

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture - 24

Part B

Post Theory

Welcome back to continue with our discussion on Post Theory. We have been talking about an array of theories available to us. And how scholars in recent times are responding to it particularly in the face of bewilderment, which is a face by students as well as general educated readers. When they come across these array of isms and theories and approaches and what is happening to literature and how do we situate literature, in these times that the question, therefore we leave in post theoretical times.

Now, in favor of theory, we have been talking about, theory and it is against, people who have taken stand against it, but then there are scholars like David Lorge, theories and novelist and Nigel Wood in this book called in a reader called Modern Criticism and Theory, A Reader. Lorge and Wood argued that it is not surprising that contemporary literary theory came into being from outside philosophy and sometimes in conscious rebellion against the weight of it is tradition.

Literary theory may now well have become legitimate concern of philosophy, but it cannot be a simulated to it. Either factually or theoretically, it contains an unnecessarily pragmatic moments that certainly weekends it as theory. But, that adds sub verses element of unpredictability and makes it sometimes or something of a wildcard in the serious games of the theoretical discipline.

Those who reproach literary theory for being oblivious to social and historical or even ideological, reality are nearly stating that theie fear at having their own ideological mystification exposed by the tool that they are trying to discredit; that is theory. What is it about literary theory? That is so threatening, that it provokes such a strong resistance and a text; that can be a question. It excerpts rooted ideologies by revealing the mechanics of the workings, it goes against a powerful philosophical tradition of which esthetics is a prominent part it excerpts.

There established canon of literary works and blur the border lines, between literary and non literary discourse. For it makes the tension between contemporary literary theory and the tradition of literary studies appear as a mere historical conflict. Many a time, the development of literary theories itself over determined by complications, inherent in it is very project and unsettling with regards to it is status as a scientific discipline.

Resistance may be built in constituent of it is discourse in a manner that would be inconceivable in the natural science and unmentionables in the social sciences. It may well be in other words that the polemical opposition, the systematic, non understanding and misinterpretation, the unsubstantial. But, eternal, eternally recurring, recurrent objection are the display symptom of a resistance inherent in the theoretical enterprise itself.

The real debate of literary theory is not with it is polemical opponents, but rather with it is own methodological assumptions and possibilities. Rather than asking, why literary theory is threatening, we should perhaps ask, why it has such difficulty going about his business. And why, it lapses so readily either into the language of self justification and self defense or else into the over compensation of programmed Utopian, an euphoric Utopia.

Such insecurity about it is own project, calls for self analysis, if one is to understand the frustration that attend up it is practitioners, even when they seem to do well in methodological self assurance. And if these difficulties are indeed, an integral part of the problem then we will have to be or to some extent or historical in the temporal sense of the term.

The resistance to theory is a resistance to the use of language about language; it is therefore, resistance to language itself or to the possibility that language contains factors or functions that cannot be reduced to intuition. They are theory and not theory at the same time, the universal theory of the impossibility of theory to the extend they are theory. That is to say teachable, generalizable and highly responsive, to systematization, the critical reading, like the other kinds is still avoid and resist the readings the advocate.

Nothing can overcome the resistance to theory, since theory is itself this resistance. The last year the aims and the better the methods of literary theory, the less possible becomes yet. Literary theory is not in danger of going under it, it cannot help, but flourish and the

more it is registered, the more it flourishes. Since, the language it speaks is the language of self resistance, what remains impossible to decide is whether this flourishing is a triumph or a fall.

Misunderstanding of theory is rightly explained by Judith Butler, theory as Butler states has been mistaken by many people to be a position of permanent skepticism. Instead, she sees it, there is nothing more than critical interrogation of belief. We already carry with us, it is a form of enquiry that does not deny the existence of the world, but rather relates to it crucially. Theory is never fully abstract she says for, it is in the context of action that we have to think.

In her words, theory is an engage form of reflection that frequently emerges in tandem with suffering. Now, Stephen Knapp and Walter Ben Michael have discussed the position of theory in against theory. Now, this state the theory is an attempt to govern the interpretations of particular text by appealing to an account of interpretation in general. Either theories grounded the reading of literary text to guarantee, objectivity and validity of interpretation or translate the instability to produce agreements among interpretants as an alternate mode of theory.

Theory attempts to solve a set of familiar problems, the mistake is that, the imagine the problems too be real. There mistake is that they imagine the possibility of moving from one term authors intended meaning to a second term that text meaning, when the two terms are the same and that is what Knapp and Michael believe in. Meaning of a text can be nothing other than the authors meaning and it is determine by the character of the speakers intention, that all literary interpretation must stress reconstruction of the author aims and attitudes.

In order to evolve guides and norms for constructing the meaning of his steps, theories argue against formalist arguments, deny importance of authorial, intention. You might recall that, we have been talking about Vimset and Beardsly affective and intentional fallacy and intension of author. So, they conceive a text as a piece of language, a public object, define by public norms.

There idea is that only by assigning a particular intention towards can one arrive at determinant interpretation. There is no such thing as intension less language; there is no getting away from intentionally for Knapp and Micheal. Missing this point enhanced

imagine the possibility of two different kinds of meaning is more than a theoretical mistake. It is the sort of mistake that makes theory possible; it makes theory possible, because it creates the illusion of a choice between alternative methods of interpreting.

To be a theorist to things that, there is a choice, theory loses, the moment it realizes that there are no theoretical choices to be made. Theories believe that intention is something that is added to a language prior to or independent of it. The textual meaning equates authorial intention, statement about meaning of work, equates statement about author's intention.

Knapp's and Michal's piece is that, it is near latitude that the meaning of a text is what the authors intended. So, that theoretical discussion of this relationship denies and elaborates differences are equally redundant and any objection depends on it is mistaking the meaning of the arguments. Since, the author is intended to be irrefutable as they point out, the absence of intention seems to make the marks meaningless.

Now, they have been criticized for Knapp and Michal, the Knapp-Michel Doctrine is lamentably paradoxical: intention is not sufficient to generate the meaning of a sculpture or a sonnet or a song; that is what the critics feel. Art is not magic; one can feel failure is precisely a discrepancy between the actual meaning of your creation and what you wanted it to be; art can mean something unintended.

Another great work is by Terry Eagleton after theory, where Eagleton feels that we are living in an age now in the aftermath of what one might call high theory in an age, which having grown rich on the inside of thinkers, like Althusser, Barthes and Derrida has also in some ways moved beyond them. The generation that followed developed the original ideas, added to them, criticized them and applied them.

For Eagleton, the ambitious originality of high theory such as the Derridean, post-structuralism has given way to the laziness and derivativeness of the current practices of cultural theory. Such as some of the current instantiations of identical theory and post-colonial theory, whereas, high theory was formed out of a real sensitivity to the social and political realities of the 1960's, current cultural theory appears to Eagleton to be born out of or to be born out of atoms nearly to be fashionably obscuring.

This is one of the key criticisms against theory, it deliberately remains obscure and inaccessible even to the general educated readers, where in the golden age of cultural theory was invested in critical agency. That is producing theoretical interventions that would result in praxis and have an actual effect on consciousness. The current state of cultural theory is regarded by Eagleton as primarily reverential and non-critical.

Even, so-called cutting edge and innovative contemporary cultural theory, such as identity theory and postcolonial theory is on the whole politically empty, according to Eagleton. Postcolonial today, for example, would vigorously charge contrary to Eagleton that they are politically engaged theories; however, for Eagleton. The case of postcolonial criticism is symptomatic of much of what was lost in the transition from a golden age of cultural theory. That is work done by people like Raymond Williams or Burdo and Julia Kristeva, Derrida, etcetera.

To the present, the loss of a connection with the politics of our daily life and lived experience in a world. In the case of postcolonial criticism, this came about through the displacement of class conflict in cultural theory. Right Eagleton much postcolonial theory, shift the focus from class and nation to ethnicity and that is a drawback. This means or this meant, among distinctive problems of postcolonial cultures were often falsely assimilated to the very different question of western identity politics.

Since, ethnicity is largely a cultural affair, we shift of the focus was also one from politics to culture. Eagleton argues you the day shift discourses of colonialism and postcolonialism in contemporary cultural theory only deflects on the real issue; that is class conflict. For Eagleton, the progressiveness and political engagement of current waves of theory such as postcolonialism and identity theory are dubious, because that a cultural theory further from it is existential social and most significantly political context.

Similarly, a problem occurs with other major contemporary cultural theories, such as feminism and postmodernism. In the first half of after theory Eagleton is doing nothing less than placing theory, such as postcolonialism, feminism and postmodernism in what James, Sonaski has called the theory Junkyard. Because, this theory have drifted too far from an engagement with the actual worlds with lived experience and everyday life. Another word for Eagleton, what may be terms second and third generation theories, such as postcolonialism, feminism and postmodernism theories that followed from high

theories are found to be lacking. Because, they have lost their grounding in social and political realities as one might expect. Now, Eagleton, whose works over the years have been strongly influenced by the works of Marx and Marxism.

So, we have to expect this from Eagleton is very defensive about the place of Marxism in the landscape of cultural theory. He manages to connect Marx and Marxism to the successors of high theory, while at the same time, distancing them from the failures of current instantiation of high theory. For Eagleton, it is clearly false to say as some help that Marxism has had nothing to say about race, nations, colonialism or ethnicity. And he takes many opportunities to connect Marxism with high theory.

Eagleton notes, for example, that Derrida also claim now it is his always understood, his own theory of deconstruction as a kind of radical Marxism and that it seems safe to say that much of the new cultural theory was born out of creative dialogue with Marxism. However, Eagleton distance on Marxism from failures of high theory, this is especially true in the case of post mortem theory of Lyotard and Baudrillard.

Of Lyotard, he says, when Lyotard rejects what he called grand narrative, he first used the term to mean simply Marxism. We have already seen Lyotard rejection of Kristen redemption and Marxism is grand narrative. Of Baudrillard, Eagleton says that it was Baudrillard, who doubted that the Gulf were even took place on the whole no Marxism and Marxist thought are selectively affiliated with high theory.

The managed to avoid the Thoreau slashing, he gives current cultural theory, Eagleton believe that. Although, there is a future for cultural theory and after high theory, it is not be found in entity theory for him. Antitheory is embodied in the works of Stanley Fish and Roti, thinkers, who epitomize what is laws by contemporary instrumentation for high theory.

According to Eagleton, there and anti theory means more than one nothing to do professional theory. For Fish and Roti, how you try to justify your way of life for them, this is rather neither possible nor necessary. For Eagleton, you cannot justify your way of life by theory, because theory is part of that way of life not something set apart from it. Eagleton contents that the so called anti foundationalism of Fish and Roti appear to have simply replaced one kind of anchor.

With another, it is now culture not god or nature write Eagleton which is the foundation of the world, Eagleton is clearly not impressed by the anti foundationalist, anti theory of series Fish and Roti. According to Eagleton again, cultural theory has made only two major achievements, against it has distributors of the idea that there is a single correct way to interpret a work of art and it is perceived us, that there are many things involved in the making of work of art decide the author.

More over cultural theory seems to have lost more than it has gain, what it has lost are absolute truth, objectivity, foundation, morality and depth. So, now we have been talking about post theory and we have been talking about the key theories related to the notion Terry Eagleton of course. After theory, you also have a book called post theory, new direction in criticism, which is an edited volume by martin McQueen at all.

So, there are major works being done in and understanding, what is theory in today's time. So, this brings us to the end of this course literary theory and criticism, I hope by and now, you have been submitting your assignments regularly. We are aware that you have been submitting your assignment, we have been responding to your queries also, very regularly and promptly. So, I do hope that you enjoy the course and very soon, you are going to have your end semester or the certification exams.

So, do it well and thank you very much for being with us.