

Introduction to Cultural Studies
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Lecture - 35
Ian Hacking – The Social Construction Of What - I

So hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Introduction to Cultural Studies. We just finished Michel Foucault's, What Is An Author and today we will start with a new text and that is Ian Hacking's The Social Construction Of What? Now before I begin with this text, before you dive into the text, I will spend some time talking about this text because this particular book is unlike any other book that we are covering in this course in terms of its thematic content, in terms of its argument. It is actually quite different.

It is actually quite opposite to many of the other texts that we may have covered so far. So as the very title suggests, The Social Construction Of What? It is a critique, this book is a critique to a certain extent of constructionalism. You know it is a critique of this idea of constructedness, this idea of that everything is constructed in a social construct etc. And it looks at the reductionism of that particular argument, that particular argument of this entire constructed qualities, the entire constructed question.

So The Social Construction Of What is basically an awareness, is basically used to design to alert us to the fact that you know there are certain things such as emigration. There are certain things such as you know the female question, feminism, law, nationalism, etc. So these are things which are very real things and these are very pertinent things. These affect us in our daily discourses of life. This affect us in a way we live our lives.

So to purely look at these categories as constructs, as social constructs could be reductionist in quality. Now obviously Ian Hacking is one of the finest philosophers we have today and he has written a series of books from Mad Travelers to you know you can talk about almost everything. He has written on some very important topics. So The Social Construction Of What becomes just one more book that Hacking writes in a series of really phenomenal texts.

But this book is quite provocative in some sense like I said as you may have guessed by now, this goes against some of the things that we have been covering. But actually if you read this book we will find it appears to go against the idea of constructedness, the idea of constructivism etc. But actually it is not. It is a book that looks at the entire idea of social construction or the construction of ideas, the construction of categories. It is a very complex process.

So it alerts us to the complexity of this phenomenon, right rather than reducing it to a pure textuality, to a pure constructed quality. It actually brings in many other parameters, many other conditions which are sometimes alluded. Which are sometimes you know overlooked in its entire idea of constructivism, right. So it is in that sense as a critique of constructivism but it is also, it also summons, it also calls for a more complex understanding of constructivism.

So I mean the references to Judith Butler for instance in this text and Hacking quite clearly lauds Butler, he appreciates Butler, he talks about butler as someone who is philosopher in a feminist tradition who moves away from the idea of pure constructedness, right. So she moves away according to Hacking from looking at gender as just a construct, as just a social construct.

But actually like I said in the very beginning of this course you know these are things which are entanglements of the constructed quality and the natural quality, the organic and the inorganic, the artificial and the abstract, the natural and the artificial, the material and the non-material. So these are the entanglements that we are looking at. So if we are to make the argument that everything is a social construct and just that then obviously there is a risk of reductionism.

And this particular book, *The Social Construction Of What* is a very important warning against that kind of reductionism. It is designed to be a warning. It is designed to caution us, to guard us against that kind of reductionism. So in that sense it is a very important book. But it appears as I mentioned, it appears to be doing something which is quite contrary to what we have been doing in this particular course.

And I have chosen this book very deliberately and just to get a more nuance, a more balanced understanding of the construction of culture right. So when we talk about culture as a construct

of course what we mean is it is a series of material, abstract apparatus which are constantly being entangled in different economic historical situations. But that obviously is the point that it is a very complex phenomenon.

It brings in many factors which are historical, which are biological, which are ideological. So you know we need to take the entire parameter, the entire corpus into account. But if we sort of just pinpoint, if you sideline everything else and just emphasize and underline the social constructedness of culture and you know look at culture as purely a social construct. If you look at gender as purely a social construct, language as purely a social construct then it becomes reductionist, right.

So over here Hacking is actually calling for a more globus and more complex understanding of culture. He is not moving away from the idea of social constructedness. He is not moving away from the idea of constructivism but he calls for a more complex constructivism; something which he takes into account various other factors which may not be social in quality. It may be biological. It may be physiological.

It maybe emotional and what we will do in this book as we study this book we will just study the introduction in a very thoroughly and very so intensely and extensively because the introduction really lays out the whole book and he talks about different issues that is emotion, affect, nationalism, the refugee problem, feminism and he takes up each of these categories and highlights how there is always this risk.

If you are looking at this category as a purely social construct then obviously you are overlooking many other factors which may play a very vital role in an understanding of these categories. So in that sense it is a very important book and also it gives us a very nuance understanding of culture. So otherwise there is always this seduction of constructivism you know you sort of end up arguing that everything is social construct and nothing else.

Every category that we see, economy for instance, language for instance you know emotion everything is social construct and you are basically sidelining, you are basically effacing and

doing away with all the other investments into this category. So in that sense this book is a very important book and I have chosen this very deliberately for this course in cultural studies. Now Hacking is in Canada, he is a Canadian philosopher who works in The United States and there are lots of references to Canada.

He talks about for instance the ministry of multiculturalism in Canada and says you know the whole idea of multiculturalism was prevalent even before in Canada, prevalent even before the term become fashionable in the Western world. So you know and he keeps referring to the Canadian emigration policy. He keeps referring to the Canadian condition in politics etc. So in that sense there is a topicality about the book.

There is a very local character, very local quality about this book in terms of references that Hacking is using. But at the same time these references can be used to connect to a broader analysis, a broader argument and this is again one of the hallmarks of great philosophers and great writers that it take us into specific, that take us in the micro and manage to analyze it in a way that it connects to macro problems.

So we just saw Foucault for instance before we you know before this text we finished with Foucault's What Is An Author when we saw that how despite looking at the author as a as a function, looking at the author as a ideological discursive function that Foucault ends up doing or ends up achieving, is a magnificent discourse analysis or a magnificent analysis of discourse formation.

And how does a discourse, how is a discourse formed, how is a discourse reformed through a different historical investment, through different economic linguistic ideological investment. So what is an author is about the discourse function of the author but at the same time it also becomes a text about discourse function or discourse analysis.

So you know that is one of the characteristics of great thinkers that it managed to take something micro and local and topical and then end up forming a very elegant theory, a very elegant

argument which can be used potentially to connect to broader topics which may not relate to that particular topic alone, okay. So the social construction of what does something similar.

So Hacking is you know is a philosopher in that tradition who takes up a very topical thing, a very micro thing in some sense he gives very micro specific samples especially from Canada and yet we find when we, the way he theorizes a problem it becomes applicable to almost any context and therein lies the richness of this particular text. So and the other thing that you find when you read the text and as you will in great details it has got a very interesting style.

It has got a tongue-in-cheek quality about it. It is sometimes flippant, a very deliberately flippant and it sometimes takes up a sort of a nonacademic tone which actually makes it more sophisticated, which actually makes it more interesting for us today. Because he is obviously using a fast array, a fast range of references. He is talking about things which are profound and political and deep.

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WHY ASK WHAT?

What a lot of things are said to be socially constructed! Here are some construction titles from a library catalog:

Authorship (Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994)
Brotherhood (Clawson 1989)
The child viewer of television (Luke 1990)
Danger (McCormick 1995)
Emotions (Harré 1986)
Facts (Latour and Woolgar 1979)
Gender (Dewar, 1986; Lorber and Farrell 1991)
Homosexual culture (Kinsman 1983)
Illness (Lorber 1997)

And you know phenomenal and significant at a macro level but also and equally he is referring to things which are more micro in quality and is just the position of the macro and the micro, is just the position of the really significant and the very immediately interesting is what makes this book a very complex text in cultural studies.

So let us begin with *The Social Construction Of What* and this is chapter 1, the introduction which we will essentially cover in details quite extensively because this sort of lays out as I said this lays out the plan for the whole book and this gives you a flavor for the whole book in terms of what the book achieves to do, what this book aims to do and you know does quite successfully I think, okay.

So this is Ian Hacking's introduction to this really important book, *The Social Construction Of What?* And he gives a series of references, series of catalogue from a library catalogue actually and he says each of these terms can be seen as social constructions and then he goes on and debunks the whole idea of constructivism in a very sometimes flippant, sometimes very profound way, okay.

So and then he goes on to sort of see how these are more complex conditions, more complex categories and require and demand attention from various perspectives and not just from social perspectives. Not just from a social constructivist perspective because that is reductionist, okay. So the very opening is sort of semiserious. It has a you know mocking quality to it. It has a flippant quality to it and that makes it really interesting and gets your attention immediately.

And he asks, what a lot of things are said to be socially constructed! There is an exclamation mark. It is not something you see at the beginning of every academy book. But this is what makes it interesting and quite offbeat I think. Here is some construction titles from a library catalog and he gives a range of titles. Authorship, brotherhood, the child viewer of television, danger, emotions, facts, gender, homosexual culture, illness.

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Knowledge (MacKenzie 1981, Myers 1990, Barrett 1992,
Torkington 1996)
Literacy (Cook-Gumperz 1986)
The medicalized immigrant (Wilkins 1993)
Nature (Eder 1996)
Oral history (Tonkin 1992)
Postmodernism (McHale 1992)
Quarks (Pickering 1986)
Reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966)
Serial homicide (Jenkins 1994)
Technological systems (Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987)
Urban schooling (Miron 1996)
Vital statistics (Emery 1993)
Women refugees (Moussa 1992)
Youth homelessness (Huston and Liddiard 1994)
Zulu nationalism (Golan 1994)

Knowledge, literacy, the medicalized immigrant, nature, oral history, postmodernism, quarks, reality, serial homicide, technological systems, urban schooling, vital statistics, women refugees, youth homelessness, Zulu nationalism. So I mean these are sort of random references but these are picked very deliberately, these are selected very deliberately by Hacking over here because he will now go through most of these terms and see how each of these terms require an attention just not just from a social constructivist perspective.

It must be more complex, it must be more rich, more robust than that okay. So these are our reference, these are random catalogues that he offers and then he goes on to say in the next page which should be on your screen.

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Not to mention Deafness, Mind, Panic, the eighties and Extraordinary science (Hartley and Gregory 1991, Coulter 1979, Capps and Ochs 1995, Grünzweig and Maeirhofer 1992, Collins 1982). Individual people also qualify: at a workshop on teenage pregnancy, the overworked director of a Roman Catholic welfare agency said: "And I myself am, of course, a social construct; each of us is."¹ Then there is experience: "Scholars and activists within feminism and disability rights have demonstrated that the experiences of being female or of having a disability are socially constructed" (Asche and Fine 1988, 5f).

Not to mention deafness, mind, panic, the eighties and extraordinary science. Individual people also qualify at a workshop on teenage pregnancy an overworked director of a Roman Catholic welfare agency said, and I myself am of course a social construct; each of us is. Then there is experience. Scholars and activists within feminism and disability rights have demonstrated that the experiences of being female or having a disability are socially constructed, right.

So he talks about different kinds of social constructions and he said you know it is possible that some individuals especially individuals working in feminist tradition or disability studies they look at themselves, their selves as a social constructs and there is another way of looking at it. It is not just about references. It is not just about texts and books and issues, political issues they can also be directed towards the selves and you know obviously he is being slightly sarcastic over here.

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My alphabetical list is taken from titles of the form *The Social Construction of X*, or *Constructing X*. I left X out of my alphabet for lack of a book, and because it allows me to use X as a filler, a generic label for what is constructed. Talk of social construction has become common coin, valuable for political activists and familiar to anyone who comes across current debates about race, gender, culture, or science. Why?

And then he goes on to say my alphabetical list is taken from titles of the form of the social construction of X or constructing X. I left X out of my alphabet for lack of a book and because it allows me to use X as a filler, a generic label for what is constructed. Talk of social construction has become common coin, valuable for political activists and familiar to anyone who comes across current debates about race, gender, culture, or science. Why?

So this is the point that Hacking is asking, so why is that the entire idea of social construction especially when it comes to issues such as race, gender, politics, language, why is it become, why has it become fashionable. To what extent is social constructivism fashionable? To what extent is it reductionist, to what extent is it sophisticated? So these are the questions that Hacking keeps on asking in this book, okay.

And then he gives a very balanced understanding of social construction. He acknowledges the fact like any thinker would that the entire idea of social construction can be very liberating; can be something which can be emancipatory. Can you know rescue people, can you know give people a certain sense of solace; can uplift people psychologically, discursively etc. But at the same time there is also a danger, the risk of reductionism, the risk of reification if you will.

Where you know if you bring everything down to social construct then you are taking away like I said in the beginning of this lecture you are taking away some of the more complex conditions

which are asymmetrically associated with you know these categories, okay. And then he says I mean this is the point where he gives a very balanced and nuance argument of this entire analysis.

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For one thing, the idea of social construction has been wonderfully liberating. It reminds us, say, that motherhood and its meanings are not fixed and inevitable, the consequence of child-bearing and rearing. They are the product of historical events, social forces, and ideology.² Mothers who accept current canons of emotion and behavior may learn that the ways they are supposed to feel and act are not ordained by human nature or the biology of reproduction. They need not feel quite as guilty as they are supposed to, if they do not obey either the old rules of family or whatever is the official psycho-pediatric rule of the day, such as, "you must bond with your infant, or you both will perish."³

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They need not feel quite as guilty as they are supposed to, if they do not obey either the old rules or family or whatever is the official psycho-pediatric rule of the day, such as, you must bond with your infant, or you both will perish. So this is what I meant at the beginning when I said you know this is not really a flippant (()) (15:37) says there is nothing called social construction.

Rather Hacking is intensely aware of the benefits and advantages and privileges that come from the idea of social construction especially when it comes to something as you know apparently biological as motherhood. So he acknowledges and accepts and he is the first to say, well there are certain things or certain issues which are deeply constructed socially like motherhood for

instance. So then he says the entire guilt in not being a good mother, the entire guilt of not doing certain things would automatically mean you are not bonding with the child.

I mean this guilt, this emotion of guilt it can be a social construct because you know the entire idea of motherhood is dependent on certain you know on your location and a particular historical time and there are certain psycho-pediatric rule which are dominant at that particular time. So you have to conform to these rules and not conforming to these rules then you may end up being called or classified as a bad mother.

So mothering a very good example of social construct and Hacking is the first to point that out. So again we can see that he is actually talking about social construction as a more complex category. So you know he is the first to say that social construction can be liberating. It can actually open us up to you know more discursive possibilities. It can open us up to questioning some you know dominant discourses etc. And so in that sense it can be liberating. In that sense it can be sort of useful at an immediately human level, okay.

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Unfortunately social construction analyses do not always liberate. Take anorexia, the disorder of adolescent girls and young women who seem to value being thin above all else. They simply will not eat. Although anorexia has been known in the past, and even the name is a couple of hundred years old, it surfaced in the modern world in the early 1960s. The young women who are seriously affected resist treatment. Any number of fashionable and often horrible cures have been tried, and none works reliably. In any intuitive understanding of "social construction," anorexia must in part be some sort of social construction. It is at any rate a transient mental illness (Hacking 1998a), flourishing only in some places at some times. But that does not help the girls and young women who are suffering. Social construction theses are liberating chiefly for those who are on the way to being liberated—mothers whose consciousness has already been raised, for example.

But then he goes on to say that unfortunately social construction analysis do not always liberate, now he looks at the flip side of the coin, the other side of the coin and he says that it is also possible that social construction analysis can be the opposite of liberating. It can be reifying. It

can be reductionist in more sense than one. Take anorexia, so he uses a very provocative example, so anorexia for instance is a very useful example and also a very disturbing example.

This is about people who have this compulsive habit of you know not eating and throwing up in order to fit into a particular body image. So anorexia becomes a psychological condition, but you know to look at anorexia as a purely social condition, as a purely social construct is a fallacy according to Hacking because that takes away the entire medical, the entire biological, the entire you know metabolic investment, the metabolic parameter, the metabolic coordinates in anorexia and just makes into a social disease.

So that is in Hacking's terms a bit of a fallacy, is an error, is discursive simplification and in that sense it ends up being reductionist and it should be avoided in any sophisticated analysis. So unfortunately social construction analyses do not always liberate. Take anorexia, the disorder of adolescent girls and young women who seem to value being thin above all else. So again this whole idea of fitting into a particular body image that becomes compulsion, that becomes an anxiety which can extend into a pathological condition.

They simply will not eat. Although anorexia has been known in the past, and even the name is a couple of hundred years old, it surfaced in the modern world in the early 1960s. The young women who are seriously affected resist treatment. Any number of fashionable and often horrible cures have been tried and none works reliably. In any intuitive understanding of social construction, anorexia must in part be some sort of social construction.

It is at any rate a transient mental illness flourishing only in some places at some times. But that does not help the girls and young women who are suffering. Social construction theses are liberating chiefly for those who are on the way to being liberated. Mothers whose consciousness has already been raised, for example. So now he is giving a more pragmatic you know reading.

So he is saying social construction analysis can often be you know completely non-liberating. It may not be any helpful at all to people who are actually suffering from that particular condition

which is a very complex condition and he is saying social construction can work only with people who are already on the way out of that particular discursive dominance.

So for instance if you go back to the motherhood example that Hacking offered, so people who realize the constructed quality of motherhood, the constructed quality of pediatric science, pediatric psycho-pediatric condition at a particular time and how that is constructed and how they need to conform to that construct is also a construct. People who acknowledge will realize and are actually moving away from that kind of a dominant, that kind of a domination, they can find social construction analysis useful. But not people who are actually suffering.

Not people who are actually in the middle of it. So anorexia for example is a real medical condition. Is a condition which involves the metabolism, involves the body, involves the nervous system, involves the brain, the mind, the entire the human self, self-esteem etc. So it reduces it to social construction analysis and to read the entire phenomenon through the social construction analysis might be reductionist and it does not help the people, does not liberate the people at all. You know it just does not work in a way that is supposed to work, okay.

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For all their power to liberate, those very words, "social construction," can work like cancerous cells. Once seeded, they replicate out of hand. Consider Alan Sokal's hoax. Sokal, a physicist at New York University, published a learned pastiche of current "theory" in *Social Text*, an important academic journal for literary and cultural studies (Sokal 1996a). The editors included it in a special issue dedicated to the "science wars." In an almost simultaneous issue of *Lingua Franca*, a serious variant of *People* magazine, aimed at professors and their ilk, Sokal owned up to the mischief (Sokal 1996b). Sokal's confession used the term "social construction" just twice in a five-page essay. Stanley Fish (1996), dean of "theory," retorted on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. There he used the term, or its cognates, sixteen times in a few paragraphs. If a cancer cell did that to a human body, death would be immediate. Excessive use of a vogue word is tiresome, or worse.

And now in page 3 which should be on your screen, Hacking gives a very, example of a very notorious phenomenon called Sokal's hoax which you know maybe familiar to some of you. So Sokal who is Alan Sokal who is a physicist in you know New York University. He wrote this

hoax bogus article using postmodernist, poststructuralist theory and notoric and got to publish in a very prestigious journal called you know Social Text.

And of course it was a hoax publication and later on Sokal acknowledged that it was a hoax publication and the whole point was to prove that you know you can pass it off as a sophisticated article if you just use the right jargon, the right language, and right rhetoric. So that was a big stub in the face for you know in people working in postmodernist, poststructuralist condition. So Sokal's hoax became a very viral phenomenon, everyone referred to it etc.

Now Hacking unsurprisingly takes it up and says how that example can be seen as the flip side of social construction analysis you know. So you can take social construction analysis too far if you just reduce itself to rhetorical and textural analysis of real world phenomena then you end up encouraging, then you end up generating you know this Sokal's hoax and you know there can be more Sokal's hoax in the times to come.

And sometimes those may not be momentous hoaxes, those may not be momentous serious arguments and sophisticated academic output but they are just relying on rhetoric, just relying on a certain kind of jargon in order to you know prove a point without really engaging with the real condition. So therein lies the risk of social constructivism or social construction analysis that he ends up being very rarefied and reified.

So the reification and rarefication over here, these are the two basic accusations that Hacking you know directs against an over determination, an over determined social construction analysis, okay. So and he uses a very interesting medical example, a very extreme medical examples of cancer cells.

And he says how just like cancer cells can spread and ruin and damage and break an organism, in a very similar way social construction analysis like cancer cells they can you know spread like viral fever, spread like cancer cells you know exponentially and then just completely destroy the organism, the organism being over academia or any sophisticated attempt to understand culture. So for all their power to liberate, this is Hacking on page 3 which should be on your screen.

For all their power to liberate, those very words, social construction, can work like cancerous cells. Once seeded, they replicate out of hand. Consider Alan Sokal's hoax. Sokal, a physicist at New York University, published a learned pastiche of current theory in *Social Text*, an important academic journal for literary and cultural studies. So like I said Sokal just borrowed some jargon and put together some jargon and just pashed on pashed together certain rhetoric, certain kinds of terms and then set it off to a very good journal call *Social Text* which actually accepted and published it.

So whole point is you can be a physicist and just appropriate a jargon, appropriate the rhetoric and get published in one of the leading you know publishing platforms you know this being *Social Text* and you know that obviously becomes a slap in the face like I said a great satire, a great you know reprimand addressing down to the entire idea of you know social construction, okay. So this particular journal was an important academic journal for cultural and literary studies.

The editors included it in a special issue dedicated to the science wars. In an almost simultaneous issue of *Lingua Franca*, a serious variant of *People* magazine, aimed at professors and their ilk, Sokal owned up to the mischief. So he owned up, he acknowledged and that was the whole point. He would sort of prove to the world that look I can be a physicist and get published in a very sophisticated literary cultural journal by just appropriating the rhetoric and that is all I mean, the rhetoric okay. I do not need anything else to get published.

Sokal's confession used the term social construction just twice in a five-page essay. So in the confession essay that he wrote to *Lingua Franca*, in you know a variant of *People* magazine, Sokal owned up to what he had done and used the word social construction twice in a five-page essay. Stanley Fish, dean of theory, retorted on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. There he used the term or its cognates sixteen times in a few paragraphs.

If a cancer cell did that to a human body, death would be immediate. Excessive use of a vogue word is tiresome, or worse. So the entire idea of social construction became excessive in his use,

excessive in his investment. So Stanley Fish is obviously one of the key proponents of reader response theory. He countered Sokal in another you know article in op-ed in New York Times. There he used the term social construction sixteen times or you know words which meant synonymous for social construction sixteen times in order to prove his point.

Now, Hacking over here is obviously looking at this particular example, this particular phenomenon as an epoch in the entire idea of social construction. This is a starting point where social construction becomes a very fashionable trendy theory, a very trendy term. But then with the trend comes also a pitfall, comes also a danger of reductionism.

As everyone starts using social construction in every category, every human category, every sub-category, every cultural category are read purely and only to social construction analysis and that obviously is a great danger according to Hacking because that takes away some of the more complex arguments which are invested in these categories, okay.

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In a talk given in Frankfurt a few days after the story broke in May of 1996, I said that Sokal's hoax had now had its fifteen minutes of fame. How wrong I was! There are several thousand "Sokal" entries on the Internet. Sokal crystallized something very important for American intellectual life. I say American deliberately. Many of Sokal's targets were French writers; and Sokal's own book on these topics was first published in French (Bricmont and Sokal 1997a). That in turn produced two French books, both with the French word *impostures* in their titles (Jenneret 1998, Jurdant 1998). The European reaction has, however, remained bemused rather than concerned. Plenty of reporting, yes, but not much passion. In late 1997 Sokal had little prominence in Japan, although the

In a talk given in Frankfurt a few days after the story broke in May of 1996, I said that Sokal's hoax had now had its fifteen minutes of fame. So you know initially Hacking confesses he did not take it so seriously. He said well in Frankfurt I gave a lecture on when I touched upon this topic and I said Sokal's hoax had had this fifteen minutes of fame. So it is like a flash in the pan. It will just come and go. People will forget about it forever.

How wrong I was. There are several thousand Sokal entries on the internet. Sokal crystallized something very important for American intellectual life. I say American deliberately. Many of Sokal's targets were French writers and Sokal's own book on these topics was first published in French. That in turn produced two French books, both with the French word impostures in their titles. The European reaction has, however, remained bemused rather than concerned. Plenty of reporting, yes, but not much passion.

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passion. In late 1997 Sokal had little prominence in Japan, although the most informative Sokal website anywhere had just opened in Japanese cyberspace.⁴ Students of contemporary American mores have an obligation to explain the extraordinary brouhaha that Sokal provoked in his own country. My aim is not to give a social history of our times explaining all that, but to analyze the idea of social construction, which has been on the warpath for over three decades before Sokal. Hence I shall have almost nothing to say about the affair. Readers who want a polemical anthology of American writing siding with Sokal may enjoy Koertge (1998).

In late 1997 Sokal had little prominence in Japan, although the most informative Sokal website anywhere had just opened in Japanese cyberspace. Students of contemporary American mores have an obligation to explain the extraordinary brouhaha that Sokal provoked in his own country. My aim is not to give a social history of our times explaining all that, but to analyze the idea of social construction, which has been on the warpath over three decades before Sokal.

Hence I shall have almost nothing to say about the affair. Readers who want a polemical anthology of American writing siding with Sokal may enjoy Koertge. So he just refers to Sokal and moves on and then gives reference that you know people might find useful if they are notified more about it, reference to Koertge. But he said the Sokal phenomenon is not really a flash in the pan.

It happened but then it opened up to more such incidence in future which were not like he said they may not have considered themselves to be hoax or bogus submission. They probably looked at themselves as very serious submission and therein lies the danger of social constructivism or the social construction analysis that they just use. There is always this idea of appropriating a certain rhetoric, appropriating a certain language, appropriating a certain idiom, a certain analysis and looking at everything with that analysis.

So that obviously narrows down the entire epistemic content of the analysis because it just relies completely on one kind of content, one kind, one brand of perspective, one brand of reading, one discourse of reading you know completely effacing, completely disregarding any other readings that might be possible in that situation. Okay, so I stop this lecture here today. This is the opening of Ian Hacking's *The Social Construction Of What* and we will continue with this introduction in the next lecture. Thank you for your attention.