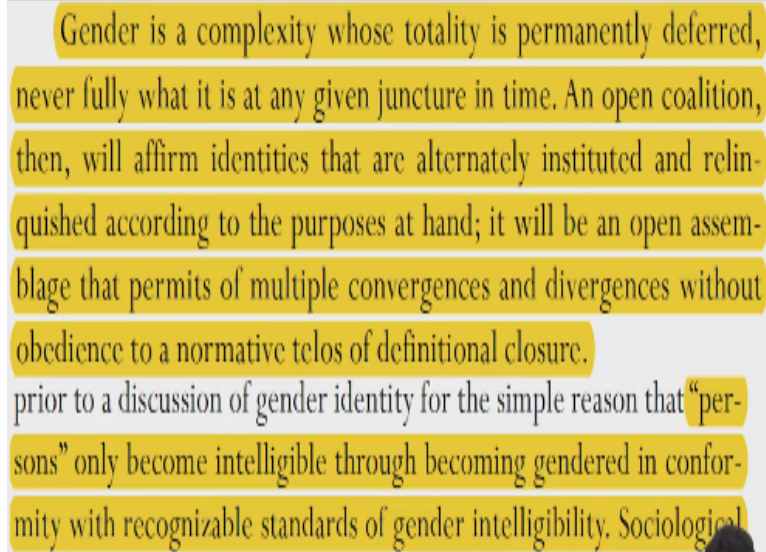


**Introduction to Cultural Studies**  
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**Lecture - 19**  
**Judith Butler Gender Trouble - II**

So hello and welcome to this NPTEL lecture, Introduction to Cultural Studies, where we are looking at Judith Butler's Gender Trouble. We have already started with the text. We will just continue with the text with the discussion today and you know with couple of lectures to come as well.

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Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time. An open coalition, then, will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand; it will be an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure. prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that "persons" only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility. Sociological

So on page 21 on your screen 22 actually on your screen we have a definition of gender that Butler offers. It is a very interesting definition and it is related to what we just talked about in the previous lecture about gender being a process, gender being a verb as an activity of becoming, unbecoming, rebecoming obviously in relation to the cultural conditions around the human self, the human body.

So Butler defines gender over here on page 22 as a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time. An open coalition then will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand. It will

be an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure.

So the very idea of gender according to Butler is a play whose totality is permanently deferred and if you remember in the previous lecture we discussed the section where Butler raised a suspicion against any sense of unity or any sense of universality and she had warned us against the universalizing tendency so looking at the category of the woman by completely doing away with the localities of existence, localities of experience etc.

And she had warned us against any essentializing technique that might be incorporated in understanding gender. And gender over here obviously is defined by Butler as a play and whose entire purpose is to defy totality, is to do away with totality and do away with closure as well. So any normative closure is done away with an idea of gender according to Butler. So it is openness, it is an open activity which does away with closure.

And then she talks about very interestingly about intelligible persons or intelligible genders. So on gender becomes an activity in certain economy of stereotypes and certain economy of identities and certain economy of signifiers. So persons and this is on your screen, persons only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility.

So there was certain recognizable standards you know apropos which people conformed to and in the process of conforming they become intelligible persons, intelligible genders. So intelligibility becomes an act of conformation or conformity, right and that is something that Butler is trying to sort of deconstruct over here their very act of conformity, very act of conforming to standard stereotypes of identity, intelligibility etc.

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prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that “persons” only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility. Sociological and meaning. Within philosophical discourse itself, the notion of “the person” has received analytic elaboration on the assumption that whatever social context the person is “in” remains somehow externally related to the definitional structure of personhood, be that consciousness, the capacity for language, or moral deliberation. Although that

So and then she goes on to say within philosophical discourse itself the notion of the person has received analytic elaboration on the assumption that whatever social context the person is in remains somehow externally related to the definitional structure of personhood be that consciousness, the capacity for language or moral deliberation. So Butler sort of describes how in analytical philosophy, how in classical philosophical discourses the person and the environment are always defined in terms of inside and outside.

So the very idea of a social context is defined as being external to the person right. And Butler obviously is looking at a more poststructuralist way of embodiment in which the very idea of externality disappears. So the internal person and external environment sort of blend into each other in the idea of identity, in a play of identity, in a play of gender etc. according to Butler.

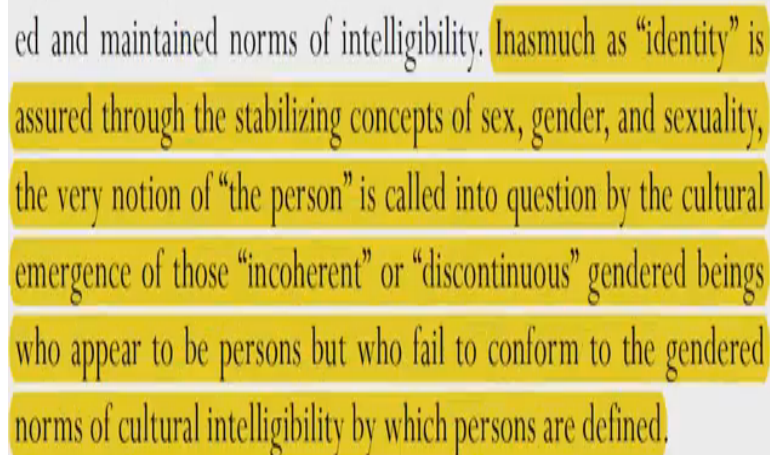
But she obviously is more critical of this channel philosophizing techniques in philosophical discourses where the very idea of the context remains external to the person, remains external consciousness, to language etc. and that is something that she has problems with. And that again obviously brings us back to one of the key things that we have been talking about since the very inception of this course.

And that is looking at culture as a mixture, a very problematic mixture of inside and outside of abstraction and materiality whereby the very differences, very borderlines between inside and

outside blur away. So very borderlines between the material environment outside and the phenomenal consciousness inside they blur away because they enter into some kind of a loop with each other.

So consciousness is informed by materiality and materiality is informed by consciousness according to this kind of a very poststructuralist way of looking at identity and cultural conditions, okay.

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ed and maintained norms of intelligibility. Inasmuch as “identity” is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of “the person” is called into question by the cultural emergence of those “incoherent” or “discontinuous” gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.

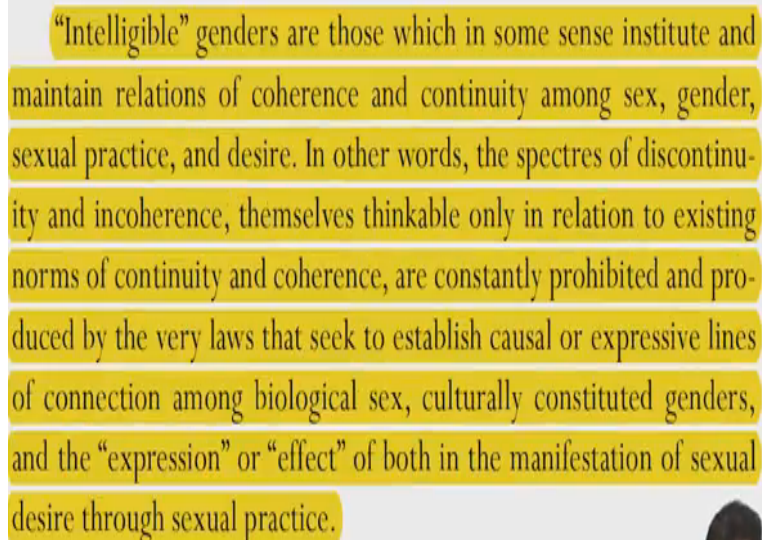
So Butler then goes on to describe and this is page 23 on your screen highlighted in yellow which says in as much as identity is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality the very notion of the person is called into question by the cultural emergence of those incoherent or discontinuous gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.

Now we just saw how conformity or the very act of conforming to the standard expectation to the standard identifiers of identity person etc. how that act of conformity creates intelligible identities or intelligibly in standard discourses. However, what if that kind of conformity is deconstructed. What if someone refuse to conform. What if someone becomes a nonconformist into that category of identity.

What if someone becomes incoherent or discontinuous in terms of gendered identity. What that does essentially according to Butler is that, that creates an emergence of non-intelligibility. So intelligibility over here is obviously a discursive category. Intelligibility is obviously here a recognizable category in an economy of stereotype, an economy of identifications etc.

Now when that intelligibility is deconstructed by acts of nonconformity through acts of incoherence, through acts of discontinuity then gendered beings who appear to be persons fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined. So very act of defining persons, personhood is defying to certain acts of conformity, certain acts of being in sync with standard notions of gender, standard notions of identity etc. and that is a very important category according to Butler.

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"Intelligible" genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire. In other words, the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the "expression" or "effect" of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice.

So intelligible genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, right. So she makes over here a very interesting definition between intelligible genders and non-intelligible genders, right. So intelligible genders obviously are produced through acts of conformity, through acts of you know by conforming to certain discourses which are familiar or discourses of familiarity etc.

So you know that is reliant on coherence and continuity and you know symmetry and conformity etc. Now in other words, the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence themselves thinkable only

in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders and the expression of effect or effect of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice.

So the very idea and we talked a little bit about in the previous lecture about the difference between you know biological sex and gender in a sense that how gender becomes more of a play which is not overdetermined by biological sex according to Butler. So gender becomes a performance whereby a man can become feminine, a woman can become masculine depending on the performance, depending on the play of certain codes which are preestablished in cultural discourses.

Now obviously intelligibility over here or intelligible genders or intelligible identities of gender are reliant on a very coherent, continuous, replication of those codes are the options through as well. So non-intelligible genders, non-intelligible identities are those identities which break or interrupt the intelligible codes and that is something that Butler spends a lot of time discussing and deconstructing.

Now and then she comes over to the idea of the question of the woman and we talked about in the previous lecture ho Butler is very skeptical about looking at any kind of essentializing techniques or any essentializing tendencies or any universalizing tendencies towards woman or the question of woman and she is more concerned when looking at woman as a topical category, as a constructed category which is you know which is reliant to its context, which is tied to its context, which cannot possibly be divorced in its context etc.

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and, hence, the unrepresentable as such. Women can never “be,” according to this ontology of substances, precisely because they are the relation of difference, the excluded, by which that domain marks itself off. Women are also a “difference” that cannot be understood as the simple negation or “Other” of the always-already-masculine subject. As discussed earlier, they are neither the subject nor its Other, but a difference from the economy of binary opposition, itself a ruse for a monologic elaboration of the masculine.

Now, then she goes to say in this particular section which is page 25 on your screen highlighted in yellow where she says, woman can never be according to this ontology of substances precisely because they are the relation of difference, the excluded by which that domain marks itself off. Women are also a difference that cannot be understood as the simple negation or other of the always-already-masculine subject.

As discussed earlier, they are neither the subject nor its other but a difference from the economy of binary opposition itself ruse for a monologic elaboration of the masculine. So women over here according to Butler and she obviously is thinking in terms of the masculine economy, the patriarchal economy of identification etc. Woman over here are neither the other nor a simple you know negation, right.

So they are obviously defined in terms of a difference and this difference becomes discursive in quality as a woman can never be according to this ontology of substances precisely because they are the relations of difference. So being of a woman is negated by the fact that women always relies in her relation of difference, in relation to the patriarchal economy, right. So you know they are excluded they are the difference by which the domain marks itself off.

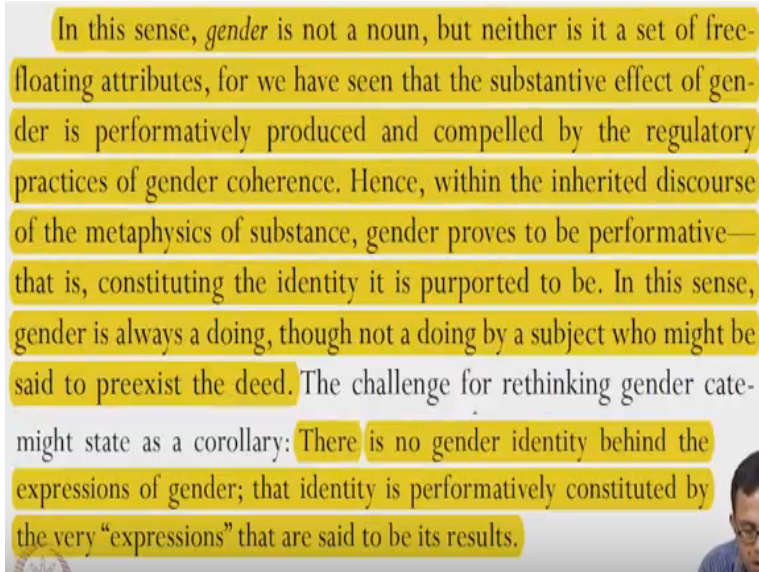
The domain a patriarchal economy, domain of masculinist economy marks off the woman as the other the different etc. So woman are also difference that cannot be understood as the simple

negation or other. So woman are obviously not the simple other or not a simple act of voluntariness over here but they you know as discussed earlier they are neither the subject nor is other. So the neither occupied a subject position nor they need other position.

So they are always liminal position between the self and the other, between the subject and the other etc. But and that liminality is something which is invested into this idea of difference. But a difference from the economy or binary opposition itself ruse for a monologic elaboration of the masculine. So the woman relies over here as the existence of difference, as a relation of difference in relation to the binary opposition in the patriarchal economy.

So they are neither the self nor the other, they are rather the liminal category somewhere between the two you know a play between identities, a play between normative and non-normative identities and that according to Butler is a very crucial thing in understanding the idea of womanhood in in a very poststructuralist terms.

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In this sense, *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. The challenge for rethinking gender categories might state as a corollary: There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.

Now, next we come to this very interesting definition of gender and this is page 33 in this particular book and highlighted in yellow for you in the screen where Butler very clearly defines what gender is and this is what I meant in the previous lecture when I said that we need to be very careful with Butler’s use of verbs over here because verbs play a very important role in Butler’s discourse.



Because verbs are obviously an activity, verbs denote activity, they denote you know a play, a performance etc. and that is something that Butler is deeply interested in as a poststructuralist, as someone who is interested in a poststructuralist understanding of gender and this is what I meant when I said in the beginning of this particular text that we need to look at Butler as someone who connects postmodernism with poststructuralism and gender studies.

So she is someone who is quite seminal really as a figure you know who connects gender identities or gender studies by drawing on post structures, by drawing on postmodernism to a great extent and that is why she is increasingly relevant in a world we inhabit today. Now on page 33 on your screen, this is one of the foundational definitions of gender according to Butler where she says that in this sense gender is not a noun but neither is it a set of free floating attributes for we have seen that a substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence.

Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative that is constitutive or constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense gender is always doing though not doing by subject who might be said to preexist the deed. So gender over here is not a noun neither it is a sort of free flowing attributes, but it is an act of performing. It is a performative activity through which subject has become, unbecome, and rebecome, right.

And obviously this becoming, unbecoming, and rebecoming is related to the idea of the economy of stereotypes, economy of presupposed identities which are already there before subject comes into being, right. So gender is always a doing according to Butler. It is an activity, it is an incessant activity though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. So it is a doing which creates subjectivity, which creates gender identities which create which produces identities in a very interesting in a very embodied sense.

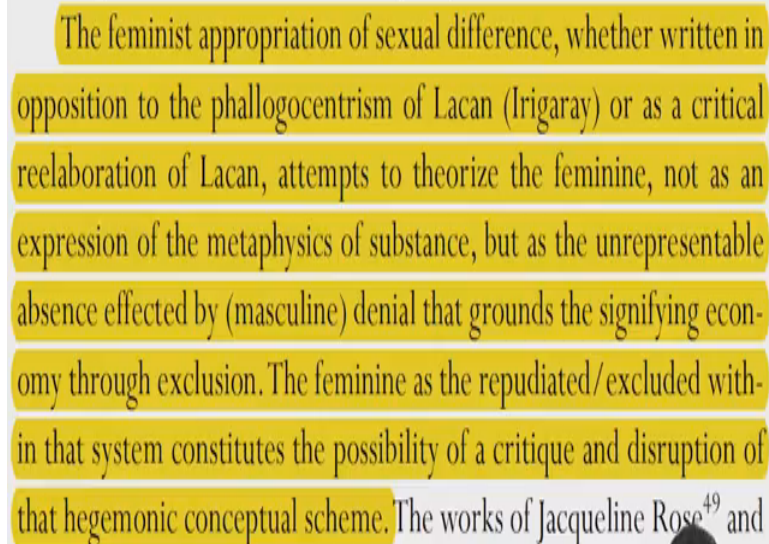
So again we are back to the idea of production but obviously this production over here is potentially subversive because the production of gender identities can be subversive in certain

context whereby the human being or the human self does not confirm to the idea of stereotypes which are preexisting before the gender comes into being. So and then she goes on to say there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender.

That identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results. So there is no preset identity in this particular context and that identity is something which is you know performatively produced and performatively replicated and played by the human self in relation to the economy of stereotypes, in relation to you know preset identities.

So this is obviously a very poststructuralist phenomena, a very poststructuralist way of looking at gender whereby you know if you go back to poststructuralism which basically questions any causal any linear relationship in signifier and signified. So this very neat equation between signifier and signified is deconstructed by poststructuralism and you know Butler obviously is drawing on that deconstruction to a great extent when she is looking at gender identity you know not in a causal linear way but in a performative kind of a way which plays up the pluralities the possibilities rather of gender identities in a social context.

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The feminist appropriation of sexual difference, whether written in opposition to the phallogocentrism of Lacan (Irigaray) or as a critical reelaboration of Lacan, attempts to theorize the feminine, not as an expression of the metaphysics of substance, but as the unrepresentable absence effected by (masculine) denial that grounds the signifying economy through exclusion. The feminine as the repudiated/excluded within that system constitutes the possibility of a critique and disruption of that hegemonic conceptual scheme. The works of Jacqueline Rose<sup>49</sup> and

Now, we had seen how Butler had looked at the difference between Irigaray and Beauvoir, Simone de Beauvoir before you know and she obviously is siding Irigaray to a great extent, Luce Irigaray the French feminist you know poststructural feminist someone argue and Butler

obviously is someone who is more akin more you know related or more sort of allied attitudinally speaking with Irigaray rather than Simone de Beauvoir.

And she goes on to say in this page over here, this is page 37 on your screen where she says, the feminist appropriation of sexual difference whether written in opposition to the phallogocentrism of Lacan which is something Irigaray does or as a critical reelaboration of Lacan, attempts to theorize the feminine not as an expression of the metaphysics of substance but as the unrepresentable absence effected by masculine denial that grounds the signifying economy through exclusion.

The feminine as the repudiated excluded within that system constitutes the possibility of a critique and disruption of that hegemonic conceptual scheme. Now the hegemonic conceptual scheme or the conceptual schema and you know and obviously we just we have read Fanon before this and we have seen how the conceptual schema can be racialized, can be epidermalized according to Fanon and over here the conceptual schema, the hegemony of the conceptual schema is more often than not you know reliant on phallogocentric principles.

Now the feminist appropriation of sexual difference, sexual difference is celebrated by certain feminist, the French feminist in particular who are reliant on poststructuralism to a great extent. They look at gender identity the feminist gender identity as an interruption, as an aporia in this narrative of phallogocentric you know activity.

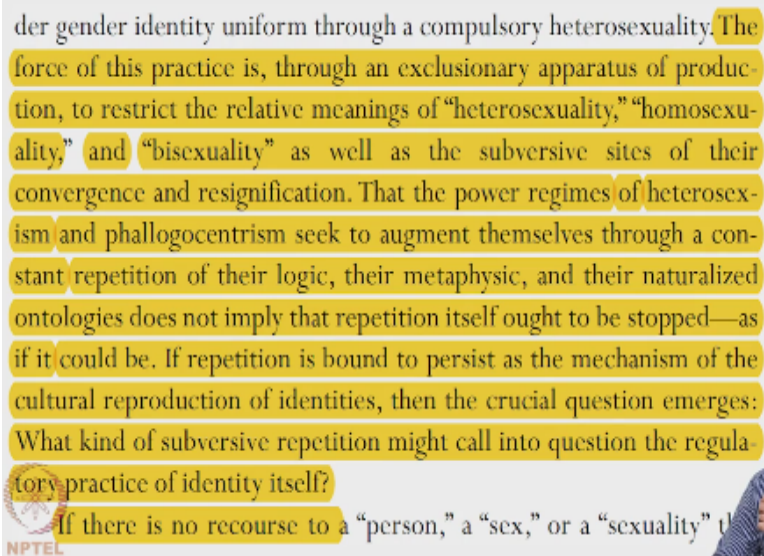
So phallogocentrism becomes the grand narrative which is interrupted by this kind of feminist poststructuralist play of identities which you know which repudiates the assumptions of the phallogocentric economy. So the feminine as the repudiated excluded within that system constitutes the possibility of a critique and disruption of the hegemonic conceptual scheme. So the possibility of critique lies on a disruption.

So this very interesting equation that Butler offers between critique and disruption. So disruption or interruption becomes you know the you know the origin of critique in certain sense. So critique relies on disruption, critique relies on interruption and interruption obviously of the

hegemonic grand narrative of masculinity, the grand narrative of patriarchy, the grand narrative of phallogocentrism etc.

So all these grand narratives are critique and you know deconstructed by the exclusionary politics of the feminine, the feminine as an exclusion, the feminine as an exclusive category obviously can create or can generate you know a productive subversion through this process of you know deconstruction, right. So that is something that Butler is deeply interested in as poststructuralist feminist, as a poststructuralist you know gender theorist over here.

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der gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality. The force of this practice is, through an exclusionary apparatus of production, to restrict the relative meanings of “heterosexuality,” “homosexuality,” and “bisexuality” as well as the subversive sites of their convergence and resignification. That the power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysics, and their naturalized ontologies does not imply that repetition itself ought to be stopped—as if it could be. If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?  
If there is no recourse to a “person,” a “sex,” or a “sexuality” th

So and then we come to page 42 on your screen and this should be highlighted in yellow again and this is what she goes on to say, the force of this practice is through an exclusionary apparatus of production to restrict the relative meanings of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality as well as the subversive sites of their convergence and resignification.

That the power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysics, and their naturalized ontologies does not imply the repetition itself ought to be stopped as if it could be. If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then a crucial question emerges.

What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regularity principle or regulatory practice of identity itself? So she talks about heterosexuality and you know how heterosexuality you know allies itself with phallogocentrism in terms of being dominant discourses or sexuality and gender and how she says how can this kind of grand narratives be subverted. So these grand narratives can be subverted through practices of identity through subversive repetitions right.

Now if you look at this idea of repetition of grand narratives, repetition of logic, metaphysic and naturalized ontologist and naturalized ontologist are obviously ontologist which are naturalized through acts of repetition and if you go back to Bhabha, Homi Bhabha's idea of this stereotype where she says where he had said that stereotype you know this ambivalence is stereotype in a sense that it is fixated.

So for instance the violence or the anarchy or the hypersexuality or wildness of the black person is you know fixated as a stereotype, as an attribute. However, that attribute needs to be replayed incessantly or add infinitum because only through repeating that kind of a permanence can stereotype gain currency in a colonial discourse. So the ambivalence lies in the display between permanence and play. So something similar is happening over here.

So this naturalized ontology is over here that need to be replayed over and over again by the patriarchal principles of production and reproduction, right. And unless we do that, unless we reproduce through a incessant play, incessant repetition the phallogocentric economy cannot gain currency or cannot gain legitimacy. So legitimacy over here becomes discursive category and aspirational category over here.

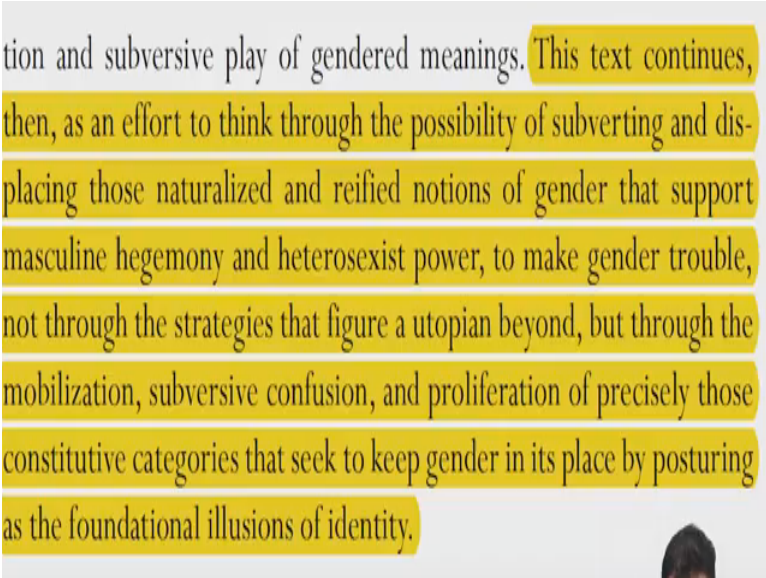
And dominant discourse can only gain legitimacy through repetition, through cultural mechanisms, repetitions or reproductions through cultural mechanism, through media mechanism etc. now obviously Butler is calling for the act of subversive repetition. The subversive repetition can interrupt and disrupt this idea this currency of this narrative of normalized ontology.

So normalized ontologies become very important in Butler's discourse and that is something that she critiques over and over again. That is something that she deconstructs over and over again, normalized ontologies. So ontologies which are normalized through acts of repetition. So constructed categories which become given which become grand narratives through acts of normalization.

So normalization or naturalization become a very discursive activities according to Butler and obviously they rely, they try to conceal the constructed quality, they try to conceal you know they you know discursive qualities by acts of repetition. So the very idea of naturalization is related to the act of concealment. So you can naturalize something only by concealing its constructed category, its constructed quality.

Now if you reveal this constructed quality if people find out it is a constructed category then obviously they would to accept it as given. They will stop to accept it as you know presupposed idea, right. So any act of presupposition, any production of presupposition relies on naturalization and obviously naturalization is related discursively through a concealment of the constructed quality of particular discourse, okay.

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tion and subversive play of gendered meanings. This text continues, then, as an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity.

So and Butler as a poststructuralist, Butler as a postmodernist feminist someone who constantly questions this acts of normalization, this acts of naturalization okay and then she goes on to say

in page 44 which should be on your screen highlighted in yellow where she says, this text continues, then as an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power to make gender trouble.

Not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond but through the mobilization, subversive confusion and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity. Now trouble over here is the key word and this is something that obviously is part of the title Gender Trouble. So trouble becomes a verb over here. Now what does trouble do?

A trouble unsettles oppositions. Trouble unsettles definitions. Trouble unsettles ontologies etc. So trouble becomes a subversive category over here. So you know if a certain definition is troubled, if a certain idea of gender is troubled then obviously we are looking at new possibilities of meaning, new possibilities of production which do away with earlier sort of ossified or fixated ontologies of you know definitions of gender which rely in a very neat binary between heterosexual, homosexual; between masculine and feminine etc.

But that binary sexism, that dualism is something that is deconstructed by Butler in this particular book. So she is setting out over here to define what this text continues to do. So this text, this particular text Gender Trouble it continues to unsettle this neat dualisms of gender etc. and which are naturalizing reified. So reification obviously is a commodification, is a fixation. So if something is reified as a category, if something is reified as a meaning then obviously what happens is it becomes fixated.

It becomes frozen into some kind of meaning, system which you resist any kind of deconstruction. That reification is something which is resisted by Butler. You know obviously that act of reification or naturalization is related to hegemony or masculinist hegemony and heterosexist power. So heterosexuality and patriarchy are conflicted by Butler over here as instruments anxiety of you know dominant discourses.

However, this particular text wants to make gender trouble, wants to trouble gender, wants to trouble the idea of gender. So the word text is also interesting. So if you look at the word text and look at the word trouble, what Butler is trying to say over here very interestingly is that the textuality of gender is what could potentially trouble any neat idea of gender which is reified and naturalized.

So textuality and trouble are related to each other as are naturalization and reification. So you know you are trying to construct again a four term strategy that Bhabha had constructed in you know the location of the other in that particular text that we did, the other question, the essay. But over here we can also draft a similar 4 term strategy. So naturalization, reification as 2 terms which are configured together and text and trouble as 2 terms which are configured together in opposition to the earlier category.

Now textuality and trouble become related to each other over here according to Butler's discourse and that kind of a sort of compound, the compound between textuality and trouble can potentially subvert any idea of naturalization and reification. Now, however, Butler is also very interestingly warning us against any idea of a utopian beyond. So she is saying you know making gender trouble or troubling the idea of gender does not aspire for utopian beyond.

But it aspires for a process through mobilization, subversive confusion, again a very important category subversive confusion so confusion or unsettling which is subversive, potential subversive in quality in a sense that it will open up new possibilities or meaning in discourses of gender. And proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place but posturing as the foundational illusions of identity.

So the foundational illusions of identity is something that needs to be done away with, needs to be sort of opened up through a proliferation of you know new kinds of identity according to Butler. So obviously what Butler is trying to do here is very interestingly she is looking at how this ideas of reification and naturalization can be broken down, can be deconstructed and we can have instead a proliferation of plural possibilities which will open up you know new ideas of gender through acts of mobilization without aspiring for utopian beyond.



Now this resistance for utopian this resistance against the utopian beyond or a utopian understanding of gender is related to what Butler had warned us against precisely in that act of universalizing. So she, so the very act of universalizing, the very act of becoming utopia are things that Butler is warning us against. So she on one hand is someone who wants to critique to phallogocentric dualisms of heterosexuality, homosexuality, masculine, feminine etc.

However, she is also equally skeptical of any kind of a utopian beyond which can appear, which can eventually end up being a universalizing tendency, can become end up becoming a universalizing totality. Now she obviously is something we just who is completely you know anti-totally. So again this anti-totalitarian identity is something that Butler you know finds you know there is reason why we find Butler so relevant in the study of postmodernism as well along with feminism, along with gender identity.

So she is someone again who is equally important for postmodernist and for you know poststructuralist. Now so this is something that Butler is interested in doing and that is something that Butler you know as a poststructuralist she is constantly aware of that she is someone who is resisting gender, resisting a reification of gender, resisting any neat understanding of gender.

However, she is equally resisting any utopian you know utopian understanding of free gender. So the idea of a universal free gender, universal utopian gender is something that Butler is warning us against constantly. So this concludes this lecture on gender trouble and we will continue with this book and hopefully conclude in the next lecture you know. So just go through the yellow sections, the highlighted sections that we have studied so far and I will see you in the next lecture. Thank you for your attention.