

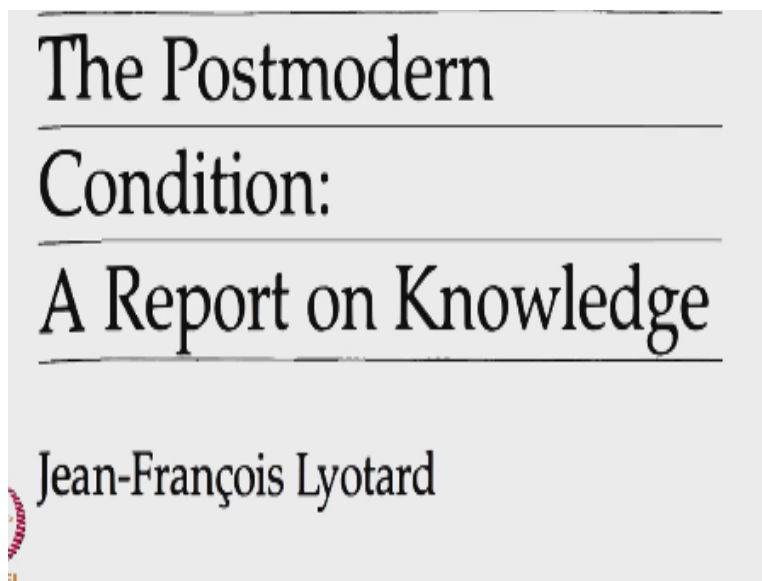
Introduction to Cultural Studies
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Lecture - 09
The Post Modern Condition (Lyotard) - Part I

So hello and welcome to this NPTEL Course entitled, Introduction to Cultural Studies. In this lecture we will begin with Jean-Francois Lyotard's The Post Modern Condition which is obviously subtitled A Report on Knowledge. So this should be on your screen, The Post Modern Condition and Report on Knowledge. So in this lecture I will just give you an introduction to this text and also talk a little bit about postmodernism in general and how postmodernism as a movement, as a condition as a way as an examination of cultural conditions is very useful for us not least if you are doing cultural studies.

So this lecture would extend almost entirely introducing Lyotard, introducing postmodernism and so looking at the connection between postmodernism in general and cultural studies and how cultural studies can draw on postmodernism as a stylistic, as a movement, as an aesthetic, as a political condition.

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So as the very title suggests of this book The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, it looks at the sub-unitology of knowledge, the discursive quality of knowledge. So Lyotard what

he does in this particular book he has got revolutionary given the time in which this book was produced and obviously there had been lot of contestations on this book and this kind of way of looking at knowledge, this kind of way of looking at the condition, the cultural condition of his times is quite so provocative in many sense.

And in the very outset we saw when I have given introductory video of this particular course I also looked how this book, *The Post Modern Condition* is a very prophetic book in the sense it really you know helps us understand the world we live in, we live in a world and we live our lives today; the kind of conditions, the kind of knowledge, networks that we inhabit and internalized today. So in that senses this book becomes quite prophetic.

It becomes, this book becomes quite topical to our times. So what is postmodernism in general? So before we sort of move into this book it is helpful for us to understand what postmodernism is and you know what are the conditions, what are the stylistic markers of postmodernism and how is postmodernism a very useful way of looking at culture.

So generally speaking, postmodernism as a movement, as a sort of temporal category is that kind that sort of artistic, cultural, political phase which prevails after the Second World War and when I say after the Second World War I mean sort of after 1945, 1947 etc. And if you look at the political condition of the Western world after the Second World War we find that this is the time also when imperialism, Western European imperialism was beginning to end.

So all the major colonies of the empire were sort of getting their freedom. A classic case of point is India, being India. So India became independent in 1947, 2 years after Second World War but we knew that by the time the World War ended that Britain was bankrupt and Britain was in no condition to retain its empire, retain India as a colony. So postmodernism as a movement begins to become, begins to happen around that particular.

It overlaps with the end of imperialism. Then what it does tells us immediately as to how the imperialist narratives on race, on knowledge, on science, on discourse in general, so those things also begin to dry up after the Second World War. So Second World War may be seen as an epoch

as a sort of paradigm shift in not just political system but also in knowledge systems, in knowledge networks.

So postmodernism has its temporal overlap with the end of imperialism after Second World War and what that also does is it so it bankrupts Europe, it bankrupts West culturally, morally, socially, financially, ideologically as well. Now what Lyotard does in this particular look, he looks at the very interesting collusion between science and knowledge and he looks at the discursivity of scientific knowledge.

And how scientific knowledge is becoming quite discursive in quality and this is a condition, this is a criterion which we will keep revisiting throughout this the lectures we have on this particular book. But just to give you an idea of postmodernism, what postmodernism does as a movement in general and obviously I am sort of simplifying for the purpose of this course. But it is a helpful signification I hope and that is it reveals the constructive quality of text.

It reveals the constructive quality of narratives. It sort of shows us how narratives are formed and what it also does almost simultaneously with this, with this revelation is that it promotes and triggers a general incredulity towards metanarratives and this is a very important condition, an incredulity towards metanarratives, a suspicion towards anything which is essentialized, anything which is a grand narrative.

So postmodernism in general could be seen as a grand narrative killer, a killer of grand narrative you know someone, a movement which does away with any kind of grand narrative; a movement which does away with any kind of universal knowledge. So universality you know the entire idea of being a grand narrative you know the general conditions of being a grand narrative. So these are these are the conditions which go away with postmodernism.

Postmodernism does away with these sort of these assumptions, these presuppositions. Now, obviously this has bearings in a political spare, this has bearings from cultural spare, this has bearings from the linguistic spare, on the literary spare, on a scientific spare as well. Now what

we have instead, instead of grand narrative of knowledge which has largely a Western Eurocentric narrative in any way we have different micro narratives which contest for credibility.

And this contestation of a credibility becomes a very important condition for postmodernism in general. So the postmodern condition A Report on Knowledge by Lyotard it becomes a very important document, not just for the times in which it was written in the 80s but also for us today. Because what we know today is you know knowledge is the most perhaps the most coveted commodity in a political systems that we have today.

So we have you know when I say knowledge of the coveted community I mean knowledge becomes a very important category of surveillance, of invasion, of preservation, of protection, security etc. So you know all us who wear the border data, all of us who wear to board how a personal information may be used, how it may be appropriated. Sometimes illegitimately, sometimes in a very state sanctioned kind of way.

But you know the long and short of it the entire thing is you know we are basically data units. We are basically units of data and we are numbers. We are certain numbers, we are certain information which are heavily coded and this coded quality of existence today is something which is examined by postmodernism quite persuasively, quite compellingly.

So this particular book by Lyotard is a very compelling study, is a very compelling argument about knowledge in a postmodern times and it so obvious how instead of military warfare what we have today is knowledge warfare. So you know and that is something which is quite prophetic as I mentioned, something which we keep saying today in different kinds of disguises, different kinds of discourses since we have countries accusing each other of stealing data of hacking the systems during elections.

So we all know what happened during the latest American Presidential election and there is a very strong suspicion that it was hacked by certain outside forces, most notably by the Western forces, by the Western intelligence, military intelligence etc. Then you have WikiLeaks, we have

you know all kinds of you know information, invasions as the information becomes a very important category in postmodernism and why is the information so important.

Why is postmodernism so obsessed with information. Why it does examine information so you know relentlessly and that is because the human subject is it becomes an informative category in a postmodern times. So it is essentially digitalized, it is essentially coded in a different kinds of digits, different kinds of discursive digits. So digits are not discourse free. Digits are not insensitive to discursivity.

So discursivity becomes a sine qua non if you will of the postmodern condition and you know the postmodern examination of that condition becomes examination of that kind of discursivity, that kind of a coded system, right. So a large part of postmodernism is basically an act of decoding. Decoding the textuality, decoding the hidden constructed quality, the concealed constructed quality of text. Text is sometimes masquerades you know presuppositions.

Text is sometimes masquerades givings as grand narratives in different discursive conditions. So the postmodern condition report on knowledge becomes actually a report on the narrative, the discursive quality of knowledge and this discursivity is something which we so we keep highlighting throughout this course if you remember. We keep talking about the collusion between discursivity and identity; discursivity, identity and corporeality.

So the human body is discursive, the human identity is discursive and of course we can add on the added component of you know the informative quality. So the informative quality and the discursive quality they go hand in hand in postmodern times. So if you think of films, a very important, a very crucial reflection of this kind of condition is if you look at popular cinemas. If you look at the matrix trilogy for instance you know a film like the True Man Show.

So you know these are films which tell us that how our condition, how are life that we live today basically are series of codes and these are codes which sometimes blur the borderline between the reality and virtuality and that is the study which is taken by Baudelaire as some of you would know the entire idea of the simulacrum, the entire idea of the blurring borderlines between reality

and virtuality, between the real world and the virtual world is something that a postmodern condition keeps on highlighting.

And the postmodern examination is basically an attempt to unpack those categories between virtuality and reality. Now, towards the end of this book and we will study those sections in great details, towards the end of this book, Lyotard offers a very interesting definition of postmodernism. So one of the problems with postmodernism is it seems to be a bit of an oxymoron.

It seems to be a bit of paradox if you are going by purely temporal definition of postmodernism. So we are going to say it is postmodern we essentially are saying that something which comes after modern, something which comes after the present time. So it is essentially a futuristic kind of a movement, a futuristic firm. But that is not quite the case. That kind of a strictly temporal definition of postmodernism makes it slightly a nebulous in vague, as an ontological category.

Now, what we have insidious the more complex definition of, the more complex conception of postmodernism offered by Lyotard towards the end of this book which we will study in great details. But just for the purpose of the summary, for the purpose of this introduction, it will suffice to say that what Lyotard does he places the postmodern as something which comes before the modern; not after the modern, but before the modern.

And what does it mean by modern? It means when you say something as modern, we say that that particular movement, that particular art form, that particular cultural condition is systematized, is theorized and has a palpable shape and has a present reality. Suppose modernism is that which comes before that shape. Suppose modernism is something which is when I say forever formative in its ontological, ontological being, ontological state.

So ontologically forever formative is something which is always happening, something which is always becoming. So its entire act of becoming, entire act of appropriation, misappropriation, you know deappropriation these become very crucial sort of activities in postmodernism. And these activities become very important you know for the purpose of our study.

And we see how one of the things which we can do from this book is when you go later to someone like Judith Butler, we find that how Butler takes up the very postmodern and very poststructuralist way of looking at gender whereby gender becomes again a very coded system but also and equally it becomes a very performative quality. So you perform different kinds of gender identities.

You become, you re-become, you un-become certain identities depending on your location, on your condition. So these are some of the very important takeaways from this book and it is a really crucial book for the purpose of our course on cultural studies because if you are looking at culture as something which is a combination of textuality and experientiality as something which is a text as well as an experience the entire idea of the report on knowledge becomes a very crucial component in that kind of a perspective.

And again if you remember the very ounce of this course we had defined culture as an asymmetric entanglement of abstraction and materiality and likewise there is an asymmetric entanglement of discursivity and experientiality of you know something which is conspectus and as well as something which is experienced. And later on we will look at the book by Ian Hacking where he warns us, where he guards us against certain over-reliance on the social construction of (()) (13:32) which does away with the experientiality of culture.

So culture is also an experience. It is not just a series of text. It is not just a series of codes which have to be appropriated and re-appropriated but is also a series of experiences which are to be lift. They have a sort of a lift reality quotient. So culture is a lift reality quotient, it is something very important for the purpose of our course today.

So The Postmodern Condition, A Report on Knowledge, it sort of gives us a very interesting overview of these categories; culture as a code, culture as a knowledge system, science of the knowledge system and science as an informative system and its entire battle between information and reality. How information can become discursive in quality. And the other thing that Lyotard does is brilliantly in his book is that he draws on Wittgenstein's idea of language games.

And that is something in the end we will study in great details when we look at this book extensively in the subsequent lectures. For the purpose of this introduction that we are doing today, it is very important to define what language games are according to Lyotard. So language games are those of different micro activity, are the inscriptions, utterances, articulations, and performances which are constantly used to enact and embody a subject position, right.

That is a working definition that you know we can use for the purpose of our course. Language games are those enactments, those inscriptions that are the embodiments and extensions of a particular subject position. Now, every subject position as Lyotard would argue in his book is born into a language game.

So language games are also the set of rules, a set of inscriptive rules which are the matrix into which a subject is born, and into which with which a subject negotiates and this entire negotiation with language games become a very key condition of a postmodern existence according to Lyotard. So a great deal of this book is spent, so a large section, large chunks of this book are used to explain what language games are.

Language games as a very crucial category, language games is a very important sort of play of identities, inscription of identities, articulation of identities etc. and is becoming very important for the purpose of our course as well in general. So this particular book is a very specifically important book for us but also is a very generally important book for us. Because you know it is a very pivotal book for the purpose of our course.

Because it connects with lots of other texts that we do for this course. For instance when we look at, much later in this course when we look at Bell Hooks books *Understanding Essay*, *Understanding Patriarchy* which is actually about a grand narrative called patriarchy and Hooks talks about how the grand narrative is formed and without realizing with anyone realizing that this is actually a formation a textualization the grand narrative is formed precisely because of the pace to be non-constructed , precisely because of the pace to be you know something grand something you know fabulous, something which is you know has a metanarrative quality to it.

Something which is outside the narrative constructed scope, right. So this whole idea of patriarchy becoming grand narrative is a very important sort of understanding how grand narratives take place, how grand narratives take over of a logical, reasonable understanding. How they become a unquestionable category. You know you cannot question those grand narratives because simply because you do not you are not aware of the discursivity, you are not aware of the constructed quality.

You simply experience that passively but that experience is a unquestioned experience, a very numbed kind of an experience which you suffer. So you know Bell Hooks book Understanding Patriarchy can also be linked to Lyotard's The Post Modern Condition, A Report on Knowledge because you know what that particular book tells us that we are blindly replicating certain language games.

The language games of patriarchy where certain you know moves are done according to certain rules, certain preset rules and is you know we are not negotiating with the rules in terms of subverting them but we are replicating them. We are appropriating and consuming those rules, those language games blindly and passively.

And this passive consumption of language games also becomes a problem in terms of confirming to a particular grand narrative in terms of confirming to a particular you know mega massive narrative which does away with this constructed quality. Now what this book does among many other things that are just mentioned, it also talks about science and how science becomes a very important form of discourse.

How science becomes a very important sort of bit of a disguised discourse in a way because you do not, again you do not realize the discursivity of science. You do not realize the discursive quality of science. You think of science as a discourse free entity, as a discourse free epistemic engagement but actually it is deeply discursive in quality and its entire deep discursive quality of this epistemic engagement which is science which is something which is highlighted by Lyotard over and over again throughout this book.

Now towards the end of this book as I mentioned when he gives us the definition of what postmodernism is when he talks about how postmodernism is actually something which is pre-modern, something which comes before the modern, something which is forever formative. He gives us 2 very important examples, literary examples. One is you know Robert Musil and Marcel Proust you know and this magnificent book that he wrote, *In Search of lost Time*.

Another is James Joyce *Finnegans Wake*. And again we look at the section in great details when you do the text but just we will look at those introduction. This is the word Lyotard offers as a distinction between the modern and the postmodern and he says when we look at prose when we look at the entire area of remembrance of things passed we find the language is you know very very nostalgic. It is sort of slipping away.

It is something which is so decentered to a certain extent. However, with all the decentering, with all the slipping away, with all the play of language what is retained is the original ontology of the novel. The original ontology of the narrative that is retained but when you come to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* we find that, that original ontology is done away with. There is no original ontology left, right and that is something which is completely done away with.

We have instead looking for a new ontology. It is a hollowed out center. The center does not hold anymore. It is a pure state of centerlessness and the centerlessness is something which categorizes the postmodern art form. It is something which is finding a center. Its entire art is actually geared, is designed towards finding and forming a particular shape, a particular structure which is not yet there in the first place.

So that becomes a very important distinction between the modern and the postmodern according to Lyotard. And later in this book following that kind of an argument we find there is another almost a debate that Lyotard sets out with another very important philosopher called Jurgen Habermas. Now Habermas has you know is a very important philosopher in terms of how he theorizes the idea of modernity as an unfinished project.

Some of you may have read that book already Habermas' *Modernity as an Unfinished Project* but you know more importantly what he does in that book is that he gives us an idea of the public space. The public space as a space for consensus, as a space where you know different kinds of dialogues come together to create a consensus, to create some kind of an agreement; an intellectual, effective agreement you know across people.

Now, Lyotard contests that severely. Lyotard is very much against that kind of a space formation, that kind of a public space, that you know is advocated by Habermas. And this again highlights the difference between the modern and the post contradictions, the modern and the postmodern ways of looking at knowledge of looking at associations, affiliations etc. Now Lyotard says quite clearly and he says that, and that particular argument is runs across along this book different places.

But in the end when he takes up issues with Habermas he says quite clearly that that kind of a consensus can also can very quickly become a grand narrative so that entire consensus in a public space where different voices come and makes a merge that can become a grand narrative in his own right and that is something which we must warn ourselves against.

So this warning against a particular grand narrative formation is something which Lyotard keeps highlighting and it defines the postmodern, the postmodern condition as an incredulity towards metanarratives, an incredulity towards grand narratives. Its entire idea of incredulity becomes very important, this entire idea of being suspicious, not believing and grand narratives become very important for Lyotard.

And that becomes a very important definition for us during cultural studies because you find oftentimes in culture we assume we consume and we sort of de-interpret certain conditions and we sort of accept those conditions as grand narratives without questioning them. But a postmodern condition is a very important sort of realization, a very important act of awareness. So that book becomes an active awareness.

The entire book becomes quite polemical in scope and quite prophetic as well which tells us exactly the dangers of reification. Then this reification or commodification where something becomes a commodity, something becomes a standardized, a centralized commodity does not happen at the level of materiality. It also happens perhaps more sinistrally and pass more surreptitiously at the level of abstraction.

So if you look at knowledge for instance, knowledge again is a very interesting entanglement of materiality and abstraction and you know the entire idea of reified knowledge, the entire idea of commodified knowledge, and knowledge as a commodity is something that is constantly highlighted by Lyotard. Now what that highlighting does. What the idea of looking at knowledge as a commodity does quite clearly is that it looks at knowledge as a non-innocent category.

It is not something which is apolitical. So there is no such thing as apolitical knowledge. There is no such thing as according to Lyotard as non-discursive knowledge. So every knowledge is discursive. Every knowledge is an act of discursivity. Every knowledge is an affirmation of discursivity. So this affirmation, this articulation this activity in discursivity is something which characterizes postmodernism. So where your entire location and discursivity is highlighted.

And this again connects Lyotard to another, some of the other philosophers which who we will cover in this course more importantly, Butler and Butler says quite clearly in Gender Trouble which we will cover subsequently and she says quite clearly that there is no true liberation and true agency. It is not outside discursivity. True agency lies inside discursivity, in sub-discursive map.

So true agency lies in a negotiation, in a human subject's negotiation or navigation with discursivity and that becomes a very important condition for Lyotard as well. Obviously, he talks about language games and he says how everyone occupies nodal points in language games. The idea of nodal points become very important for Lyotard and nodal points those points where information and interactions crisscross each other in different kinds of discursive conditions.

And Lyotard says quite clearly no matter how unprivileged someone is, no matter how agencyless someone is in terms of financial agency, in terms of economy and cultural agency it is virtually impossible not to occupy in a nodal point, not to occupy any position which does not have an intersection of knowledge, intersection of epistemic activity. So his entire idea of epistemic activity becomes a very important quality in postmodernism.

And that epistemic activity is a very non-innocent process. That is why I said a little while ago, knowledge is discovered, knowledge is revealed to be non-innocent in a postmodern time. So a report on knowledge obviously over here is a debunking of the myth of innocent knowledge. It is a debunking of the myth of non-discursive knowledge. So and he spends a good deal of time talking about scientific knowledge and how scientific knowledge which claims to be non-discursive.

Which claims to be non, sort of ideological is basically you know is a masquerading but because what happens in terms of (()) (25:33) knowledge is that certain kind of discourses, certain kind of discursive deep discursive structures are smuggled inside the scientific narratives and we have oftentimes that collusion between science and ideology; science and you know different kinds of discursive investments in terms of concocting you know different discourses which are sanctioned.

So this entire idea of sanctioned discourses becomes very important because then that goes a step towards, a step closer towards becoming a grand narrative. If you sanction something scientifically, if you sanction something empirically then basically you are protecting that from questioning. You are protecting that from any kind of interrogation, any kind of deconstruction or demystification. So you are mystifying it with science.

So again we are looking at a very important you know utility of science. So science becomes a utility based knowledge network which sanctions certain discourses which sanctions which legitimizes certain you know ways of looking at lives and ways of understanding, examining, quantifying matter etc. Now, if those of us who are interested in imperialism and racism and

studies on those imperialism and racism and imperialism and racism obviously go hand in hand in different kinds of collusive qualities, collusive conditions.

But what we find is quite interesting. We find in late 19th century with the emergence of criminology, with the emergence of the degeneration discourses we find more often than not the idea of race became very important and the idea of race was empirically corroborated. So you know the entire superior white race and inferior black race the innate inferiority of the black man, the innate violence of the black man.

So these are very discursive categories to the I mean today obviously we know that all these are sort of manmade manufactured myths which were used essentially to sanction and legitimize imperialism but the point is at those times in late 19th century we find these are discourses which were completely backed by “scientific studies” of course. These are discourses which are back, which are supportive, which are cooperative by different kinds of scientific collusion.

So we have the entire “scientific proof” of the innate inferiority of the African based on skull size. The innate criminality of the colonized based again on skull size and anatomical measurements etc. So criminology as a discipline, criminology as a way of looking at human anatomy is a very physiotoxic metanomic system. So that becomes very discursive. That became historically a very discursive ideological, sort of ideologically biased knowledge network.

But the point is that bias, that ideological bias is very carefully concealed in the idea of scientific backing, in the idea of how this was empirically true, there was empirically you know there were the evidences etc. So there are lots of published articles, there are lots of very prestigious publications which were actually corroborating by the inferiority of the African innate violence of the African, the laziness of the Asian you know in all kinds of stereotypical, essentialized epistemic systems.

And that is something which we find, which is wonderfully explored in Edward Said’s Orientalism which is entirely about the essentialization of the Orient by the West. How the Orient becomes a very handy instrument of stereotypification, a very handy instrument, a very handy

object of essentialization. But the point is such essentialization happened you know which are often backed by scientific investments, by scientific you know knowledge networks.

So science and discourse science and ideology go hand in hand in more ways than one and that is something which Lyotard often highlights in this particular book. And then again he connects this to the broader postmodern condition that we started off with. The postmodern condition with the suspicion towards grand narratives, with his incredulity towards grand narratives is actually a condition, a way of examination which keeps unpacking the constructed quality, the textural quality of knowledge formation.

The textural quality of knowledge networks. So the textuality of knowledge becomes a very important category in postmodernism, right. Where this postmodernism is always if not you know is nothing if not you know an examination of discursivity an examination of constructed quality an examination of experientiality and again we are looking at a very interesting entanglement of experientiality and discursivity.

And identity becomes a very important quality, a very important category in this framework. But as I mentioned in the very beginning of this lecture you will find if you read this book, when you read this book how identity is informative and quality, how information and identity become this makes grand narrative in the postmodern times, in the postmodern sort of cultural climate where Lyotard says quite clearly at one point where countries do not invade each other with military anymore but invade each other informatively in these days.

That seemed to be so true to our times where we have like I said we have hackings, we have you know and the people crashing in other people's computers. We have entire government systems, power systems, alternative government systems which are competing with each other for knowledge etc. So the entire idea of surveillance, the entire idea of military intelligence that becomes dependent on knowledge.

So countries compete with each other for knowledge. So knowledge becomes the next resource, the next coveted commodity and that is something which Lyotard highlights constantly. Now,

you find a very fair reflection of that in cinema, in popular cinema as well and that is something which we might talk a little later in the subsequent lectures. Say for instance if you look at the modern spy cinema you know which is released at a holiday, the major holiday at production houses.

And if you look at films which is a Bone series films, the Bone identity, the Bone supremacy and Bone ultimatum we find that the entire Bone series which is a very smart cinema, a very smart spy cinema we find that the entire commodity, the entire coveted commodity is oftentimes just a little pen drive, just a little memory stick and that little memory stick that little pen drive contains perhaps very vital and classified information which might compromise the entire governments, which might compromise the entire government security.

So again knowledge becomes a very sort of coveted commodity and it becomes a very discursive commodity as well. So this entire mingling of discursivity and commodification, discursivity and reification you know obviously these are discursive reified as well. These become very important categories of study in Lyotard's book and you know obviously these happen in different kinds of language games and different kinds of you know mixture of preset rules and navigation with those rules, utterances and articulations within those rules.

These become very important throughout this book, *The Postmodern Condition*. So that is basically why we are looking at this at this particular book in terms of a very pivotal you know position in our course in cultural studies. Now I just mentioned how it connects with Butler, how it connects with Ian Hacking, how it connects to Bell Hooks but also and equally important we need to understand how this connects to the question of authority.

So who contains authority in postmodern times something which Lyotard also asks in this book and later on in this course we will look at Michel Foucault's essay *What is an Author* which is again a very important discourse analysis on authority, auto identity etc. but that is something which is sort of anticipated in this book as well, that that kind of a study where authority becomes again a very discursive quality.

So authority and agency go hand in hand and agency can be a quiet, it can also be de-quiet. It can be given, it can be taken away. So these become very important categories in the postmodern times. The question of agency keeps coming up. Who acquires agency and what is the modus operandi, what is the means, what are the means through which we want to acquire agency. So the means obviously are economic, cultural, financial you know etc.

So how do you consume the capital, how do you consume the means, how do you appropriate the methods through which we acquire agency in the first place. So these are conditions, these are the very important questions that keep getting asked in a postmodern condition, A Report on Knowledge, okay. Now the other thing, the counter narrative of this is also something which is worth bearing in mind.

One of the very common accusations against postmodernism is something which keeps coming up is that it ends up bringing up self-defeating game. It ends up becoming a self-reifying narrative. It reifies itself in his question, in his attack against reification. So the postmodern subversive act, the postmodern subversive coup can very quickly become reified, can very quickly become commodified, can very quickly become coded and become part of status quo.

And that is something which is quite often an accusation against postmodernism. Now what Lyotard does in this particular book, he makes it very clear that postmodernism does not quite offer the solutions and postmodernism does not quite offer the you know the resolutions to crisis. Rather it raises questions, it raises more complex questions and to a certain extent it is escapism quality, to a certain extent you know it does away with in real engagement as well.

But the questions which are raised by postmodernism that become very important for us especially in cultural studies. And among the many questions, some of the key questions are the following. A, how are narratives formed. So how is the grand narrative formed. So what are the cultural, economic, informative conditions which are invested into the making of a grand narrative, right.

So the making of a grand narrative is a very important quality you know which is investigated which is examined over and over again by postmodernism the entire narrative formation, B. And what are the different kinds of identity markers in that kind of a narrative formation, right. So the identity markers in postmodernism are more often than not metonymic in quality. And what I mean when I say metonymic? By metonymic I mean fragmented in quality.

So they are selective, they are fractured. So identity is more often than not fractured. Identity more often than not selective in quality in postmodern condition. So the postmodern condition often becomes a celebration of that kind of fractured identities. Of that kind of a you know metonymic identity. So its entire idea of metonymization where you break down something into certain represented or something some you know representative components.

These become very important markers of postmodernism. So postmodernism really require sense of wholeness. Does not really aspire for wholeness. It aspire, it aspires for actually a deconstruction of wholeness, deconstruction of any kind of a causal closure and that is the third point which we need to bear in mind the idea of a causal closure. And what is the causal closure.

A causal closure is you know a closure you know a sense of finale a sense of ending which is acquired, which is reached through kinds of causing effective logic. Now postmodernism among the many things which it does it exposes the constructed quality of commonsense. It exposes the constructed quality of logic. And obviously logic, the way we consume, the way we look at logic is a very Eurocentric enlightenment kind of phenomenon and in that sense postmodernism moves away from the enlightenment logic which is quite Cartesian in quality.

The idea of the thinking man, the idea of I think therefore I am. So the entire idea of agency rests on the thinking process. That kind of a logic, that kind of a causal structure of logic is done away with in postmodernism and that is again a grand narrative and other metanarrative that postmodernism is suspicious of, right. So you know that logical system, that causal logical system is something which is done away with postmodernism, right.

So the enlightenment logic, the causal logic, the Eurocentric logic is something which postmodernism does away with. Now, lastly it is a very, this might be a bit of a digression from this course but postmodernism is quite akin to what we also classify as post-humanism in academic study today. The post-humanism obviously is something which comes after humanism which again does not mean something which comes after humanity is gone or destroyed itself.

That would make no sense; but something which is which takes a revision relook at humanism. The humanism if we put in capital H is a very enlightenment narrative. It is a narrative about the primacy of man, the primacy, the supremacy of man and more often than not this is supremacy or primacy of the white man. Now notice the very selective quality of such a narrative is the white man's, it is a racial selectivity in question as the man serves a gender selectivity in question.

So it is a white man, white man's rationality which becomes the grand narrative of enlightenment, imperialism etc. And that kind of a narrative, that white man's narrative which is a grand narrative is questioned by postmodernism as well as the post-humanism and in that sense postmodernism is quite akin stylistically, thematically, ontologically as well as epistemologically with post-humanism as it is with post structuralism.

So with post structuralism the things become more semantic while the relationship and signifier and signified gets problematized. And there is no causal relation between cat and animal cat. So these things become questioned, these things become quite slippery in quality. And postmodernism becomes in the sense a celebration of slipperiness, a celebration of simultaneity rather than you know something which is geared or designed towards causal closures.

So closure becomes the postmodern condition, the postmodernity becomes a closure killer in a sense. It does away with closures. It is always sort of open ended kind of a narrative which anticipates more narratives to come. It does not really close in any particular point but it anticipates and work in its own contestations. Now, if you take all these conditions in mind and look at representations because representation becomes very crucial and key category in postmodernism.

Now what is representation? Representation is obviously a way of telling a particular narrative you know designing a particular narrative and that designing that telling are often quite political in quality. So what do you design, what do you tell, what do you select, what do you include, what do you collude, this become very political discursive questions that keep getting asked in postmodernism. Now if you look at these kinds of designs.

Now if you look at these kinds of designs we find that when you look at the postmodern narratives and what it also celebrates is unreliability to a certain extent. So unreliability is something which is not lamented but it is rather celebrated in postmodernism. So you know the entire unreliable narrator becomes a very popular trope in postmodernism. A trope which is constantly highlighted throughout postmodern narratives.

If you look at a postmodern novel say for instance, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles, you find that entire novel is written in a very unreliable kind of a way and more importantly it is quite metafictional in quality. So this metafictional quality in postmodernism is something which is which we must bear in mind when we do a great sophisticated study, when you attempt to do a sophisticated study of postmodernism and how it connects with culture and cultural studies.

So what is metafiction? Metafiction is a meta-storytelling. It is a way of looking at fiction which is about itself. It is self-reflexive in quality. It draws attention to its own ontological state. It draws attention to its own constructed quality. It draws attention to its own fluidity as a narrative. So the postmodern narrative more often than not whether it is a cinema narrative which is a diegetic quality, is a diegesis when it comes to films, whether it is a literary narrative, you find unreliability becomes a very important condition in postmodernism.

So the entire area of ontological reliability, ontological stability are done away with. And notice there is also a sentimental quality in postmodernism and when he comes to modernism when we read a novel by Joseph Conrad for instance you find that the idea that the story cannot be told, the idea there is no center, the idea there is no reliable narrative left. These are ideas which are, these are realizations which are lamented, which are mourned by Conrad.

So it is a very nostalgic quality by modernism which looks back at the past and tries to retrieve an era where reliability happened, where certainty took place, where you know things did not become contingent etc. but when you look at postmodernism there is no nostalgia left. There is no you know longing left to recover a lost hole or recover a lost paradise. The paradise lost is something which has happened and postmodernism becomes in a way a celebration of very carnivalesque centerlessness.

Now what do you mean by carnivalesque is a Bakhtinian term used by Mikhail Bakhtin. It is a kind of a strategy, it is a kind of mode, a kind of a activity where normal notional orders, hierarchic orders are overturned. So the Pope becomes beggar, the beggar becomes a Pope in a classic carnival and sort of becomes metaphoric example of how you know how he is inverted, a normal hierarchic orders are done away with in that kind of a condition.

So postmodernism becomes quite interestingly carnivalesque in quality. That also becomes heteroglossic in quality. Has many voices, heteroglossia, has many voices, many languages, many representations etc. So this multiplicity of meaning, this carnivalesque of meaning these becomes very very important categories in postmodernism.

So moving away from the modern lamentation, the modernist lamentation, the modern nostalgia for lost origins, for lost paradises postmodernism becomes a celebration of centrelessness or certaintylessness and this is reflected in the way narratives are formed in postmodernism. This is reflected in the way how slipperiness and unreliability are foregrounded by postmodern narratives, not concealed.

So when you look at classic realist narratives, realism obviously is a very important category because realism aims at totality. Realism gives an illusion of totality. Realism gives an illusion of an omniscient omnipresent totality which is done away with when it comes to postmodernism. There is no totality left in postmodernism. So in that sense postmodernism becomes a very anti-totalitarian perspective of looking at things.

And this anti-totalitarian perspective is something which is constantly highlighted by Lyotard. So there is no grand narrative left in postmodernism. Instead what we have a different micro-narratives, different language games which is often collusive with each other, which is often, which often collide with each other and this entire play between contestation and collusion and again we cannot quite map out the difference between contestation and collusion in a postmodern times.

This is a very messy mixture, this is a very messy mutable mixture that is something which is celebrated by the postmodern theorist, by the postmodern pundits not least by Lyotard in this book, *The Postmodern Condition, A Report on Knowledge*. So that kind of an acknowledgement of messiness, a foregrounding of unreliability, an exposure of certaintylessness you know a revelation of the constructed quality these become very important tools.

Very very important sort of epistemological instruments for which with which we can examine culture and cultural formations and cultural narratives because oftentimes we find that in culture narratives it is aim towards a tendency towards totalization and this tendency towards totalization is something which postmodernism warns us against you know something which can quickly become totalitarian in quality.

Something which tends towards totalitarianism and these are important warnings. These are important suspicions. So suspicion of postmodernism against grand narratives is a very important warning, a very important guardedness against any kind of totalitarian formation. It is something which Lyotard highlights quite often in this book. So the postmodern condition is a very important text in terms of looking at discursive formation but also in terms of looking at affective formations.

So one of the key, one of the key categories in postmodernism is also affect, sentiment. So the postmodern is also a sentiment rather than just a structure, just a text. So this entire idea of a sentimental subversion is something which a postmodernism, a postmodern does quite well. So sentimentally it does not have any melancholic mournful longing of a loss hole but rather it is quite slippery and subversive and it laughs itself.

It is a very circumflexive, slippery subversion. It keeps drawing attention to its own reflexivities. It keeps drawing attention to its own textural, constructed quality and in that sense it becomes a very subversive statement and again we can connect this idea postmodernism with Butler's idea of looking at gender as a way of Bakhtinian activity, as an active becoming, unbecoming, re-becoming etc.

So these become very important dissensions, very important categories in Butler as well. And lastly we find that this idea of the postmodern condition as I mentioned a while ago it is quite post-structuralist in this scope as well. So post-structuralism, post-humanism, gender studies, postmodernism, these categories come together and they often, oftentimes we see them occupying or inhabiting or sort of overlapping each other in terms of historical synchronicity, in terms of historical temporality.

So all these begin to take place with the sort of the end of Europe as a grand narrative, the end of the Western civilization of the grand narrative which happened after Second World War. So the Second World War maybe seen historically as the beginning of postmodernism. However, there is a caveat that I must offer over here. If you are looking at narrative structures it does not necessarily mean that every narrative designed after Second World War becomes postmodern by default.

So I urge you to look at postmodernism or postmodern as not just a temporal category but also as a stylistic and aesthetic category, as an ontological category. So for us in literary studies if you go by to the earliest days of a novel we can find that Don Quixote by Cervantes to perform the postmodern text. Because again it talks about the unreliability of narration. It talks about the non-causal relationship between the signifier and the signified, the semantic slipperiness between the object and its meaning.

These are questions which keep getting in Don Quixote later on in Lawrence Jones' Tristram Shandy. It is one of the earliest novels written in English. We find that it is a novel which constantly highlights the own formative process. It is the novel which constantly highlights its

own constructed quality, how was the narrative being formed. So the entire novel is about writing the novel. It is about you know designing the particular novel.

So it does not really have the clinical close quality of a classic realist text which is as we know is something of a disguise, something of a masquerade, something of a trickster job because real life is not full of closures. Real life does not really have an omniscient writer. Real life does not have any sense of reliability. Real life is profoundly unreliable. Real life is quite contingent, quite complex and quite mutable in quality and sometimes quite messy in quality as well.

So the postmodern representation, the postmodern aesthetic sometimes actually becomes the most authentic form of reality despite its constant foregrounding of unreliability; despite its constant revelation of its own constructed quality. So in the sense the postmodern condition becomes a very political condition as well as a very experiential condition. So the postmodern condition becomes revelation of our own experientiality.

It tells us things about our own experience, unreliability, contingency, mutability, messiness. These become very experiential condition in the postmodern times. And The Report on Knowledge that Lyotard offers over here is very important precisely because it brings in scientific report, scientific knowledge and talks about how those become quite collusive with discursivity and different ideological climates at different points of time.

So I hope to establish by this lecture by now that this is a really important text for us in cultural studies, not least as it gives us a training to look at culture as a text, to look at culture as an experience which is also a text. So textuality and experientiality of culture are both so highlighted in this particular book. So this particular book becomes a very important training for us in postmodernism not just in cultural studies but also postmodernism as a literary activity, as an artistic activity as obviously a political and cultural activity.

And in that sense it becomes quite a prophetic book because as I mentioned a little while ago that this book is actually more true to our times today than when it was originally written many decades ago because the question of identity, authority, agency these become very crucial

questions for us today in the world that we inhabit and internalize. So with that we conclude this introduction to the postmodern condition by Jean-Francois Lyotard and we move with the text in the subsequent lectures.

But I hope to have established by now that this is a very important text and not just that it is not a standalone text. It connects with some of the other texts that we do in this course not least with Butler's Gender Trouble, Hacking's Social Construction of What? Mitchel Foucault's What is an Author and lastly Slavoj Zizek's Welcome to the Desert of the Real which is the final text which we will do in this particular course.

But this this book, The Postmodern Condition is a really pivotal book in terms of its connectivity and relativity you know relativity to the other texts that we all endeavor to cover in this course. So with that I conclude this lecture and we will move on with this text in the lectures to come. Thank you for your attention.