstructive science Habermas introduces the term reconstructive science with a double purpose, there is a dual purpose there are two purposes number one the purpose of reconstructive science is; to place general theory of society between philosophy and social sciences between abstract systems and concrete systems between general systems and specific systems. And secondly, the purpose of reconstructive science is to re-establish are rift between great theorization and the empirical research.

There must be I mean they must always I mean in our experiences our theories they must interact with each other there must be a tussle other way, we cannot have new theories.
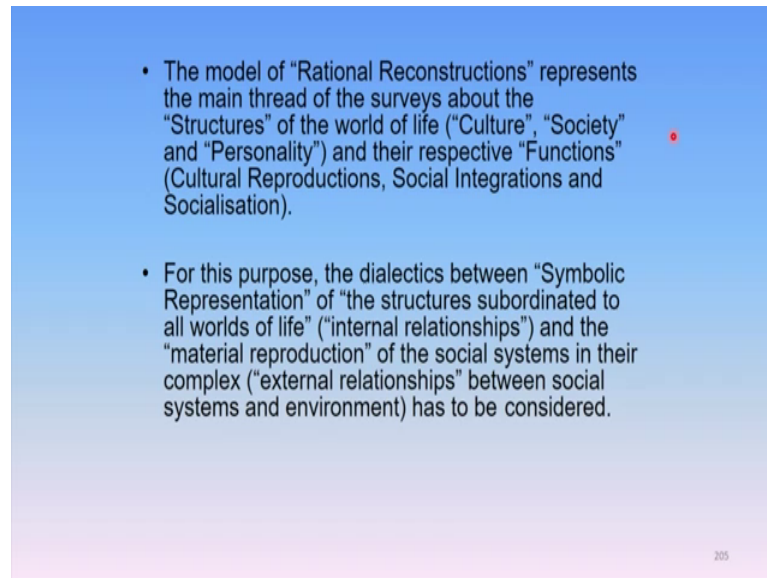
The model of the model of rational reconstructions represents the main thread of the surveys about the structures of the world of life in terms of culture society and personality and their respective functions I mean in terms of cultural reproduction social integrations and socialization. And for this purpose the dialectic between symbolic representation of the structures subordinated to worlds of life I mean internal relationships ok.

On the one hand, the material reproduction of the social systems in the in the complex external relationships between social systems and environment has to be considered this is very important when I when Habermas was trying to dwell upon rational reconstructions I mean it represents the main thread of the surveys about the structures of the life world structures of the life world. On the one hand and their respective functions on the other when he referred when he said structures of the world of life or life world he referred to culture society and personality and the functions of those structures of the life world when he said he referred to cultural reproduction social integrations as well as socialization.

And when he talked about when Habermas is talked about the dialectic between symbolic representation of on the one hand and materially production. On the other I mean when symbolic representation of the structure subordinated to all worlds of life I mean internal relationships when he referred to material reproduction of the social

systems in their complex systems he referred to the external relationships between social systems.

And environment and this dialectic between symbolic representation and material reproduction of the social systems has to be constitutive ok.

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This model I mean Habermes's model finds an application above all in the theory of the social evolution starting from starting from the reconstruction of the necessary conditions for a phylogeny of the socio cultural life forms I mean the hominization until an analysis of the development of social formations which Habermas divides into primitive traditional modern and contemporary formations what are the key points that we have got in the context of all 3.

It is whether it is by Wallerstein or Giddens or Habermas, we are going to discuss in the next lecture now what we have discussed very quickly we have discussed we have I mean in this lecture, we have discussed the distinctions between modernity and post modernity the contributions made by I mean on the basis of the distinctions between modernity and post modernism. We have discussed the contributions made by Antony Giddens and Jurgen Habermas and Antony Giddens reflections on the problem of order is one of time space distances I mean in that time in space are ordered in modernity to connect presence and absence.

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We have also discussed how these time space distance distanciation or separations produce dis-embedding of traditional forms of relationships as standard abstract dimensions of space and time come to order and rationalize activities in the place of local contexts.

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We have also discussed dis-embedding and I mean dis-embedding mechanisms for Giddens I mean which required the creation of symbolic tokens I have also discussed trust which arises from the lack of full information which connotes reliability in the face

of contingency which operates as a link between faith and confidence which involves principles rather than relying on the morality of others and so on.

And how we have also discussed how Giddens dismisses anti europe foundationalism in post modernism we have also discussed structuration theory the duality of structure and so on.

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And then we moved on to Habermas, I mean how Habermas was how Habermas belongs to the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism how; he is well known for his work on the structural transformation of the public sphere ok.

What are his intellectual influences namely American pragmatism structural functionalism and even post structured religion though many of the central tenets of Habermas is thought remain broadly Marxist in nature and when Weber was more concerned about instrumental rationality or strategic rationality or goal oriented. So, selection or intentional human action Habermas was more concerned about communicative rationality and rationalization. And when well while Habermas stated that the enlightenment is an unfinished project he argues that it should be corrected and complemented not discarded in this of course, Habermas distanciates distance distances from distances himself from the Frankfurt school criticizing it as well as much of more postmodern thought for excessive pessimism misdirected radicalism annexed as a result ok.

In the in the next lecture I mean further Habermas also talked about reconstructive science I mean the purpose of which is to place the general theory of society between philosophy and social sciences and also to reestablish the rift between the great theorization and the empirical research. And then the way Habermas talked about the model of rational deconstructions which represents the main threat of the surveys about the structures of the world of life. On the one hand the functions of those structures of the world of life.

On the other and for this purpose the dialectic between symbolic re-representation of the structures subordinated to all worlds of life on the one hand and the material reproduction of the social systems in their complex has to be considered and such model finds an application above all in the theory of the social evolution starting from the reconstruction of the necessary condition for a phylogeny of the socio cultural life forms the hominization. And until an analysis of the development of social formations which Habermas subdivides into primitive traditional modern and contemporary formations.

In the next lecture we are going to discuss the key points so far as the contributions of Waller Stein Giddens and Habermas are concerned.

Thank you.