

Introduction to Cultural Studies
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Lecture - 21

Judith Butler Gender Trouble - IV Conclusion Lecture 1 - From Parody to Politics

So hello and welcome to this NPTEL lecture and this course Introduction to Cultural Studies and we are looking at Judith Butler. So we had finished the text Judith Butler's Gender Trouble in the last lecture. So we cover the content in terms of looking at the important sections for us for the purpose of this particular course. So what we will do today, we will look at the conclusion of that book. It is really a very seminal book as I keep saying.

It is one of those books which connect postmodernism with gender studies and poststructuralism. So it does a lot of things in terms of you know its impact on critical theory and its impact on cultural studies.

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Conclusion: From Parody to Politics

I began with the speculative question of whether feminist politics could do without a "subject" in the category of women. At stake is not whether it still makes sense, strategically or transitionally, to refer to women in order to make representational claims in their behalf. The feminist "we"

So it is very important that we look at the conclusion in some details and we look at the conclusion, we read the entire conclusion actually in this particular lecture and the one to come as well where she talks about how, how not to look at gender. I mean she shows us how to look at gender of course but also how not to look at gender. And also interestingly she looks at the

way in which some of the supposed constrictions in terms of gender studies can actually be seen as positives.

So some of the supposed ambiguities in gender studies can be looked at can be seen as possibilities and that is one of the really radical things which that particular conclusion does. And also it really summarizes the whole book, gender trouble. It talks about how you know gender trouble you know draws on Foucault, draws on Irigaray, draws on Simone de Beauvoir.

And also draws on to a great extent poststructuralism which is a good section to look at in terms of looking at the entire text but also and equally in terms of looking at how gender identities are played out and proliferated and produced in culture, in popular culture, discursive conditions, ideological conditions etc. okay. So this should be on your screen at the moment. It is a conclusion and it is called from Parody to Politics.

And before I sort of dive into it if you remember she had made a very crucial distinction between parody and pastiche in one of the sections in the main text which we studied and she had drawn on Fredric Jameson and she sort of examined pastiche as a hollow parody, as a parody which has been exhausted of laughter and pastiche so different ontologically from parody because you know it does not rely, it does not assume any ontological origin.

So parody assumes an ontological origin. Parody assumes a original center against which the parody production is measured up. Whereas pastiche does not assume any ontological center, any ontological origin at all. So pastiche is more hollow than parody. It is a parody which is exhausted of laughter. But also that exhaustion becomes a subversion to a certain extent and that is a important definition that Butler draws on and expands on towards end of gender trouble.

Now in this particular section, entire conclusion from parody to pastiche, from parody to politics, she talks about how you know politics can be produced, political identities can be produced through parody and how parody can performatively produce political identities and sub identities and counter identities as opposed to the hegemonic discourses which you know contain identities as in relation to gender, okay.

So she starts this particular section by you know rehearsing some of the questions that she had already raised in gender trouble. And she says, I began with the speculative question of whether feminist politics could do without a subject in the category of women, right. So I mean we have seen how she had warned us against, repeatedly warned us against any universalizing tendency and totalizing tendency in terms of looking at women you know the women and you know offering instead so the plural possibilities that can come with the subject position of women.

At stake is not whether it still makes sense, strategically or transitionally to refer to women in order to make representational claims in their behalf. The feminist we is always and only a phantasmatic construction, one that has its purposes, but which denies the internal complexity and indeterminacy of the term and constitutes itself only through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent.

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I began with the speculative question of whether feminist politics could do without a “subject” in the category of women. At stake is not whether it still makes sense, strategically or transitionally, to refer to women in order to make representational claims in their behalf. The feminist “we” is always and only a phantasmatic construction, one that has its purposes, but which denies the internal complexity and indeterminacy of the term and constitutes itself only through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent. The tenuous or phantasmatic status of the “we,” however, is not cause for despair or, at least, it is not *only* cause for despair. The radical instability of the category sets into question the *foundational* restrictions on feminist political theorizing and opens up other configurations, not only of genders and bodies, but of politics itself.

So she looks at a paradox in representation and feminism and she says the question of we becomes very important. Who are these we and this entire idea of we in feminist politics is based on certain degree of exclusion right. It excludes certain elements which paradoxically it sets out to represent, sets out to promote, right. So there is a paradox in the question of agency, the question of location and a question of representation and feminism.

So it ends up being she says is always a phantasmatic construction. It is a construction of fantasy. It can never be an entire construction. It can never be a total construction and also and equally and more importantly she says she goes on and says this is actually marked by internal complexity and indeterminacy which ends up excluding certain subjects, excluding certain components which feminism sets out to represent, right.

So therein lies the paradox in representation. Therein lies the paradox of the subject position in feminism but she is so interrogating and trying to deconstruct. So the tenuous or phantasmatic status of the we, however, is not cause for despair or at least it is not only cause for despair. The radical instability of the category sets into question the foundational restrictions on feminist political theorizing and opens up other configurations not only of genders and bodies but of politics itself.

So this is what I meant when I sort of said in the very beginning of this particular lecture that one of the really radical things which this particular conclusion does is that it looks at certain supposed shortcomings of subject position, representation, agency as some of the constrictions you know some of the shortcomings, some of the pitfalls of these things and looks at those things in terms of privileges, in terms of possibilities.

So she is saying over here that there is an indeterminacy, there is an ambiguity in the question of we in the category of we in feminist politics. So who are these we you know and what constitutes this we? And obviously, we works with exclusion, we works with paradoxes, internal paradoxes, internal complexities, internal ambiguities. It does not include certain things which it sets out to represent etc. So there was a problem, it is a problematic category.

However, she goes on to say over here that this problematic category or this acknowledgment or this discovery of the problem, it should not be the cause for despair alone. (()) (06:38) on despair, the fact that it is an ambiguity the question of we, there is a complexity, there is a paradox and the question of we inform this politics. But rather we should look at this ambiguity in terms of a possibility, in terms of opening up more possibilities, plural possibilities in foundational politics and this is what she says in the end.

The radical instability and this instability, this indeterminacy can have radical possibilities emerging out of it. So radical instability of the category sets into question the foundational restrictions on feminist political theorizing and opens up other configurations, not only of genders and bodies but of politics itself, okay. So this can become possibilities not just in terms of gender and bodies but also politics itself. So politics of course over here is an umbrella term which includes representation, agency, body, identity everything really, okay.

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term and constitutes itself only through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent. The tenuous or phantasmatic status of the “we,” however, is not cause for despair or, at least, it is not *only* cause for despair. The radical instability of the category sets into question the *foundational* restrictions on feminist political theorizing and opens up other configurations, not only of genders and bodies, but of politics itself.

The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a “doer behind the deed,” but that the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed. This is not a return to an existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts, for the existential theory maintains a prediscursive structure for both the self and

And then she goes on to say the foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken, right. So and this is one of this a priori definitions of identity which obviously Butler goes on to critique and deconstruct and she says over here that this foundationalist reasoning of identity politics, the dominant rationale of the identity politics assumes, what does it assume? It assumes that identity is a prediscursive phenomenon.

That is what she says over here. But you know it kind of assume that identity must first be in place in order for political interest to be elaborated and subsequently political action to be taken. So identity comes before political action according to the dominant rationale of identity politics. Identity comes before political interest. Identity comes before political motivations, before discursive motivations.

However, she says quite clearly in subsequent sections over here almost immediately after this that identity is actually part of the production principle. Identity it cannot exist a priori. Identity cannot be a prediscursive phenomenon. It is very much a product of discursive phenomenon. It is part of the discursive phenomenon. So identity is very much you know sort of synchronized a part of or embedded in the entire idea of discursivity, right.

So identity and discursivity are allied together, embedded together organically related together and we cannot really siphon out one from the other in a way which is what the ordinary foundationalist rationale of identity does. So she is questioning and deconstructing the foundationalist reasoning of identity which assumes identity to be a prediscursive given. Instead she says over here that identity is very much a part of the discursive politics, discursive production. So identity is discourse.

So identity and discursivity are simultaneous, synchronous and a part of each other. They compliment each other in you know human situations and then she says over here, my argument and this is what she says is that there need not be a doer behind the deed but that the doer is variably constructed in and through the deed. And that is really a beautiful way to put it and she says the doer and the deed are you know they are part of the same thing.

They are part of the same process. So the action and the actant they are part of each other. They are sort of they inform each other. They entangle with each other and again it is an asymmetric entanglement. So the foundationalist reasoning of identity the dominant rationale of identity production which is obviously discursive in quality it conceals this entanglement of doer and deed. It sort of says that the doer comes before the deed, that identity precedes discursivity.

Identity precedes you know ideological interest. Identity precedes discursive interest. But Butler says quite clearly over here and it is a very poststructuralism to say that identity and action, the doer and the deed are entangled with each other, they are progressively in process. So the doer is produced by the deed, the deed is produced by the doer. There is no ontological difference. There is no ontological separation between these 2 categories, okay.

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The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a “doer behind the deed,” but that the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed. This is not a return to an existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts, for the existential theory maintains a prediscursive structure for both the self and its acts. It is precisely the discursively variable construction of each in and through the other that has interested me here.

And then she goes on to say this is not a return to an existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts. You know this is a classic existentialist idea you know that you know existence precedes essence etc. But then you know this is not what she said. She says you know I am not going back and falling back upon existentialist theory, that existence precedes essence, she is not saying that.

Because she says quite clearly that for the existential theory maintains a prediscursive structure for both the self and its acts. So she is against any idea of prediscursivity to put it very bluntly. She says that there is nothing that can be prediscussed where everything is part of the discursive process. So she says that existentialism despite saying that existence precedes essence because it says existence precedes essence actually separates out or maps out the self and the action.

It looks at self as a prediscursive phenomenon and obviously Butler has problems with that because Butler, according to Butler the self is very much a product of discursive phenomenon. The self and discursivity are entangled together. Identity and discursivity are entangled together in a same complex process. So there cannot be any separation, any ontological or epistemological separation between identity and discursivity, okay.

So the self cannot be preceding the essence. The self cannot be preceding the idea of discourse. So and then she says it is precisely the discursively variable construction of each in and through the other that has interested me here. So you know they are discursively informed that the self and doer, the doer and the deed they are all discursively informed, discursively interested you know in different ways in very complex ways, okay.

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Gender Trouble

The question of locating “agency” is usually associated with the viability of the “subject,” where the “subject” is understood to have some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates. Or, if the subject is culturally constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the capacity for reflexive mediation, that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness. On such a model, “cul-

Now if we come to page 182, the next page from this particular section where she starts looking at agency as a very important category. So the question of locating agency is usually associated with the viability of the subject where the subject is understood to have some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates. So the key word over here is prior and obviously Butler is going to debunk the theory.

Butler is going to shoot down the theory or shoot down any idea of a priori existence right. so you know and she says the the usual association between agency and subjectivity works this way that you know the subject is understood to be you know have a stable existence prior to discourse, prior to the cultural field and negotiates. But for Butler the subject and the discursive field are part of the same process. They are always entangled with each other.

They are always involved with each other. They are always dialogic with each other. They are part of the same process and they cannot possibly separate or make any epistemological

separation between the subject and discursive field. The subject is a discursive field, the discursive field is a subject. They inform each other. They feed into each other in more ways than one, okay.

And then she says the dominant way of looking at, the usual the conventional way of looking at subject says that if the subject is culturally constructed it is nevertheless vested with agency usually figured as the capacity for reflexive meditation or mediation that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness. So again the normal normative way of looking at agency and subjectivity it says that you know the subject has a degree of immunity from discursivity if you can put it that way or has a degree of insularity from discursivity.

It is not, it remains intact. There is an integrity to subject that is not discursive in quality. However, Butler contests that immediately over here and she says you know there cannot be an integrity which is prediscursive or which is nondiscursive or a discursive right. There can be no such thing as a discursive subject. So every subject formation is discursive in quality, is ideological in quality, is cultural in quality.

And you cannot possibly separate out the subject from the cultural field and you cannot invest in any romantic or reifying idea of integrity or interiority which is not discursive in quality. So every form of subjectivity, every flavour of subjectivity is discursive in quality. There is no pure interiority, there is no pure you know integrity which is a discursive in quality and that is a myth that Butler goes on to debunk, okay.

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Gender Trouble

The question of locating “agency” is usually associated with the viability of the “subject,” where the “subject” is understood to have some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates. Or, if the subject is culturally constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the capacity for reflexive mediation, that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness. On such a model, “culture” and “discourse” *mire* the subject, but do not constitute that subject. This move to qualify and enmire the preexisting subject has appeared necessary to establish a point of agency that is not fully *determined* by that

On such a model, culture and discourse mire the subject but do not constitute the subject. So you know if you look at the normative understanding of subjectivity and agency Butler says that on such a model the normative the dominant model of looking at through subject is it says the culture and discourse mire the subject. They inform the subject. But they do not constitute the subject. So the subject has a degree of romantic separation.

A degree of existential separation from discourse, from you know the entire idea of culture. But culture and discourse inform the subject but the subject has a state of separatedness from you know culture and discourse according to the dominant theory the subject has a degree of autonomy compared to the idea of discourse, compared to the idea of culture. So there are certain elements with certain components of the subject which are a discursive in quality, which are not cultural in quality, which are purely existential in quality.

But obviously you know Butler is saying all this because she will on to deconstruct this and interrogate this and you know refute this quite radically very soon. This move to qualify and admire the preexisting subject has appeared necessary to establish a point of agency that is not fully determined by that culture and discourse. So again the normal conventional way of looking at agency to say there is an agency which is not fully, fully determined by culture and discourse, right. So there is a degree of agency which is separated, which enjoys the luxury of separation

from culture, the luxury of separation from discourse, right. That is the conventional understanding of agency apropos of discourse and culture.

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subject is culturally constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the capacity for reflexive mediation, that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness. On such a model, “culture” and “discourse” *mire* the subject, but do not constitute that subject. This move to qualify and enmire the preexisting subject has appeared necessary to establish a point of agency that is not fully *determined* by that culture and discourse. And yet, this kind of reasoning falsely presumes (a) agency can only be established through recourse to a prediscursive “I,” even if that “I” is found in the midst of a discursive convergence, and (b) that to be *constituted* by discourse is to be *determined* by discourse, where determination forecloses the possibility of agency.

Even within the theories that maintain a highly qualified or situated subject, the subject still encounters its discursively constituted environment in an oppositional epistemological frame. The culturally

And yet this kind of reasoning falsely presumes of a, agency can only be established through recourse to a prediscursive I even if that I is found in the midst of a discursive convergence and b that to be constituted by discourse is to be determined by discourse where determination forecloses the possibility of agency.

So she is pointing out the paradoxes in this particular definition where she says that you know there is a claim, there is a theory that agency can only be established through recourse to a prediscursive I, there is a prediscursive I which exists and you know it is only that prediscursive I which can emerge which can produce agency, a pure agency, right. And that I can be in convergence with discourses with you know intersect with ideologies, intersect with discourses etc.

But at the same time there is a prediscursive I which exists at a romantic remove from discourses, a romantic remove from culture and b that to be constituted by discourse is to be determined by discourse where determination forecloses the possibility of agency. There is a paradox in Butler’s pointing out over here. So she says on one hand this theory says there is a prediscursive I.

And on the other hand you know she is saying to be constituted by discourse this would determine the discourse and determination forecloses the possibility of agency, right. So there is a degree of over determination of this course. So she is saying, she is pointing out the paradox, the contradiction in this kind of a you know definition of agency and discursivity where she says on one hand there is a claim there is a prediscursive I.

On the other hand there is also a very blunt statement that you know the you know the subject is considered by discourse to the extent that it is determined by the discourse where any other active agency is foreclosed, that determination forecloses any possibility of agency. So therein lies the contradiction in this particular theory, okay.

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ture” and “discourse” *mire* the subject, but do not constitute that subject. This move to qualify and enmire the preexisting subject has appeared necessary to establish a point of agency that is not fully *determined* by that culture and discourse. And yet, this kind of reasoning falsely presumes (a) agency can only be established through recourse to a prediscursive “I,” even if that “I” is found in the midst of a discursive convergence, and (b) that to be *constituted* by discourse is to be *determined* by discourse, where determination forecloses the possibility of agency.

Even within the theories that maintain a highly qualified or situated subject, the subject still encounters its discursively constituted environment in an oppositional epistemological frame. The culturally enmired subject negotiates its constructions, even when those constructions are the very predicates of its own identity. In Beauvoir, for example, there is an “I” that does its gender, that becomes its gender.

And she goes on to say even within the theories that maintain a highly qualified or situated subject, the subject still encounters its discursively constituted environment in an oppositional epistemological frame. So she goes on to say that there is a you know that there are certain other theories where the subject is situated or immersed in discourses etc. However, even within those theories the subject encounters its discursively constituted environment in oppositional epistemological frame.

In other words what that means is the subject exists at an opposition to agency, an opposition to discourse, an opposition to discursive environment. So the subject and the discursive environment are not entangled with each other. The subject is not part of the environment per se. But subject negotiates the environment, the discursive environment as an oppositional frame, as an oppositional epistemological frame.

So again we are back to saying there is this pure I, there is a prediscursive I, there is an a discursive I which negotiates the discursive field as an oppositional category, right. So you know that is another theory that Butler is pointing out and highlighting. The culturally enmired subject negotiates its constructions even when those constructions are the very predicates of its own identity, right. so you know she goes on to say that the culturally constructed subject you know negotiates with its constructions. Again, the constructed subject and the pure self are opposition relation to each other over here. So the pure self or the culturally enmired subject you know is negotiation with construction. So in other words constructions and the self are removable with each other and they are epistemological opposition with each other. That is something that Butler is pointing out, okay.

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fully of the cultural world that it negotiates, no matter the narrowness of the ontological distance that separates that subject from its cultural predicates. The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed “etc.” at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. This failure, however, is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated “etc.” that so often occurs at the end of such lines? This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the *supplément*, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to

And then she goes on to look at how Beauvoir had talked about you know talked about the different ways in which the feminine subject can be seen as the other, can be seen as in relation as an oppositional relation to a patriarchal frame etc. And then she goes on to say through this

horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete.

And then she says in page 182, the theories of feminist identity that can that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed etc. at the end of the list. So you know when she says that the theories of feminist subjectivity or feminist identity when they are listed in variables in identity they come up with color you know which is race, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness, whether it is an able-bodied female or you know a differently abled female etc.

So all these variables come to being and then she says at the end of this list of variables is always an embarrassed etc. which means that this particular list is potentially limitless it can just go on forever. So what that means obviously is the feminist idea of identity is you know has this ambiguity, internal ambiguities or internal complexities or internal limitlessness. It cannot be a total definition. It cannot be a complete definition.

However, this is exactly which Butler points out and then draws on says that this potential limitlessness can actually be a possibility, can actually be you know some kind of a plurality or possibilities which open up you know close doors which will resist any kind of closure okay. Then she says through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete.

So the idea of the situated female subject does not have a completeness of variables. So it has very much this race, color, ethnicity, language, you know sexuality, able-bodiedness etc. and then there is an et cetera. in the end which says you know it can go on forever. So it fails the complete. However, for Butler this failure to be complete is actually a radical possibility. It says this failure it does not complete at all.

Means in some sense it resists closure, it resists a closure definition which means it can potentially be limitless. And this limitlessness can actually be a radical possibility according to Butler and which she says quite clearly over here where she says this failure, however, is

instructive what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated etc. that so often occurs at the end of such lines.

So she says is there any political impetus that can be drawn that can be derived from this exasperated etc. which comes at the end of this feminist identity, at the end of the variables constitutes the feminist identity and she says this particular failure, the supposed failure, this ontological epistemological failure to determine the feminist identity can actually be instructive politically.

It can actually offer, it can invest itself into the politics of representation more radically and she says quite clearly this is the sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself, right. So this is illimitable right, it is limitless. It is exhaustion yes you know it just goes on forever and at the same time it is also limitless.

So this illimitable process of signification is something that Butler is quite keen on and you know obviously if you look at this phrase illimitable process of signification, this is a classic poststructuralist phrase where it says that this possibility of meaning, this possibility of variables, possibility of production of identities is potentially limitless and this limitless potential is actually subversive in quality because it will resist any kind of closure.

It will not be you know it will not be sort of dogmatically determined by certain presuppositions, by certain predetermined variables. The variables are the very process of production. The variables are produced by the definition. So the definition produces this paradoxes. The definition produces this openings, this possibilities, is an open definition. It will never be a close definition.

So on one hand that lack of closure, the lack of closed definition can be an exhaustion, can be an exasperation, can be frustration but at the same time this lack of closure, this lack of a dogmatic ending to the definition can actually be a possibility of you know radical production which just go on add infinitum, just go on limitlessly okay. So this illimitable process of signification that

Butler talks about is a very important phrase that is classically a poststructuralist way of looking at representation right.

So representation as a feminist identity, the feminist subject is illimitable process. It is an illimitable process of signification that Butler draws on and she hammers on the point and she is someone who celebrates it and this is a very postmodernist kind of a celebration which again brings us back to this idea of Butler being a postmodernist feminist, a postmodernist gender theorist right.

Because she looks at the ambiguity of representation, the ambiguity of signification or the endlessness of signification not as a cause for lament, not as a cause for you know tragedy and there is no closure, there is no universal idea of the feminist identity there is no consensus in the idea of feminist identity. However, the lack of consensus, the lack of a universalizing idea becomes for Butler a possibility of, radical possibility of plural production, a plurality of production in other words okay and she defines this illimitable process of signification as a supplement she says as a supplement the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all right.

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posit identity once and for all. This illimitable *et cetera*, however, offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing.

If identity is asserted through a process of signification, if identity is always already signified, and yet continues to signify as it circulates within various interlocking discourses, then the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an "I" that preexists signification. In other words, the enabling conditions for an assertion of "I" are provided by the structure of signification, the rules that regulate the legitimate and illegitimate invocation of that pronoun, the practices that establish the terms of intelligibility by which that pronoun can circulate. Language is not an *exterior medium or instrument* into which I pour a self and from which I glean a reflection of that self. The Hegelian model of self-recognition that has been appropriated by

So this is a supplement and excess which is actually a very healthy excess, a very healthy supplement that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all. The

illimitable et cetera, however offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing. So this could be a healthy, radical, subversive departure for feminist political theorizing. This idea of an illimitable process of signification and that is something that is celebrated by Butler.

She says that this should not be seen necessarily as a constriction, necessarily as a restriction in terms of the ontological possibility of feminist identity but rather this idea of a limitless variable, limitless signification can actually open up the idea of feminist identity add infinitum. You can take up new many at different points of time and different spatiotemporal conditions at different cultural conditions.

You can just keep producing this paradoxes, keep producing this open-endedness. So this idea of the feminist identity being an open-ended identity, being an identity which defines itself through its limitlessness of definition. It is not really a tragedy, it is not really a cause for concern for Butler but rather it becomes a cause for celebration for Butler you know she celebrates this illimitable idea of feminist identity.

So it is a definition which keeps producing its open-endedness. It keeps raising its exits. It keeps raising its et ceteras in other words right. So this et ceteras become discursive in quality according to Butler's theorizing okay. So and then she goes on to say if identity is asserted through a process of signification, if identity is always already signified and yet continuously or continues to signify as it circulates within various interlocking discourses, then the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an I that preexists signification, right.

So she says if identity is produced by discourses, if identity you know is already there at the same time it is produced by discursive formation, discursive reformations or discursive configurations then the question of agency must not be sought in a prediscursive I. So she she points out the error, she points out the fallacy of looking at agency as a prediscursive idea. So again we are back to saying that you know identity and discursivity are entangled in Butler.

So there is no prediscursive identity according to Butler. So she says it is a mistake, it is a fallacy to look for a prediscursive identity, a prediscursive I because we are looking at identity as a

process of production right. So there is a set of rules which identity you know which informs and understands identity. However, those rules are plastic, those rules can be produced and reproduced at different cultural conditions and there is and there is a degree of limitlessness in terms of the variables determining the rules.

So that limitlessness for Butler becomes a possibility, becomes a subversive possibility and that allows her to say that you know any idea of agency cannot be located at a prediscursive I. It is a mistake, it is a fallacy, it is an intellectual fallacy to look at the prediscursive I, a recourse to an I that preexists signification. So there cannot be any I which preexists or precedes signification. So every I, every identity is produced through a process of signification right.

So signification and you know identity formation go hand in hand according to Butler. In other words the enabling conditions for an assertion of I are provided by the structure of signification. So the very enabling condition which can produce an I are allowed or provided by the structure of signification. So signification and identity formation, they coexist. They do not precede each other, right. They do not follow.

There is no sequential relationship between identity formation and you know signification. Signification and identity formation are synchronous in terms of quality, in terms of the operation, okay. The rules that regulate the legitimate and illegitimate invocation of that pronoun, the practices that establish the terms of illegitimacy or intelligibility by which that pronoun can circulate.

A language is not an exterior medium or instrument into which I pour a self and which I glean a reflection of that self. So again language is not to be seen as an external medium as something which is outside the I as something which exists post I, something that the I can come before etc. Language and I coexist together. So the very process of I formation, the very process of identity formation is through a process of language through a process of signification through language right. So there cannot be a prelinguistic I right and this is what she says quite clearly.

Language is not an exterior medium. It is not something external to the I. It is very much a part of the I. So again what she is doing is very poststructuralist. She is blurring the borderlines between the inside and the outside. So inside and outside blend together in Butler's idea of language and I, the language and identity okay.

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tion. In other words, the enabling conditions for an assertion of "I" are provided by the structure of signification, the rules that regulate the legitimate and illegitimate invocation of that pronoun, the practices that establish the terms of intelligibility by which that pronoun can circulate. Language is not an *exterior medium or instrument* into which I pour a self and from which I glean a reflection of that self. The Hegelian model of self-recognition that has been appropriated by Marx, Lukacs, and a variety of contemporary liberatory discourses presupposes a potential adequation between the "I" that confronts its world, including its language, as an object, and the "I" that finds itself as an object in that world. But the subject/object dichotomy, which here belongs to the tradition of Western epistemology, conditions the very problematic of identity that it seeks to solve.

What discursive tradition establishes the "I" and its "Other" in an

The Hegelian model of self-recognition that has been appropriated by Marx, Lukacs and a variety of contemporary liberatory discourses presupposes a potential adequation between the I that confronts its world including its language as an object and the I that finds itself as an object in the world. So she is critiquing the Hegelian tradition of looking at identity.

So she says the Hegelian tradition which has been appropriated by Marx, Lukacs and lots of other liberatory discourses it presupposes the I that confronts the world, an I that confronts the objectified world. So there is a subjective I and objective world and the I negotiates with the objective world through an active confrontation. However, Butler says you know that model actually it has a residual dualism in it. It has a nostalgic dualism in it.

It has a it retains a dualistic binary structure which Butler wants to do away with completely and she says the subject object dichotomy which here belongs to tradition of Western epistemology conditions the very problematic of identity that it seeks to solve. This is a very radical statement

and she says that if you really seek to solve the problematic of identity then we must do away with the dichotomy of the subject and object.

And she says the subject object dichotomy has been it belongs to the Western metaphysical tradition, the Western epistemological traditions. You can think of Kant's Noumenon and Phenomenon. You can think of Hegel's Self and the Other etc. But that particular tradition must be done away with according to Butler if the problematic of identity is to be solved. So she says the Western epistemology is caught in a paradox.

Because it inherits the subject object dichotomy. It does not do away with the completely. It retains that at the same time it wants to solve the problematics of identity and that cannot be that cannot happen unless the subject object dichotomy is done away with in the first place. So that has to be done away that has to be deconstructed, debunked in the first place in order for the problematics of identity to be resolved to any kind of a fruitful synthesis, okay.

So I complete this lecture today with this particular section. But we are looking at a very radical way of looking at subjectivity and agency and you know obviously the deconstruction over here is to for any kind of a prediscursive given in a prediscursive identity any prediscursive subjectivity is done away with and deconstructed by Butler and is a really important conclusion to gender trouble which we will continue in the next lecture. Thank you for your attention.