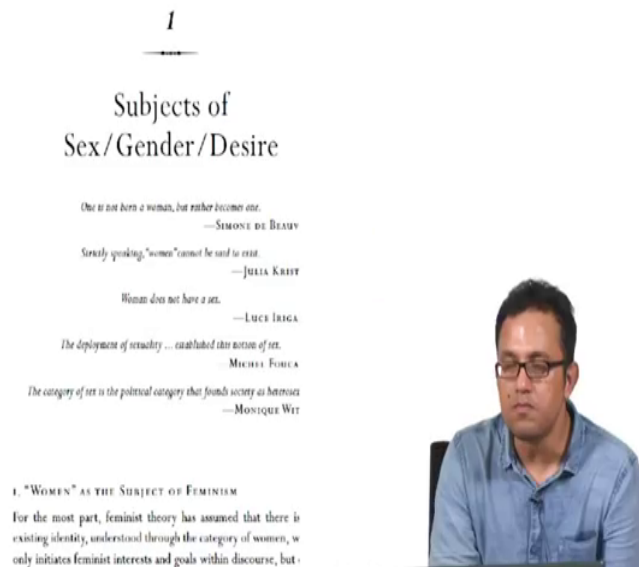


Feminist Writings
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Gender Trouble - Part 1

Hello and Welcome to this NPTEL course entitled feminist writings. Where we will begin with a new text today and that will be Judith Butler's book, Gender Trouble. It is one of the seminal books on any study of feminism and gender. Really, it is one of the landmark works, one of the landmark publications in this field and its (0:34) which we keep returning to and keep drawing on as poststructuralist, as postmodernists, as feminist, as well as scholars and students gender.

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So like I said, it was one of the path breaking works in this area of research and it inaugurated a new kind, a new perspective of looking at gender, the whole politics of gender, the whole politics of representation, the whole ontology of gender really was sort of, you know, deontologize, and reontologize as it were in academy discourses and also in popular culture to a large extent, but Butler's work.

So its significance actually not be overemphasized to the extent that his book that we keep anthologizing in any curriculum on gender and feminism. So what we will do is, we will look at certain selected sections in this book, so specifically from the first chapter, which is entitled subjects with Sex, Gender and Desire.

And obviously with Butler, what is important for us to understand is again this constant entanglement or combination of textuality and experientiality. So she talks about the whole textual construction of or constructiveness of gender and how that, constructiveness and constructive quality becomes an experiential category because experience it as a living feeling subject, living feeling human subject to a large extent. And that is important in a case of Butler.

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—JULIA KRISTEVA
Woman does not have a sex.

—LUCE IRIGARAY
The deployment of sexuality ... established this notion of sex.

—MICHEL FOUCAULT
The category of sex is the political category that founds society as heterosexual.

—MONIQUE WITTIG

I. "WOMEN" AS THE SUBJECT OF FEMINISM

For the most part, feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued. But *politics* and *representation* are controversial terms. On the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is



Okay! So, we look at, we will sort of dive into the text right away and the first chapter, as I mentioned, is entitled subjects of Sex, Gender and Desire. And the subcategory, the opening of this chapter is entitled woman as a subject of feminism. So a woman of course, as you can see on the screen is within quotations.

So you know, what constitutes the category of woman is a question Butler keeps asking “What makes a woman or what unmakes a woman?” And we have seen prior to this we have seen Simone de Beauvoir’s understanding of *The Second Sex* or the entire constructedness of the woman as a category, as an ontology, as an entity, and that is something which we keep returning to as well. And there is a very interesting dialogue that one can establish between Beauvoir and Butler to a large extent.

Okay! So, at the very outset, Butler tells us, and this should be highlighted in yellow on a screen where she is saying the politics and representation are controversial terms. On the one

hand, representation serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to woman as political subjects.

So, in a representation is something which is of course a very political process because what representation does, it combines what is included, but also in time, it also points to what gets excluded. So every act of representation is a mixture of inclusion and exclusion. And that combination is very-very interesting. And that that balance between inclusion and exclusion is a very important category.

And also in the case of woman as, as a representational category, the two very important issues Butler points out are visibility and legitimacy. So, to what extent does representation make the woman visible and to what extent does it make the woman legitimate category. So, to what extent there is this lend legitimacy to the entire category of woman and to what extent does it lend a visibility to the category of woman as political subjects?

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—JULIA BUTLER
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assumed to be true about the category of women. For feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represents women has seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of women. This has seemed obviously important considering the pervasive cultural condition in which women's lives were either misrepresented or not represented at all.

Recently, this prevailing conception of the relation between feminist theory and politics has come under challenge from within feminist discourse. The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms. There is a great deal of material that not only questions the viability of "the subject" as the ultimate candidate for representation or, indeed, liberation, but there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women. The domains of political and linguistic representation set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended.

Foucault points out that juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent.¹ Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms—that is



On the other hand, representation as the normative function of a language, which you said either to reveal or distort, what is assumed to be true about the category of woman. So, you know, representation also belong to the normative category of language. So which is supposed to reveal and distort to what is assumed to be the category of woman. So this duel possibility of revolution and distortion is what constitutes representation.

So, representation can be used to reveal things, to convey things. But equally representation can be used or seen as a, as a means, as an instrument to conceal or distort things. So it has that potential distorting as well.

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all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women. The domains of political and linguistic representation set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended.

Foucault points out that juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent.¹ Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms—that is, through the limitation, prohibition, regulation, control, and even "protection" of individuals related to that political structure through the contingent and retractable operation of choice. But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures. If this analysis is right, then the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. This becomes politically problematic if that system can be shown to produce gendered subjects along a differential



And then Butler goes on to sort of expand on this and that should, this should be on your screen in yellow as well, highlighted in yellow where she is saying, “The domain of political and linguistic representations set out in advance, the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must be met before representation can be extended.”

So this is where it begins to get really political. And so it begins to understand the discursive underpinnings of representation that you know, in order to get represented, you first must be acknowledged as a subject. You must meet the expectations of a subject and those expectations obviously, they carry or constitute lot of discursive markers.

There are certain discursive markers which must be satisfied, uh, before a subject, is acknowledged as a subject. And then obviously the next extension is that of a representation. So that is a very important category or very important condition which must be fulfilled.

Okay! And then of course, we are told that the subjects are regulated by structures of a virtue being subject to them form denied, formed, defined and reproduce in accordance with the requirements of those structures. If this analysis is correct, then the judicial formation of language and politics, they represent woman as “these subjects” of feminism is itself discursive information and effect of a given version of representation on politics and a feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate those emancipations.

Right? So this is what I meant a little while ago when I said, that there is always a dual function which is operated over here. Then on the one hand, you know, it is something which is supposed to emancipate the woman, supposed to represent the woman. But at the same time, this whole idea of representation is, it has set of presuppositions which must be met, which must be satisfied for a subject to be acknowledged as subject. Right?

So that whole feminist subjects then in that case, that reading, it turns out to be discursively constituted, discursively determined. So there is all discursive determination which goes into the making of the feminist subjects. And determines it, who constitutes that? The very political system that is supposed to facilitate as emancipation. So what is supposed to emancipate the subject, turns out to discursive determine it in the first place.

So that becomes a bit of a paradox if you will. So, that paradox which can be a productive paradox, but at the same time it can be a limiting paradox is very much at the heart, how the politics or representation Judith Butler sees it, especially when it comes to feminism and feminist subjectivity. So we find that how a Butler is way diving into some very political and discursive territories, and talking about how the whole idea of discursive determination is very much part of the narrative of emancipation.

So if you are talking about emancipation, if you are talking about representation, if you are talking about giving agency to the female subject, we must also bear in mind that the politics of representation which is supposed to give agency to the female subject also carries with it certain discursive markers, certain discursive determinates, which make it what it is, narrative in the first place.

Okay! So I should dwell on the whole idea of subject. What is the subject and the field of politics for you know feminist theory in particular? So what constitutes this subject? What does the ontology of the subject as it were?

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Denise Riley's title suggests, *Am I That Name?* is a question produced by the very possibility of the name's multiple significations.¹ If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.

The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernable in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists. Where those various contexts have been consulted within such theories, it has been to find "examples" or "illustrations" of a universal principle that is assumed from the start. That form of feminist theorizing has come under criticism for its



So, "The question of "the subject" is crucial for politics and for feminist politics in particular, because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not show once a judicial structures and politics has been established.

In other words, the political construction of the subject proceeds with certain legitimating and exclusionary aims, and these political operations are effectively concealed and naturalized by political analysis that takes juridical structures as their foundation. Juridical power inevitably produces what it claims merely to represent. Hence, politics must be concerned with a dual function of power, the juridical, and the productive.

So, the whole idea of bringing in the judicial component is important because you know this is where Butler talks about, each after representation or each after becoming a subject, it constitutes certain exclusionary aim. So, it aims to exclude certain things as well not just include things, that exclusionary aim is something which is very, very important for Butler. The process of inclusion, exclusion, uh, also constitutes the process of effective concealment and Naturalization.

So all these are very loaded terms. Effective concealment. What does effective concealment mean? So effective concealment means on that, those strategies, which is first you conceal sudden loose ends of a grand narrative, certain loose ends of the narrative of subject formation. If we do not conceal those loose ends, then the constructed quality of the subject will become quite obvious and they don't want that.

They wanted to be a seamless structure and seamlessness is dependent on the whole idea of concealment, of the whole idea of effacing away, the loose ends as it were. Okay! So, and of course the whole idea of concealing loose ends comes in the process of naturalization.

So, what does naturalization? Naturalization is a process through which a particular narrative becomes a norm, a particular narrative is internalized. So you internalize it, you make it and do, you believe it to extend that it becomes a part of your system that it becomes completely legitimized. So naturalization is legitimization, internalization, all these things put together.

Okay! And of course, when you are naturalized a particular narrative, then, you know, then the whole point of naturalization requires certain degree of exclusion as well. So, exclusion, naturalization, inclusion, all these things become very-very important or concealment. All these things become very important in Butler's analysis of subject and subject formation. And that is something that she constantly highlights, for us, readers.

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to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two.⁸ The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.

This radical splitting of the gendered subject poses yet another set of problems. Can we refer to a "given" sex or a "given" gender without first inquiring into how sex and/or gender is given, through what means? And what is "sex" anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such "facts" for us?⁹ Does sex



Okay! And then of course she comes to the really crucial point, where she talks about how one cannot possibly talk about gender by divorcing it from the political and discursive determinates, the cultural determinants, which go into the making of gender. And that is something that she is very careful and very consistently highlighting throughout this text.

Where she is saying, "It becomes impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained." So every act of gender, every, you know, every activity of gender, or rather gender is an activity in his own right. Because, you know, it is produced out of certain cultural material conditions and that production itself becomes an activity, which is what defines gender according to Butler.

So, far from being static, dominant, gender is a vibrant dynamic, and dialogic and productive activity. It is something which is constantly being produced. And of course anything which is produced can be deproduce and then reproduce, spouted textual function on gender.

So anything that can be textualized can be detextulize, and retextualized, so it is a part of a deconstruction mechanism. You keep deconstructing and reconstructing new orders or meaning. So gender becomes an activity in that sense, and that activity comes, incorporates with such issues such as agency, ethics, and morality, etc. But that is all part of the narrative of activity that we are talking about over here.

So, the political assumption, Butler goes on to say “The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism. One which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of woman has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination.

The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for his failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural context in which it exists”. So Butler over here is wanting us against the dangers of essentialism.

So, she is saying that if you look at Patriarchy as a single category, as a singular category, something which is universally functioning in a very standard, in a predictable pattern, then of course, that becomes a problem because then we are losing track of the different kinds of patriarchal operations, different kinds of patriarchal principles at work, at any given point of time.

And of course it does a disservice to feminism, does a disservice to the entire politics of gender and the entire politics of producing gender identity and that that becomes a problem for gender from Butler quite heavily and quite directly.

Right! What Butler is obviously talking about here is really nuanced, the more nuanced in complex understanding of gender. Something which just should not be moved away from any universal understanding of patriarchy, from many universal understanding of feminism and must locate it. And this whole idea of locating in the context is part of the textual package, it is part of the politics of textuality the Butler constantly wants to draw attention to, right!

So, what are the things that we talked about already in looking at Butler’s books. We talked about the context being as important as the text, the material conditions, which make possible the production of a certain kind of texts and gender as that kind of texts, and of course the whole idea of dismantling or trying to do away with any idea of a universal model of patriarchy or universal model of feminism because there isn't any such model as Butler recreating points out.

Because if we look for that model, then we obviously fall back or you fall prey to being consumed by grand narrator which is essentializing in its quality. So, that idea of

essentialism, the fear of essentialism, that risk of reification to a large extent is what Butler's warning us against, and that is something which we must take into account.

Okay! The whole idea of gender then becomes a productive activity according to Butlers. In order to be subversive, you need to acknowledge gender first for as an activity, as a verb in a way. It is not a noun, it is not an adjective is something which happens all the time. And of course the whole idea of happening and the whole idea of producing which means it can work in both ways.

It can be a process of consolidation. It can also be a process of subversion. But either way, it is a process, either way it is an activity and that must be taken into account all the time. Now, then Butler moves on to a critique of the binary model of the gender. Now the whole idea of looking at gender as a male versus female, masculine versus feminine thing, and that binary model of course, I mean that itself is quite patriarchal in quality.

Now, Butler says we need to be aware of many more models of, you need to be aware of many more nuanced understanding of gender and gendered experiences. Because the whole idea of experientiality becomes very important. Because in one hand we are looking at gender as a textual category, other classifications are done, other classifications are consolidated in public discourses and public spaces.

But at the same time, at more private levels, how do you navigate and negotiate with those classifications at an experiential level, at an immediately experiential level? So that immediate experientiality is something that Butler is a very careful to draw attention to. And this is what she says in her critique of the binary model, the off-on model, the entire dualism of gender.

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Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire

ings are only externally related, But "the body" is itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender; the question then emerges: To what extent does the body come into being in and through the mark(s) of gender? How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will?¹³

Whether gender or sex is fixed or free is a function of a discourse which, it will be suggested, seeks to set certain limits to analysis or to safeguard certain tenets of humanism as presuppositional to any analysis of gender. The locus of intractability, whether in "sex" or "gender" or in the very meaning of "construction," provides a clue to what cultural possibilities can and cannot become mobilized through any further analysis. The limits of the discursive analysis of gender presuppose and preempt the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture. This is not to say that any and all gendered possibilities are open, but that the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always



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So, this is what Butler means by this superficiality of signification, out of superficial signifiers that is celebrated over here, and the very post-modern spirit. Now, which you say is initially is that, you know, if you are falling back upon the binary model all the time, then of course, we are looking at gender as a mimetic activity.

In terms of gender, and sex, they mirror each other in a very mimetic way whereas if you take the whole idea of construction, and theorize it in a proper poststructuralist fashion as Butler does away, then we see according to Butler, the gender and sex become very different categories. Gender itself becomes a free floating artifice.

And that this is the important point. Artifice, entire artificiality of gender is something which Butler's highlighting. There is something which is manufactured, and it has almost nothing to do with the biological sex. The fact that what you are biologically male or female may not

have anything to do with the way you function and perform in society as a masculine or feminine things.

Then Butler goes on to say that, “The whole idea of man and masculine maybe easily applied to a female body as a male one. So, the whole, it becomes a bit of an act of appropriation and the superficiality of the signification is something which celebrated by Butler, it is not laminated. It is celebrated with Butler.

And it is very important in a very ontological, fundamental way that Butler seems to say over here that we need to celebrate the fact that the man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body than a male one and woman unfeminine and male body as easily as a female one.

So, you know, there is no biological equation, there is no biological essentialism Butler is trying to subscribe to. So she is saying quite clearly that male, man and masculine might work or might be used to describe the female body just as much as used to use, you know, a male body. So it has got nothing to do with biological determinism as such, and that is something which she is very carefully highlighting all the time.

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their sex and extolling men as the bearers of a body transcendent universal personhood.

In a move that complicates the discussion further, Luce Irigaray argues that women constitute a paradox, if not a contradiction, within the discourse of identity itself. Women are the “sex” which is not “one.” Within a language pervasively masculinist, a phallogocentric language, women constitute the *unrepresentable*. In other words, women represent the sex that cannot be thought, a linguistic absence and opacity. Within a language that rests on univocal signification, the female sex constitutes the unconstrainable and undesignatable. In this sense, women are the sex which is not “one,” but multiple.¹⁸ In opposition to Beauvoir, for whom women are designated as the Other, Irigaray argues that both the subject and the Other are masculine mainstays of a closed phallogocentric signifying economy that achieves its totalizing goal through the exclusion of the feminine altogether. For Beauvoir, women are the negative of men, the lack against which masculine identity differentiates itself; for Irigaray, that particular dialectic constitutes a system that excludes an entirely different economy of



Now, then she comes to the whole idea of body. So what is a body in a discursive analysis, how does body function, how does a body fit into critical study of discourse information, and

then she says, this should be on a screen as well. "The body is itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constituted the domain of gendered subjects."

"Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender, the question that emerges "to what extent does body come into being in and through the mark(s) of gender?" How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial wealth?"

So you know, how do we move away from a understanding of body as a passive, a passive entity, and rather look at it as an organic process, that is something which is dynamic in quality as coming into being through certain markers of gender and how do we negotiate with that understanding, how do we negotiate with that knowledge.

So that is something which, you know, Butler is very careful to highlight. So how does body come into being with the marks of gender and a whole coming into being thing is obviously an activity which just sometimes subversive in quality, it is not something which Butler is highlighting very-very carefully over here.

So, and then she moves, this should be on your screen page 14. She moves on how, the whole idea of female gender more often and out stems of emergence or sense of lack, sense of absence, something which is on male enough, that something which you have seen already and before was analysis, right?

The whole idea of female or a woman being not man. The process of othering is something which is palpable, palpably which is present throughout this kind of discursive formation. So, then Butler is quoting Luce Irigaray and of course Irigaray is a very famous, she is one of the top French theorist, feminist theorist in 1960s, Irigaray (())(20:35) and you know the whole idea of a feminist writing on creature feminine, obviously then we have the idea of Kristeva's Abject, Julia Kristeva.

And the three of them really talking about the whole idea of owning a writing, of reowning or repossessing the process of writing by using a feminist model of writing, a creature feminine is that feminist model of writing the three French feminists advocate for its strongly. And so of course Butler is drawing on Irigaray to some extent and in terms of advocating on theorizing her argument

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the field of power structured in part by the imperializing gesture of dialectical appropriation exceeds and encompasses the axis of sexual difference, offering a mapping of intersecting differentials which cannot be summarily hierarchized either within the terms of phallogocentrism or any other candidate for the position of "primary condition of oppression." Rather than an exclusive tactic of masculinist signifying economies, dialectical appropriation and suppression of the Other is one tactic among many, deployed centrally but not exclusively in the service of expanding and rationalizing the masculinist domain.

The contemporary feminist debates over essentialism raise the question of the universality of female identity and masculinist oppression in other ways. Universalistic claims are based on a common or shared epistemological standpoint, understood as the articulated consciousness or shared structures of oppression or in the ostensibly trans-cultural structures of femininity, maternity, sexuality, and/or *écriture féminine*. The opening discussion in this chapter argued that this globalizing gesture has spawned a number of criticisms from women who claim that the category of "women" is normative and exclusionary and is invoked with the unmarked dimensions of class and racial privilege intact. In other words, the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of



In a move that complicates the discussion further, Luce Irigaray argues that the women constitute a paradox, if not a contradiction, within the discourse of identity itself. Woman are the "sex", which is not "one". Within a language pervasively masculinist, a phallogocentric language, woman constitutes the unrepresentable. So the whole idea of phallogocentrism is important because that phallogocentric narrative is what consolidates and creates most grand narratives.

So, you find phallogocentric of course the combination of phallogocentric and logo centric male logic and of course, according to that kind of a system, according to that kind of a narrative, woman become the unrepresentable, something which cannot be represented. Something which cannot be put into a predictable pattern. And, of course, that becomes a problem, that becomes an aberration to a large extent. And that is something Butler is celebrating, the unrepresentable quality of woman which is ought to be celebrated, adequately.

In other words, woman represent that sex that that cannot be taught, a linguistic absence and opacity, that is a very important term, the Butler is using, opacity and opacity is obviously the opposite of transparency. But the obvious question is transparent and opaque in relation to what, in relation of course for the phallogocentric principle, relation to the male logical principle.

So, to what extent are you rational, and transparent by that male logic or by the parameters of the logic, and to what extent are your problem or an aberration or an absence or an aporia to a large extent you know that unpassable being from the position of phallogocentric logic. Because, more often or not Butler goes on to say woman occupy or woman in habit that aporeatic space, the impassed space, the unrepresentable space to a large extent.

In other words, women represent the sex that cannot be thought, a linguistic absence and opacity, within the language that resists and univocal signification, the female sex constitutes the unconstrainable, and undesignatable.

In this sense, women are the sex, which is not one but multiple in opposition to Beauvoir for one woman as the designated as the other. Irigary argues that both the object, both the subject and the object are masculine mainstays of a close phallogocentric signifying economy that achieves its totalizing goal to the exclusion of feminine altogether.

Now the last bit is what is really interesting and that is the point where I will do a long little bit. Because obviously Butler's drawing on Irigary over here and she talking about the politics of producing the other as reconvenient classification, which would consolidate the supremacy and primacy of the masculine subject. So Irigary argues that both the subject and the object are masculine mainstays of a closed phallogocentric signify economy, that is a very important term, 'closed phallogocentric signifying economy'.

So, it is a close economy, is one which operates, which celebrates closures rather than open-endedness. It is phallogocentric, is full of male logic and that is the economy of signifiers, that economy of markers that are floated around in a normal normative gender dome. But of course compared to that, woman become not one but multiple and because it, it doesn't really subscribe to that economy at all.

That economy achieves its totalizing goal to the exclusion of the feminine altogether. So in an ideal condition, according to that economy, that very patriarchal economy woman should be excluded altogether as such, and that of course is part of the totalizing goals. So in order to become a grand narrative, we must be totalizing in quality.

He must, you know, what does totalizing mean? Totalizing means to take everything together in a form, into a grand narrative without looking, overlooking the little micro narratives

which went into the making of it. So we at the end, we are more interested in having this grand narrative out of it.

And in a very totalizing way, adding up the different bits and producing something which is more than the sum of the parts. And that is, that becomes a part of a celebration when it comes to grand narrative in totalization. But of course Butler is not interested in that at all like any post-modernist. She is more interested in the little narratives, the micro narratives which make meaning and different points of time. So, that is something that Butler keeps drawing on over and over again.

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Gender Trouble

cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of "women" are constructed.

Some efforts have been made to formulate coalitional politics which do not assume in advance what the content of "women" will be. They propose instead a set of dialogic encounters by which variously positioned women articulate separate identities within the framework of an emergent coalition. Clearly, the value of coalitional politics is not to be underestimated, but the very form of coalition, of an emerging and unpredictable assemblage of positions, cannot be figured in advance. Despite the clearly democratizing impulse that motivates coalition building, the coalitional theorist can inadvertently reinsert herself as sovereign of the process by trying to assert an ideal form for coalitional structures *in advance*, one that will effectively guarantee unity as the outcome. Related efforts to determine what is and is not the true shape of a dialogue, what constitutes a subject position, and, most importantly, when "unity" has been reached, can impede the self-shaping and self-limiting dynamics of coalition.



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And on page 19 which should be on the screen, she says, the opening discussion is why she is setting out a (25:33) map for this book and explaining to us very briefly, what (25:37) constitute one by one. “The opening discussion in this chapter argued that this global gesture has spawned a number of criticism woman who claim that the category of women is normative and exclusionary and is invoked with the unmarked dimensions of class and racial privilege intact.”

“In other words, the insistence upon the coherence and unity of with category of woman has effectively refused the multiplicity of, cultural, social and political intersections in which the concrete array of “woman” are constructed.” Right? So this is obviously a critique of feminism and Butler goes on to say that feminism has suffered from closure obsession and it wants to be totalizing and closure centric as well.

And that is obviously denied the multiplicity and plurality in the many feminist voices, which should be incorporated, onto this head of feminism. Because feminism is a way, the Butler talks about, is very wide middle class activity and that obviously doesn't take into account other racial, ethnic, linguistic, activities at all.

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ings. The definitional incompleteness of the category might then serve as a normative ideal relieved of coercive force.

Is “unity” necessary for effective political action? Is the premature insistence on the goal of unity precisely the cause of an ever more bitter fragmentation among the ranks? Certain forms of acknowledged fragmentation might facilitate coalitional action precisely because the “unity” of the category of women is neither presupposed nor desired. Does “unity” set up an exclusionary norm of solidarity at the level of identity that rules out the possibility of a set of actions which disrupt the very borders of identity concepts, or which seek to accomplish precisely that disruption as an explicit political aim? Without the presupposition or goal of “unity,” which is, in either case, always instituted at a conceptual level, provisional unities might emerge in the context of concrete actions that have purposes other than the articulation of identity. Without the compulsory expectation that feminist actions must be instituted from some stable, unified, and agreed-upon identity, those actions might well get a quicker start and seem more congenial to a number of “women” for whom the meaning of the category is permanently moot.

This antifoundationalist approach to coalitional politics assumes neither that “identity” is a premise nor that the shape or meaning of a



So, “The very notion of “dialogue” is culturally specific and historically bound, and while one speaker may feel secure that a conversation is happening, the other may not be sure, may be sure, it is not. The power relations, the conditions and limited dialogue possibilities need

first to be interrogated.” So, it is a very important point because it talks about dialogue being this ready quick healed solution of everything.

There is a very massive patriarch, but Butler warns us against her presupposition. Butler says that two people are in equal positions in life and society in whatever privileges. Then of course, it is not so much a dialogue. One person just happens to be interlocutor and then she says quite clearly, this is historically true, empirically true.

While one speaker may feel secure that the conversation is happening, another may feel, maybe sure it is not. The power relations, the conditions, and limit dialogic possibilities need first to be interrogated. So what are they again, so before we come to the notional dialogue, before it comes to the ontology of dialogue, we must look at the material conditions which produces dialogue in the first place, the context, the cultural context, the apparatus which produces dialogue in the first place.

Otherwise, the model of dialogue runs relapsing into a liberal model that assumes that speaking agents occupy equal positions of power and speak with the same presuppositions about what constitutes “agreement” and “unity” and indeed those are labeled to, those are the goals to be sought for, sought after.

So you know, this is a critique of the liberal movement that Butler is offering and she is saying that we must move away from this idea of, this liberal idea of dialogue, which assumes, which presupposes that everyone, everyone (())(28:09) is equal opportunities, of equal privileges, but that of course is erroneous in quality because no two people have equal privileges.

So, that not acknowledging difference, not acknowledging diversity in a dialogue or something which makes this whole idea of dialogue in a liberal space very reify for Butler. She wants to break away from that model. Okay. And of course she says that the whole idea of dialogue in this liberal common sensical sense is to achieve agreement and unity. And those are the two big goals which need to be sought.

But as you may have guessed by now Butler is more interested in disagreement and disunity. She is more interested in the fault lines of fractures which go to the making of dialogue formation. And she says, that unless we are looking, we are aware of the material conditions

which inform a dialogue, is always going to run into the risk, you know, becoming a reified category, which assumes equality, which assumes democracy, while really being the case so far, and that model is something the Butler is constantly warning us against all the time. Right?

We do not need to have the goals in mind in terms of unity and agreement. Those are not the goals which need to be sought after, rather Butler saying that disunity, disagreement, this can become more discursive in quality. This can become more subversive in quality and indeed that should be sought after in more ways than one.

If you are looking for a radical model, a radical up idea of feminism. And she continues with this in the section where this is a concluding session for this lecture, but again, this is a critique of this aspiration for unity as Butler see it where she asks us a direct question.

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Is "unity" necessary for effective political action? Is the premature insistence on the goal of unity precisely the cause of an ever more bitter fragmentation among the ranks? Certain forms of acknowledged fragmentation might facilitate coalitional action precisely because the "unity" of the category of women is neither presupposed nor desired. Does "unity" set up an exclusionary norm of solidarity at the level of identity that rules out the possibility of a set of actions which disrupt the very borders of identity concepts, or which seek to accomplish precisely that disruption as an explicit political aim? Without the presupposition or goal of "unity," which is, in either case, always instituted at a conceptual level, provisional unities might emerge in the context of concrete actions that have purposes other than the articulation of identity. Without the compulsory expectation that feminist actions must be instituted from some stable, unified, and agreed-upon identity, those actions might well get a quicker start and seem more congenial to a number of "women" for whom the meaning of the category is permanently moot.

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"Is unity necessary for effective political action"? Of course, the whole idea of unity is very liberal and bourgeois according to Butler, and that can very quickly become a grand narrative in his own right, which can take her with the radical potential for dialogues in the first place.

Is a premature insistence on the goal of unity, precisely the cause of an ever more bit of fragmentation among the ranks? So, you know, if that becomes to be all in, ends all in terms of aspiration, that can create and generate a bit of fragmentation among the ranks. Certain

forms of acknowledged fragmentation might facilitate coalitional of action precisely because a unity of the category of woman is neither presuppose nor desired.

And that is something which is very important. Acknowledged fragmentation, so we are aware of a disagreement, we agree to disagree. So there is acknowledgement is awareness of disagreement and fragmentation is something which Butler is insisting very-very carefully and she says that this might facilitate coalitional action. This precisely because the unity of the woman is neither presupposed nor desired.

So, you know, there should be no presupposition about the unity of woman as a category, nor should we look at women as a desired model, the woman as a desired model rather we should be extremely aware of the different micro models about the category of woman, about becoming a woman and becoming a woman, re-becoming a woman, unless rather than relying on one big liberal model of womanhood, which is more often than not very white, very privileged in what very middle class, and that's something Butler wants to move away from in her radical retelling of feminism.

So, does unity set up an exclusionary norm of solidarity or the level of identity, the rules out the possibility of a set of actions which disrupt the very borders of identity concepts or would seek to accomplish precisely that disruption as an explicit political aim.

Without the presupposition of goal of unity, which is in either way always instituted at a conception level, provisional unities might emerge in the context of concrete actions that have purposes rather than other than articulation of identity.

Without the compulsory expectation that feminist actions must be instituted from some stable, unified and agreed-upon identity. Those actions might well get a quicker start and seem more congenial to a number of "woman" for whom the meaning of the category is prominently moot. Right?

So the whole idea of compulsory expectation of unity must be done away according to Butler. And she said that there should be, like I mentioned quite ago, there should be an acknowledgement of the potential disunity, which might actually facilitate coalitional activities in feminism because that will make for a more inclusive model of feminism rather than making it exclusive in quality in terms of being aspiring for unity.

If you are looking for a unified territory, you know, that is very close to what, the whole idea of public space is. If you aspire for this public space narrative, which is something that I notice is a big battle Habermas and Lyotard in a postmodern politics, where Habermas, of course, looks at modernity as an unfinished project.

And he laments in a certain way, the unfinished quality of modernity. Whereas when it comes to the Lyotard, he celebrates the unfinished project of post-modernity and says, and we don't read public spaces. We need micro spaces. We need agentic spaces, which will give access to individuals at an agentic level.

And that agentic access is more important than any aspiration for our unity because you know, any idea of unity as a narrative might very quickly be coopted into grand narrative, which will then be reified readily into becoming some kind of a compulsory expectational economy, which will then obviously become a hegemonic quality.

Now, if you are really looking for a radical retelling of feminism, you must move away from this aspiration for unity and must look and acknowledge and articulate the micro categories which make woman, as a living entity, as an experiential entity and that something Butler is very much insisting on her retelling of feminist politics, especially given the current times we inhabit today.

So with that, we conclude the first lecture of Judith Butler. We move on with the text and the lectures to come. Thank you for your attention.