Feminist Writings
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The Cyborg Manifesto - Part 4

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Hi, welcome to the N P T E L Course entitled Feminist Writings. So we are looking at Donna Haraway's The Cyborg Manifesto.

So, we have covered quite of a few lectures in this text and now in this particular lecture we look at some of the interesting mapping out that she does in terms of looking at what is more relevant to the context of our times.

And comparing that with some of the other forms of representation earlier and how the cyborg obviously takes up the current forms of appropriation, current forms of representation, post-modernist, almost post-humanist forms of representation.

So what she says over here, this should be on your screen,

In this attempt at an epistemological and political position, I would like to sketch a picture of possible unity, a picture indebted to socialist and feminist principles of design. The frame for my sketch is set by the extent and importance of rearrangements in worldwide social relations tied to science and technology. I argue for a politics rooted in claims about fundamental changes in the nature of class, race, and gender in an emerging system of world order analogous in its novelty and scope to that created by industrial capitalism; we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system—from all work to all play, a deadly game. Simultaneously material and ideological, the dichotomies may be expressed in the following chart of transitions from the comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks I have called the informatics of domination:

is that, "I argue for politics rooted in claims about fundamental changes in the natural class, race and gender in an emerging system of world order analogous in its novelty and scope to that created by industrial capitalism.

We live into a movement from an organic industrial society to polymorphous, information system, from all work to all play, a deadly game. And if you notice the adjectives used over here.

And these obviously are sort of symptomatic what Haraway has been arguing throughout this essay and she is saying that we are, we are moving away from an idea of organic industrialism, an organic industrial society to a polymorphous activity, to an information system where the difference between organic and inorganic are not so clearly discernible anymore.

And if you remember one of the previous lectures how she talked about, how Haraway talked about, how Haraway explored the three major paradigm shifts which sort of inform the emergence of the cyborg. And the paradigm shifts were first of all the man-animal paradigm shift, then the man-animal together organic and inorganic and then lastly the physical and the non-physical.

So these binaries, ontological differences are also increasingly blurring away in the post-modern times that is where the cyborg is a major embodiment of.

And now she is saying that, she is arguing for politics, subversive politics, subversive political system of politics representation where, you know which will bring about changes in some of the fundamental ideas of race, class and gender.

So, you know how Eurocentric, organic, humanist idea of race, class and gender are giving way to the sort of post-humanist idea of embodiment, the post-human idea of identity, post-human idea of representational politics.

And word 'polymorphous' is interesting over here. Polymorphism means it is mixture, it is a mixture of opposites, it is the mixture of things which are combined in a very playful way and word 'play' appears as very political category over here.

So, she says that, "We are moving from all work to all play." Now what play signifies in the context of this particular essay is interesting, because play is an activity that may or may not be productive. I will say it again. Play is an activity which may or may not be productive. And there is a very complex relationship with productivity is what gets play a subversive quality. It may not end up producing anything.

So, it is not really a part of the industrial productive mechanism but productive machinery of the control and consumption. So, play becomes a post-modern, post-structural activity that is in where Haraway takes up appropriates and uses as a very important example of a deadly game. So, deadly game over here, or play over here becomes an act of subversion.

And that kind of an activity what we see is clearly that, you know moving away from a Fordist or Taylorist mode of sequential production, of controlled production, controlled consumption to more anarchic mode of production, more polymorphist idea of production where you know the difference between producer and the product is not really always, you know mapped out clearly.

So, simultaneously material and ideological, the dichotomies may be expressed in a following chart of transitions, from the comfortable, old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks are called the information of domination.

So again look at the adjectives, scary, scary new networks, why this scary? Who is getting scary? Who is it meant to scare?

Obviously it is scaring from a Eurocentric humanist perspective where you know production could be a controlled activity, consumption could be a controlled activity, representation could be a controlled activity? Now, obviously from that mode of controlled activity we are moving away from to a more anarchic, more playful, more ludic forms of productions and consumption.

So, ludic also is playful; it comes from ludo which means play. So, and then she is offering us very interesting chart, very interesting, sort of map of how the shifts are taking place in different realms of existence, different realms of representation, from a pre post-modern to post-modern times.

And how the cyborg obviously belongs to the second realm so, you know post-modern

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created by industrial capitalism; we are living through a move-
ment from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, in-
formation system—from all work to all play, a deadly game. Si-
multaneously material and ideological, the dichotomies may be
expressed in the following chart of transitions from the com-
fortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks
I have called the informatics of domination:

Organics of Domination	Informatics of Domination
representation	> simulation
bourgeois novel, realism	> science fiction, postmodernism
organism	> biotic component
depth, integrity	> surface, boundary
heat	> noise
biology as clinical practice	> biology as inscription

post-humanist realm.

And on your screen we should see this idea of mapping of Haraway offers and she so clearly, she so given title to the two realms, first title on the left is called the organics of domination, the second on your right is the information of domination.

So, we see that how if we look at the two categories closely we find what was quite palpable is that how the right hand side, the right hand column is known post-modern column, the column which accommodates the cyborg, the column which produces the cyborg, the column in which the cyborg emerges as an activity, as an organism which is also inorganic in quality.

So, if we take a few terms, so let us spend some time unpack the differences between some of the terms mentioned on, you know which you see on the screen. First of all, representation. So representation is now replaced by simulation.

Now, what is the difference between representation and simulation? Now, the word 'representation' or the word 'mimesis' for that matter, it has a degree of organic quality to it. It is almost always high art. It is almost always human activity, it is an organic human addressment in act of representation.

So there is, you know spontaneity, organicity, humaneness in act of representation which is what makes the, which makes fit into this particular humanist world of things.

Now compare and contrast that with simulation. The simulation, the very word simulation has an artificiality embedded in it. So, the artificiality is something which is highlighted, foregrounded and almost celebrated by post-modernism in a very interesting sense.

So, (())(7:01) bourgeois novel realism or the bourgeois novel as compared and contrasted with science fiction and post-modernism.

Now, one of the key things about post-modernism and this is something that you know all students of post-modernism such as (())(07:15) we are aware of.

And that is the entire idea of unreliability, the entire idea of inauthenticity, the entire idea of the unreliable narrator, the narrator which can trick you later, the narrator who is uncertain narrator who is nervous, narcissistic neurotic, nervous narrator of post modernism.

Now, there is complete contrast, ontologically as well as functionally with the idea of realism, realism being this great map of the century, and a phenomenon, great map of the century representation mechanism whereby you know reality is represented in a, as a closed product, as a closed commodity in terms of the spatial and temporal quality, you know…

The realist narrator would contain a narrator if there is an inside narrator at all who knows exactly what happens in the minds of characters, who has a sense of begin, middle and end, who has a sense of before, now and after which is a complete contrast to the unreliability of the post-modern narrator, you know which does not really have any of these ideas, any of this knowledge.

And that ironically makes post-modern unreliable narration, more authentic form of narration because in real life, we are all living uncertain lives. We do not know what is happening now; we do not quite know what is going to happen in future.

And we do not quite completely know what happened in the past. So it is always an unreliability about the way we navigate in our lives. And so it proves post-modernism is unreliable narration.

Ironically, a more authentic form of representation compared to realism which tricks you to believing that it is real, it is about real life, which actually it is not.

Now, there are categories that and we quickly take a look at is on the left there is depth and integrity which is compared and contrasted with surface and boundary or maybe superficiality is the word you know that will help us understand what is happening here better.

So, depth or integrity is replaced by superficiality. Now, what is superficiality? Why is superficiality celebrated post-modernism? This idea of depthlessness, why is that important thing? Because it does away with the any sense of the ontology of origin.

So, it does away with any other origin narratives. So if you take something as completely superficial, completely depthless in quality, what you are essentially saying that it does any require any authentic origin narrative.

It does not require any kernel at the center, so centerlessness becomes a big component of superficiality which is also here a very-very post-modern phenomena

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physiology	>	communications engineering
small group	>	subsystem
perfection	>	optimization
eugenics	>	population control
decadence, *Magic Mountain*	>	obsolescence, *Future Shock*
hygiene	>	stress management
microbiology, tuberculosis	>	immunology, AIDS
organic division of labor	>	ergonomics, cybernetics of labor
functional specialization	>	modular construction
reproduction	>	replication
organic sex role specialization	>	optimal genetic strategies
biological determinism	>	evolutionary inertia.

as well.

So and then we can move on again on your screen we have perfection which is again organic and spontaneous and so human quality compared that with optimization which has a machining quality embedded in it.

Reproduction is replaced by replication; hygiene is replaced by stress management which is most important phenomena, most important medical phenomenon in post-modern times, stress management.

So these become very, very important categories. Racial chain of being is replaced by, you know neo imperialism and United Nations humanism.

This is very, very interesting.

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organic sex role specialization	>	optimal genetic strategies
biological determinism	>	evolutionary inertia, constraints
community ecology	>	ecosystem
racial chain of being	>	neoimperialism, United Nations humanism

And in a great tongue-in-cheek style Haraway is also ticking the neo imperial constructs rational chain of being was obviously a former social Darwinism which was invested in the imperialism, which was invested in the sense of racial supremacy, supremacy of the white man to be precise.

And that was, that was the ideological backbone that was the empirical, quote unquote a epistemic backbone of imperialism which (())(10:44) the superiority of White Man. And that racial chain of being is now replaced by neoimperialism and United Nations humanism. So, the face of humanism has changed. It is now more United Nations humanism.

So, and then we have scientific

hygiene	>	stress management
microbiology, tuberculosis	>	immunology, AIDS
organic division of labor	>	ergonomics, cybernetics of labor
functional specialization	>	modular construction
reproduction	>	replication
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biological determinism	>	evolutionary inertia, constraints
community ecology	>	ecosystem
racial chain of being	>	neoimperialism, United Nations humanism
scientific management in home/factory	>	global factory/electronic cottage industry
family/market/factory	>	women in the integrated circuit

management in home, factory; family, market, you know is replaced by global factory, electronic cottage industry, woman integrated circuit.

So, we were looking at, looking at the difference between the macro mode of production and micro mode of production where, you know micro activity can be productive in a scale that is unimaginable before the postmodern times.

Just couple of more interesting

organic division of labor	>	ergonomics, cybernetics of labor
functional specialization	>	modular construction
reproduction	>	replication
organic sex role specialization	>	optimal genetic strategies
biological determinism	>	evolutionary inertia, constraints
community ecology	>	ecosystem
racial chain of being	>	neoimperialism, United Nations humanism
scientific management in home/factory	>	global factory/electronic cottage industry
family/market/factory	>	women in the integrated circuit
family wage	>	comparable worth
public/private	>	cyborg citizenship
nature/culture	>	fields of difference

(())(11:25) here; and contrast here, the public private dichotomy is now replaced by cyborg citizenship.

Now what is cyborg citizenship? Now this is interesting bit

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functional specialization	>	modular construction
reproduction	>	replication
organic sex role specialization	>	optimal genetic strategies
biological determinism	>	evolutionary inertia, constraints
community ecology	>	ecosystem
racial chain of being	>	neoimperialism, United Nations humanism
scientific management in home/factory	>	global factory/electronic cottage industry
family/market/factory	>	women in the integrated circuit
family wage	>	comparable worth
public/private	>	cyborg citizenship
nature/culture	>	fields of difference
cooperation	>	communications enhancement
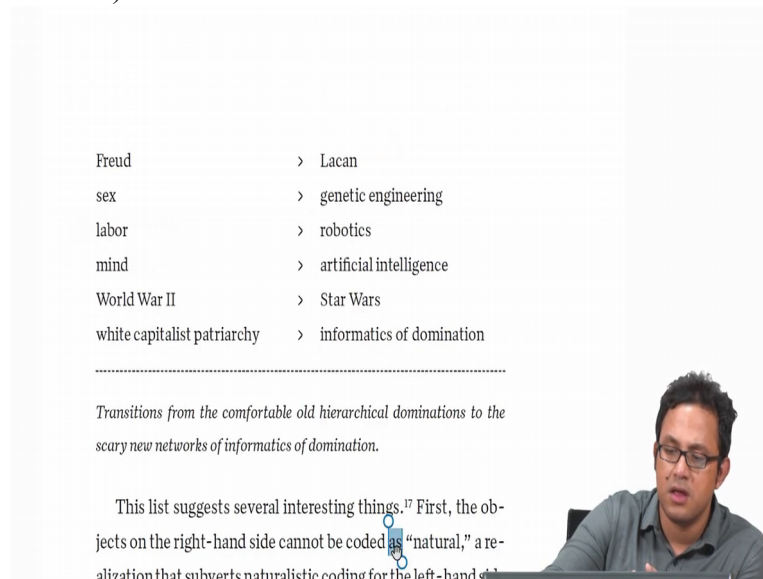
that I want to spend a little time with. Like most post-modernist essays, even Haraway's essay is quite prophetic in quality, so she is talking about cyborg citizenship in the time we should not really have drones as various formations but now drones as various formations is very much reality.

So we are looking at a different kind of grammar of combat altogether, we are looking at a different mode of combat, a different grammar of combat, a different kind of combat where we do not require human beings any more.

So drones can do the war for you, drones can fire the war for you, you know drones can, you know win the war for you. And you know these become very important qualities. So, we were looking at the future where the citizenship for drones can actually become a reality as if it is not a reality already.

Because you know drones fighting for countries, we have two kinds of drones, two deformation fighting with each other in battlegrounds where you know the idea of citizenship, the idea of identity, the idea of ownership of drones become very, very important. So, we are looking at cyborg citizenship as a real, as a real phenomenon,

Freud	>	Lacan
sex	>	genetic engineering
labor	>	robotics
mind	>	artificial intelligence
World War II	>	Star Wars
white capitalist patriarchy	>	informatics of domination

Transitions from the comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks of informatics of domination.

This list suggests several interesting things.[17] First, the objects on the right-hand side cannot be coded as "natural," a realization that subverts naturalistic coding for the left-hand s...

Ok.

And as just finally Freud is replaced by Lacan which is obviously more disobedient, more post-modern in quality, mind is replaced by artificial intelligence again the organicity of the mind, the purity, the pure human organic quality of the mind which is very, very human, embedded humanness is replaced by artificial intelligence. It is more of a switch on, switch off mechanism of, you know binary circuit.
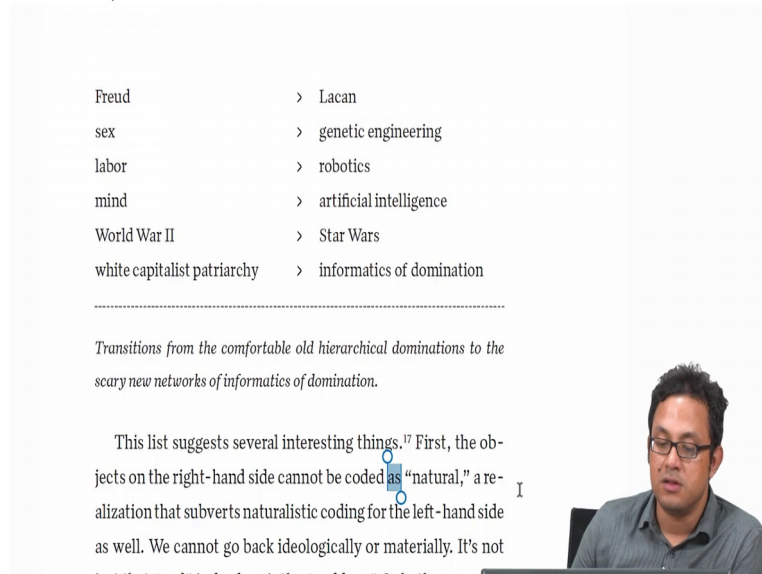
World War II is replaced by Star Wars. Now, what is this kind of contrast? The World War II is a real war, where real people fought and died in this massive human casualty and, you know but if you compare that with Star Wars which is obviously a, you know fictional game, you know hyper-magnetic game.

We know we are looking at difference between you know real and the hyper-real. Star Wars is not really a war but at same time; it is a war which is, you know, it is a form of entertainment which is consumed globally across the world.

Labor is replaced by robotics. Robotics is also artificial quality, automatic in quality as compared to labor which is more human in quality.

Now, what Haraway is also underlining over here, she goes on to say quite clearly

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the objects on the right hand side cannot be coded as natural. A realization that a subverse natural is a coding for left hand side as well.

Now while we say that, notice on right like for instance artificial intelligence, robotics, cyborg citizenship, Star Wars these are not really natural organic objects.

So, you know once we realize this and we begin to question the constructive quality or the organicity, even the left hand object, so we talk about for instance a great chain of being, which is a chain of racial supremacy, a chain of discourse which legitimizes racial supremacy, now that kind of discursive legitimacy is obviously has much an artificial thing as, you know any right hand side, right hand side objects over here.

That is what precisely point is, very objective quality, object-like quality, the artificial quality of right hand side objects, just does not promote the artificiality of them but at the same time it throws back and makes us aware of the artificiality of the objects on the left as well which is supposedly human, which is supposedly organic in quality, supposedly natural in quality.

But we see how, unless something which we realize even when we read Bell Hook's essay Understanding Patriarchy, how naturalization and normativization are important characters, important functions of creating or promoting grand narratives. So, any grand narrative needs to be naturalized and normativised.

So, it appears as a natural thing. It appears as un-artificial thing, an organic thing. Once it appears as an organic thing then you do not begin to question this textual material inorganic quality and then we begin to consume some kind of a matter discursive given.

Well that is the whole point of the right hand side column which will make you aware of how even you aware how even the ones on the left hand side are artificial, perhaps more artificial, more dishonestly artificial than ones on the right.
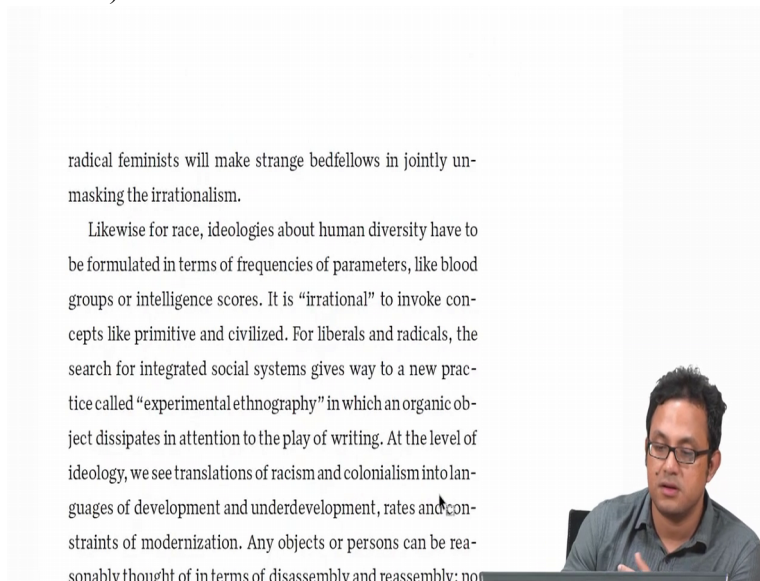
Ok,

scary new networks of informatics of domination.

This list suggests several interesting things.[17] First, the objects on the right-hand side cannot be coded as "natural," a realization that subverts naturalistic coding for the left-hand side as well. We cannot go back ideologically or materially. It's not just that "god" is dead; so is the "goddess." Or both are revivified in the worlds charged with microelectronic and biotechnological politics. In relation to objects like biotic components, one must think not in terms of essential properties, but in terms of design, boundary constraints, rates of flows, systems logics, costs of lowering constraints. Sexual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many, with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment. Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families. Such reasoning will be unmasked as irrational, and

so this is some of the important categories that

radical feminists will make strange bedfellows in jointly unmasking the irrationalism.

Likewise for race, ideologies about human diversity have to be formulated in terms of frequencies of parameters, like blood groups or intelligence scores. It is "irrational" to invoke concepts like primitive and civilized. For liberals and radicals, the search for integrated social systems gives way to a new practice called "experimental ethnography" in which an organic object dissipates in attention to the play of writing. At the level of ideology, we see translations of racism and colonialism into languages of development and underdevelopment, rates and constraints of modernization. Any objects or persons can be reasonably thought of in terms of disassembly and reassembly; no

Haraway is highlighting. Now, and then she goes and says what happens to something like kinship, what happens to something like, you know family. What happens something like being relative in this kind of world, this kind of setting. And then she says, this should be on the screen.

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For liberals and radicals, the search for integrated social systems, it gives way to a new practice called experimental ethnography in which an organic object dissipates an attention to the play of writing. So play of writing becomes important character over here.

So writing as play, writing as not essentially productive, not necessarily productive, and this whole idea of approximated productivity, something which is very post-modern quality, writing as play, writing as subversive, writing as a ludic activity. That is something that Haraway is highlighting.

At a level of ideology, we see translations are racism and colonialism into languages of the development and underdevelopment, rates and constraints of modernization.

Any objects or persons can be reasonably thought of in terms of disassembly and reassembly, no natural architecture is

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constrained system design. The financial districts in all the world's cities as well as export processing, free trade, zones are proclaimed this elementary factor of late capitalism.

The entire universal objects that become known scientifically

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must be formulated as problems in communications engineering for the managers or theories of the text for those who resist. Both are cyborg semiologies.

So the whole idea of cyborg semiology becomes quite clear. So what is cyborg semiology? Cyborg semiology is this microactivity through which writing becomes play, through which representation becomes play, through which classifications are resisted, through any kind of meta-classifications are resistant and cyborg semiology, the different kind, an alternative mode of semiology which produces an alternative order of meaning, from the dominant order meaning, that is something that Haraway is highlighting and perhaps advocating in this point in the essay.

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guages of development and underdevelopment, rates and constraints of modernization. Any objects or persons can be reasonably thought of in terms of disassembly and reassembly; no "natural" architectures constrain system design. The financial districts in all the world's cities, as well as the export-processing and free trade zones, proclaim this elementary fact of "late capitalism." The entire universe of objects that can be known scientifically must be formulated as problems in communications engineering (for the managers) or theories of the text (for those who would resist). Both are cyborg semiologies.

One should expect control strategies to concentrate on boundary conditions and interfaces, on rates of flow across boundaries—and not on the integrity of natural objects. "Integrity" or "sincerity" of the Western self gives way to decision procedures and expert systems. For example, control strategies applied to women's capacities to give birth to new human beings

So, in that kind of a semiological system "integrity" or "sincerity" of the Western self gives way to decision procedures and expert systems. So, the whole idea of self disappears. The whole idea of self is problematised in this kind of a discourse.

So, self has a organic, natural you know meta discourse is given which is authentic in quality, which is rational in quality, which sounds divine in quality, rationality and divinity are almost often equal with each other, especially in enlightenment logic and that kind of equation, that kind of an enlightenment centric or Eurocentric idea of self is completely done away with.

And what we have instead gives way to decision procedures and expert system. So the word system, the word procedure, again they highlight the mechanistic, the automatic quality of the self-aware, the automatic quality of post-modern rationality, it is not really rationality and Cartesian sense of I think therefore I am.

It is a divine quality about reason, divine quality about this light bulbs, spark or reason which will make you human that kind of equation, that kind of a sequential semantic equation in rationality and divinity and humanity, that is done away with.

What we have instead is the focus on decision procedures and expert systems. Again systems and procedures become important, especially because of the artificiality which are embedded, which is embedded in those narratives.

Ok, so,

will be developed in the languages of population control and maximization of goal achievement for individual decision-makers. Control strategies will be formulated in terms of rates, costs of constraints, degrees of freedom. Human beings, like any other component or subsystem, must be localized in a system architecture whose basic modes of operation are probabilistic, statistical. No objects, spaces, or bodies are sacred in themselves; any component can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed for processing signals in a common language. Exchange in this world transcends the universal translation effected by capitalist markets that Marx analyzed so well. The privileged pathology affecting all kinds of components in this universe is stress

and what happens to the, I mean if this is what happens to self or the idea of the self, what happens to human beings in this context, what ought to happen to human beings in this context.

So human beings like any other component or subsystems, again look at the way in which Haraway is equating humans as the subsystem, so that in a way deflates entire glamour of humanism, deflates entire glory of humanism as being a unique activity, as being a unique gift, a unique primate in this whole world.

Where everything else is secondary, everything else, it is is very anthropocentric idea of humanism, of humanness is done away with.

What we have is more distributive quality of humanism, more distributive narrative, more distributive perspective of humanism which becomes more humble, more democratic.

And one more inclusive quality according to Haraway, the entire human beings, the humanness must be localized in the system architecture whose basic modes of operation are probabilistic, statistical, right. So probability and statistics become very important categories rather than something (())(20:43), so metaphysical rationality for Haraway.

So no objects, spaces or bodies are sacred in themselves. The any component can be interfaced with any other with proper standard, the proper code can be constructed for processing signals in a common language.

Now, what is being said over here is the entire idea, the entire ontology of sacrality which is sometimes related rationality, sometimes related to humanism, sometimes related to imagination of pure, natural organic activities, that entire idea of sacrality is done away with and what we have in its place is the local, nature of knowledge, the local, nature of you know intimacy, the local nature of interaction and you know she says that essentially anything can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, a proper code can be constructed.

So we can have proper code, proper replicating code. Anything can be not just replicated, not just interfaced but contaminated. Contamination becomes a very important category in Haraway's thesis because contamination or dilution of making something impure is a very important activity, very important subversive activity for Haraway.

Because that does away with the entire fantasy of purity, pure imagination, pure body, pure self, pure rationality, pure civilization, pure language.

So, entire fantasy of purity is done away with. What we have instead is the culture of contamination where contamination becomes, you know a kind of quasi-hygienic activity because contamination can be redemptive in quality.

It can actually give you sense of real hygiene, so hygiene of, which comes as entanglement, hygiene which comes as sort of mixture, messiness, immutability. So anything can be constructed, reconstructed by processing signals in a common language.

Exchange in this world transcends the universal translation effected by capitalist markets that Marx analyzed so well. The privileged pathology affecting all kinds of components in universe is

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stressed. Now, interestingly look at the alternative oxymoron that Haraway is highlighting over here, the privileged pathology which is stressed, communications, breakdown.

The cyborg is now subjected to Foucault's biopolitics; cyborg simulates politics, much more important field of operation. Now, in the postmodern world, the privileged pathology is stressed. Our communications break down.

There is no insidious pathology that knows… dangerous pathology in the post-modern world, where systems break down, communications break down and stress happens because of the kind of breakdown.

So hence the looking at, you know organic ailment, you know, something which affects you as cellular organic tissue that we have more important pathology over here which is the

communication breakdown, which is the system breakdown, artificial machinery breakdown into pieces. It cannot communicate any more. It cannot convey messages any more.

Now, in this style of setting the cyborg emerges is not something which is subject of Foucault's bio- politics, Foucault's bio- politics contains a, you know collusion between ideology, you know some kind of organic ideology and you know state of organic entity collude together to create this fantasy of bio politics but cyborg is not subject to Foucault's bio- politics.

So cyborg simulates politics. So again this is not really a representation, this is an artificial mimicry, an artificial imitation of politics. So it is the artificiality of the mimicry, artificiality of this mimetic process is something that is highlighted throughout the essay over here.

It is not really human mimicry, it is not really human imitation, not really human, you know imagination, or imitation, it is mimicry at a machine level. It is mimicry at an automated level that is something that Haraway is highlighting quite clearly, quite spectacular, cyborg simulates politics, a much more potent field of operations, right.

So, politics becomes potent field of operations, representational markers in politics, identity markers in politics. These become very, very important characteristics in post-modern world. And cyborg is designed to simulate those kind of structures, simulate those kind of functions.

And in that act of simulation lies the potential for subversion. So again we had very interesting equation between simulation and subversion which is embodied by the cyborg. It is not really representational in a holy, representation and all the, you know organic magnetic sense.

It is simulative in quality, simulates reality through machining process, through an artificial process and entire artificial machinery of simulation is something which characterizes cyborg quite clearly and that is something that Haraway is constantly highlighting.

Now, this brings us back to the entire three leaky blurring of distinctions that Haraway talked about beginning of the essay, the entirely organic and inorganic blurs where, entirely of the physical and the non-physical, the tangible and the non-tangible, you know blurs where,

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the map blurs where, the border blurs where, quite neatly and quite dramatically and somehow becomes very important or very interesting embodiment of that blurring away of borderlines.

So, we will stop at this point, (())(25:48) and hopefully we will wind up with this essay in the lectures to come. Thank you for your attention.