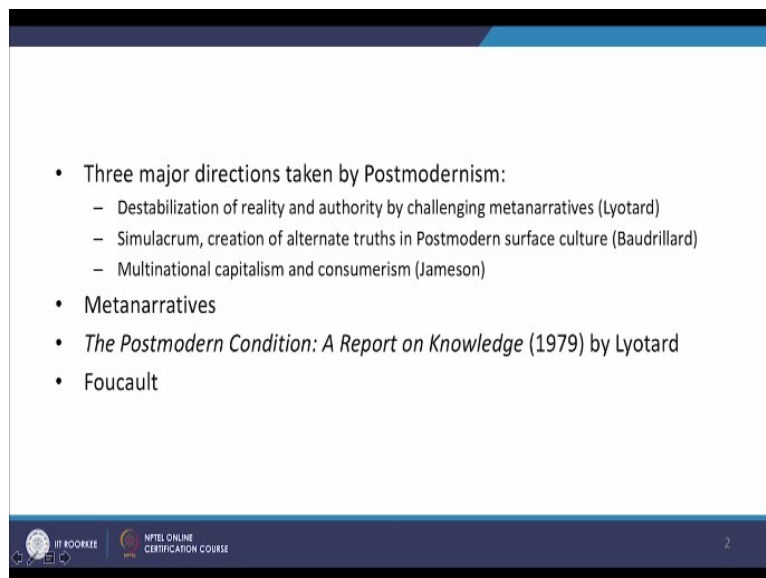


Literature, Culture and Media
Prof. Rashmi Gaur
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Lecture - 13
Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge

Dear participants, welcome to the third module of the third week. So far, we have discussed the three major directions which have been taken up by the postmodernist thought. The first one was the destabilization of reality and authority by the rejection of metanarratives and this direction was taken up particularly by Lyotard. This is also a direction which today we would be discussing in detail.

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The second direction was taken up by Baudrillard when he had talked about the simulacrum, the creation of alternate truths in postmodern surface culture. This particular direction we would be detailing later on when we shall discuss issues related with media. The third direction was taken up by Jameson when he had talked about multinational capitalism and consumerism.

Today, we shall discuss in detail what exactly metanarratives are and what exactly Lyotard has to say about this particular theoretical approach of the postmodern sensitivity and later on we would also introduce Foucault's concept of knowledge and power.

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Metanarratives

- "Meta" is Greek for "beyond"; "narrative" is a story that is characterized by its telling
 - The prefix meta means "beyond" and is here used to mean "about," and a narrative is a story.
- In the context of postmodernism, the narrative is a story that functions to legitimize power, authority and social customs.
- A grand/metanarrative is one that attempts to explain various events in culture and history, gives meaning by connecting disperse events and phenomena by appealing to some kind of universal knowledge or schema.
- Although first used earlier in the 20th century, the term was brought into prominence by Lyotard in his work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979).
- He claimed that the postmodern was characterized precisely by a mistrust of the grand narratives – progress, emancipation, Marxism, Enlightenment etc. – that had formed an essential part of Modernity.

Metanarratives if we look at this term etymologically we find that the prefix meta means beyond and here it has been used to mean about and a narrative is a story which is characterized by telling. So metanarratives are basically a story about a story. In the context of postmodernism, the narrative is a story that functions to legitimize power and authority and the social sources.

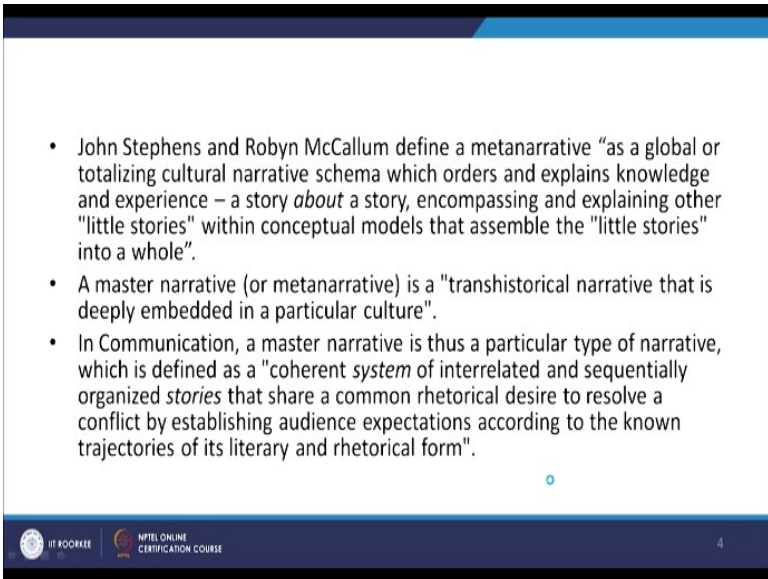
And therefore you would find that grand narratives or metanarratives had a very significant place in the modernist culture. A grand narrative is the one which is attempted to explain various events in the course of the history and culture of a particular society. It sometimes connected to disjointed events happening at different points or in the history and different cultural phenomena but then it try to put it under a particular scheme defining them as being a part of a universal knowledge or schema.

So let us say that the metanarrative attempted to give a unique identification for varied cultural phenomena in the hope that it would be able to cover up the differences also. However, we find that the postmodernist movement started to challenge this and thought that it suppresses the heterogeneity of mankind. The term metanarrative was used for the first time in the beginning of the 20th century.

But the term was brought into prominence in popularity by Lyotard in his work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* which was published in 1979. He claimed that the postmodern was characterized precisely by a mistrust of the grand narratives whether they are the grand narratives of progress, emancipation, Marxism, enlightenment, etc and

these metanarratives had formed an essential part of modernity. The modernist debate could not stand in fact if we take out the metanarratives out of it.

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The slide contains three bullet points defining metanarrative and master narrative. At the bottom, there are logos for IIT Kharagpur and NPTEL Online Certification Course, along with the number 4.

- John Stephens and Robyn McCallum define a metanarrative “as a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience – a story *about* a story, encompassing and explaining other "little stories" within conceptual models that assemble the "little stories" into a whole”.
- A master narrative (or metanarrative) is a "transhistorical narrative that is deeply embedded in a particular culture”.
- In Communication, a master narrative is thus a particular type of narrative, which is defined as a "coherent *system* of interrelated and sequentially organized *stories* that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form”.

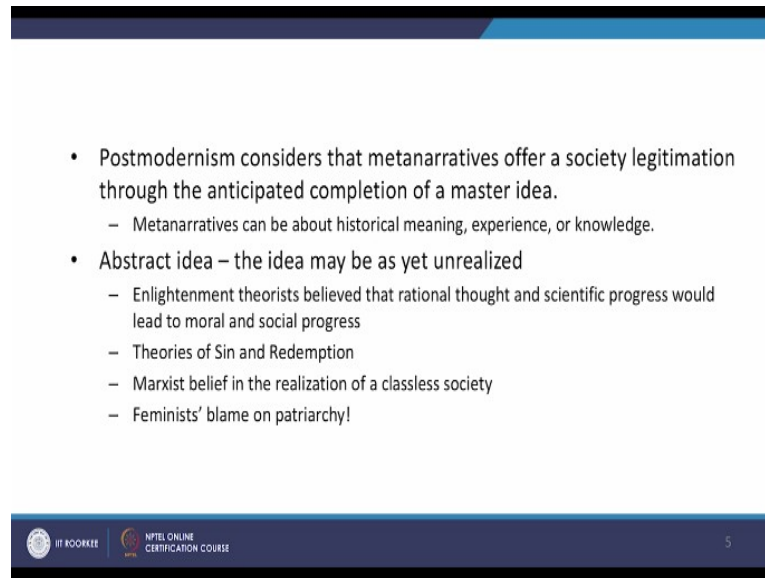
Here I would quote from John Stephens and Robyn McCallum who define metanarratives as “a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience”. It is according to them again a story about a story encompassing and explaining other little story within a conceptual model that assembles the little stories into a whole. So we can say that a master narrative or a metanarrative or a grand narrative is a transhistorical narrative that is deeply embedded in a particular culture.

In communication, we also think that a master narrative is a particular type of narrative which is defined as a coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form. Now this point is pretty interesting.

Because it takes up two simultaneously different aspects related with our understanding. On the one hand, a metanarrative attempts to define a particular system, puts together varied experiences within the cultural history of a society and tries to explain them by arranging them somehow in a particular sequence in a particular order. Simultaneously, it also encourages people to have a particularly predefined notion as far as their understanding and related expectations are concerned.

So it modulates not only what knowledge is, it also modulates and impacts the people's understanding or what that knowledge should be. So let us say that the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form is a particular aspect which is taken up later on by the postmodernist criticism in order to define their incredulity towards metanarratives.

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- Postmodernism considers that metanarratives offer a society legitimation through the anticipated completion of a master idea.
 - Metanarratives can be about historical meaning, experience, or knowledge.
- Abstract idea – the idea may be as yet unrealized
 - Enlightenment theorists believed that rational thought and scientific progress would lead to moral and social progress
 - Theories of Sin and Redemption
 - Marxist belief in the realization of a classless society
 - Feminists' blame on patriarchy!

Postmodernism considers that metanarratives offer a society legitimation through the anticipated completion of a master idea. These metanarratives maybe about historical meanings, some random cultural experiences or some knowledge bases but they try to provide a legitimation by anticipating that this master idea would be completed. Interestingly, this master idea exists in abstraction.

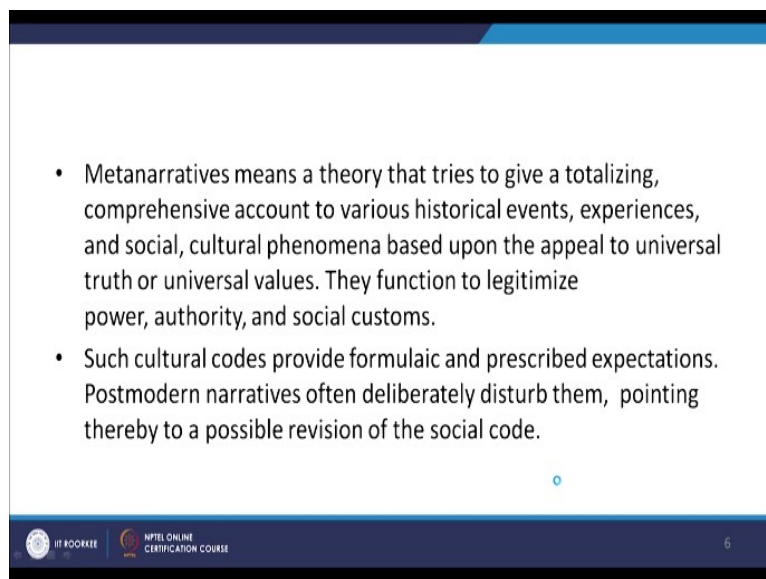
And the idea may yet be unrealized but they provide the hope that this particular metanarrative is in the interest of the people by defining and conditioning their trajectories of expectations. Various examples have been given about metanarratives from time-to-time. For example, enlightenment theories believe that rational thought and scientific progress would lead to more moral and social progress.

This is something which is a metanarrative in which the modernist philosopher believed in. The Christian theory of sin and redemption which has continued throughout the centuries is also a metanarrative which conditions people to think in a particular way. The Marxist belief in the realization of a classless society. Their belief that the proletariat would roll that the state will wither away is also a metanarrative in which the Marxist believe.

Another example of metanarrative which is doing the round nowadays is that of feminist blame on patriarchy for their condition, the subservient condition in the society. I have taken this example because I find it very interesting and I also find that it is being more and more included in the Western theories as well as in the theoretical approaches taken up by various Indian critics.

During our discussions on feminist debates on our debates on gender studies, we would take it up again as an example.

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- Metanarratives means a theory that tries to give a totalizing, comprehensive account to various historical events, experiences, and social, cultural phenomena based upon the appeal to universal truth or universal values. They function to legitimize power, authority, and social customs.
- Such cultural codes provide formulaic and prescribed expectations. Postmodern narratives often deliberately disturb them, pointing thereby to a possible revision of the social code.

Metanarratives means a theory that tries to give a totalizing comprehensive account to various historical events, experiences and social cultural phenomena which are based upon the appeal to universal truth or universal values. They function to legitimize power, authority and social customs. Such cultural codes provide prescribed expectations to the people; they provide a formula for life for understanding it.

So these prescribed expectations condition the thinking of the people also. Postmodern narratives often deliberately disturb them, problematize them pointing thereby to a possible revision of the social code and herein lies the significance of the postmodernist approach towards human condition because they tell us that the revision in accepted beliefs is possible not only individually but also collectively.

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- In "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" (1979), Lyotard highlights the increasing skepticism of the postmodern condition towards the totalizing nature of metanarratives and their reliance on some form of "transcendent and universal truth"
- Lyotard and other thinkers like Foucault view this as a broadly positive development for a number of reasons:
 - Attempts to construct grand theories tend to unduly dismiss the naturally existing chaos and disorder of the universe, the power of the individual event.
 - Ignore the heterogeneity or variety of human existence, metanarratives are created and reinforced by power structures and are therefore untrustworthy.
- "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. ... The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language ... Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside?"

In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* which came out in 1979, Lyotard has highlighted the increasing skepticism of the postmodern condition towards the totalizing nature of metanarratives and their reliance on some form of transcendent and universal values. Lyotard and other postmodernist critics particularly Foucault view this as a broadly positive development for a number of reasons.

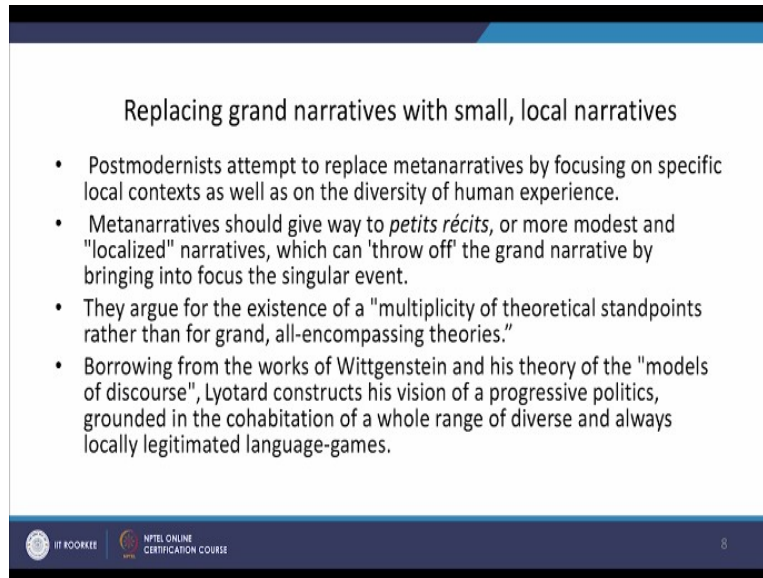
Firstly, they say that they attempt to construct grand theories tend to unduly dismiss the naturally existing chaos and disorder of the universe which they view as a primary condition of the human state. So according to them, the modernist metanarratives try to ignore the basic chaos of human condition. Secondly, they also say that the metanarratives also ignore the heterogeneity of human existence.

Because no human existence, no human experience can be a copy of a different human experience. So the uniqueness and the essential heterogeneity of human experience has been side tracked absolutely by the metanarratives. So metanarratives according to the postmodern philosophers are created and reinforced by power structures and therefore they are basically untrustworthy.

Towards the end of this slide, I have quoted Lyotard and I would read "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language where after the metanarratives can legitimacy reside?"

So the postmodernist attempt is to replace grand narratives and metanarratives with small local narratives and that is why it is said that postmodernism talks about the proliferation of smaller truths.

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Replacing grand narratives with small, local narratives

- Postmodernists attempt to replace metanarratives by focusing on specific local contexts as well as on the diversity of human experience.
- Metanarratives should give way to *petits récits*, or more modest and "localized" narratives, which can 'throw off' the grand narrative by bringing into focus the singular event.
- They argue for the existence of a "multiplicity of theoretical standpoints rather than for grand, all-encompassing theories."
- Borrowing from the works of Wittgenstein and his theory of the "models of discourse", Lyotard constructs his vision of a progressive politics, grounded in the cohabitation of a whole range of diverse and always locally legitimated language-games.

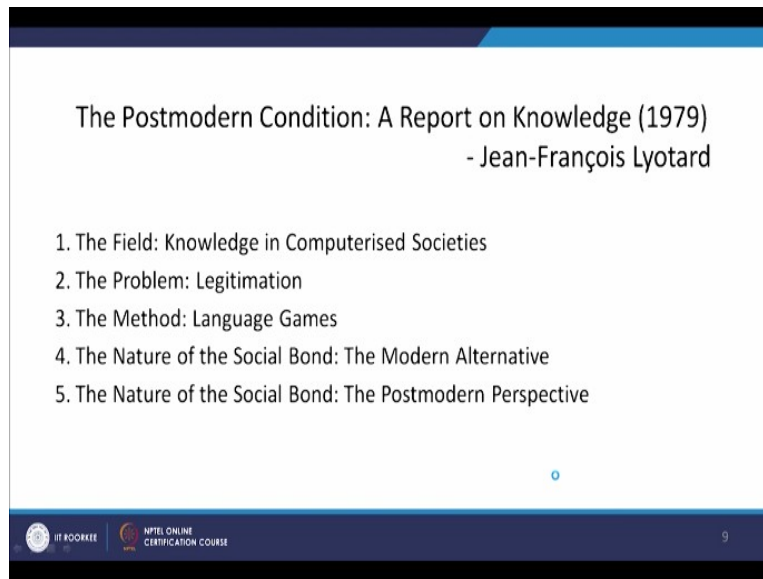
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Postmodernist attempt to replace metanarratives by focusing on a specific local context as well as on the diversity of human experience. Metanarratives should give way to *petits récits* or more modest and localized narratives which can throw off the grand narrative by bringing into focus the singular event.

The postmodernist thinkers also argue that the existence of a multiplicity of theoretical standpoints is better than the grand, all-encompassing theories because only then we would be able to cater to the heterogeneity and flux of the human experience. At this point, we can also say that Lyotard has also borrowed from the works of Wittgenstein, particularly his theory of the models of discourse.

Wherein Lyotard constructs his vision of a progressive politics, grounded in the cohabitation of a whole range of diverse and always locally legitimize language-games.

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In his work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard has basically talked about 5 different arguments and here I am listing them. The first is ‘The Field: Knowledge in Computerized Societies’ where he has talked about the two types of knowledge. The second part of his essay is based on ‘Legitimation’. The third is ‘The Method’ where he has talked in detail about the Language Games.

The fourth is about ‘The Nature of the Social Bond in a Modern Society’. The fifth is about ‘The Nature of the Social Bond in The Postmodern Perspective’. Lyotard has taken up a futuristic argument and therein lies the significance of his work. However, we find that the examples which he has quoted in his work are rooted in a particular point of history. So even if the examples he has cited or rooted in a particular moment in a history, they do not erode the significance of the futuristic argument of Lyotard.

And it is only now that we have started to see the significance of his work because now we are trying to we have started to realize it at this point in the 21st century. I always approach Lyotard’s work with the same awe in the same reverence with which I have approached Orwell’s seminal work *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It has the same futuristic, prophetic argument in a very compelling manner.

So now let us look through the arguments with which Lyotard has started to discuss the idea of postmodernist incredulity.

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1. The Field: Knowledge in Computerised Societies

- The status of knowledge is altered as societies enter the postindustrial age and cultures enter the postmodern age.
- This transition has been under way since at least the end of the 1950s, which for Europe marks the completion of reconstruction.
- The pace is faster or slower depending on the country, and within countries it varies according to the sector of activity: it makes sketching an overview difficult.
- (Movement of Waves)

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Lyotard says that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter the postindustrial age and the cultures enter the postmodern age. In order to understand what he wants to say about the postindustrial age, we will have to refer to Jameson's arguments about a particular development in our economic arena. He has equated postindustrial age with the postmodern culture also. He also says that this transition has started to occur right from the 1950s which for Europe marks the completion of reconstruction also.

He also says that the pace maybe faster or slower depending on the cultural manifestations of a particular people and also within countries it may vary according to the sector of activity, it makes sketching and overview difficult. Here I would also refer to a sociologist's way of explaining the impact of a particular theory.

The sociologists often employ the movement of the waves on the seashore to explain the significance and the impact of a particular theoretical movement. In the wave theory, what happens when the first wave strikes on the seashore, it brings in energy and it takes away so much of garbage which was littered on the seashore but then some residuals are still there. The second wave comes and it also takes away certain more garbage, brings in maybe something new.

But then some residual is always there and this process continues. So the impact of a particular theory; howsoever, enormous it may be it would always vary according to the variations within culture, economy and social perceptions of the people.

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- Scientific knowledge
- Narrative knowledge
- Scientific knowledge is not complete in itself
- Narrative knowledge is important as it defines a set of rules which are basic and crucial to social bonds in different cultures
- Both types are necessary as they complement each other.

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Lyotard when he refers to knowledge, talks about two different types of knowledge, ‘the scientific knowledge’ and ‘the narrative knowledge’. According to him, the scientific knowledge is not complete in itself. Narrative knowledge is also important as it defines a set of rules which are basic and crucial to the formation of social bonds in different culture. Lyotard’s argument begins by stating that these two different types of knowledge are complementary to each other.

None of them is supreme to other but they are complementary and they are important for understanding our sociological issues.

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Object of Study

- Scientific knowledge - a kind of discourse.
- for the last forty years the “leading” sciences and technologies have become increasingly concerned with language:
 - phonology and theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics, computers and their languages, problems of translation and the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages, problems of information storage and data banks, telematics and the perfection of intelligent terminals, to paradoxology.
- The facts speak for themselves (and this list is not exhaustive).
- Technological changes have a strong influence on knowledge
- Global competition for power shall centre on knowledge

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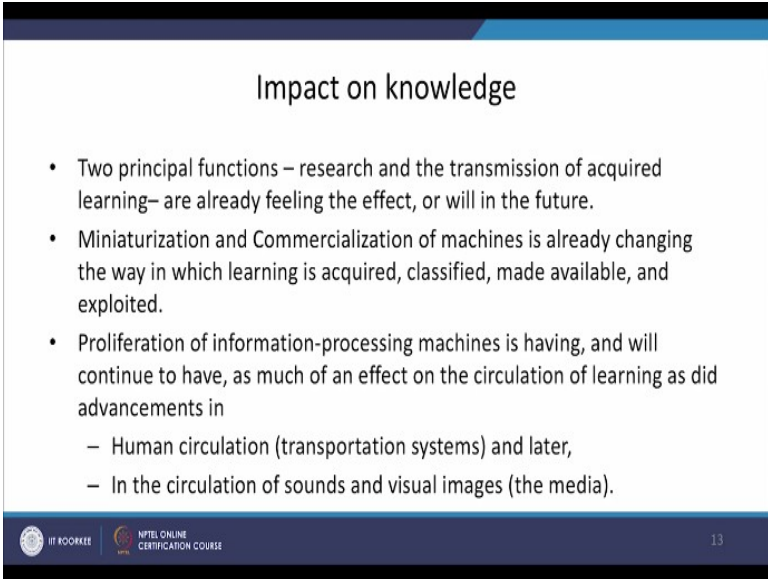
Scientific knowledge is a type of a discourse and for the last 40 years we find that leading sciences and technologies have become increasingly concerned with the issues of language

and Lyotard has given many examples. For example, phonology and theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics, computers and their language, problems of translation and the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages, problems of information storage and data banks, telematics and the perfection of intelligent terminals, to paradoxology.

This list is not exclusive and therefore we find that some other aspects of newer research fields can also be added but these facts speak for themselves that the scientific investigation is also involved with an investigation into the capabilities of language. How compatible the languages are with computers for example. So let us say that technology has a strong influence on knowledge.

And global competition according to Lyotard for power shall center on knowledge, how do we produce it, how do we circulate it and how do we equip ourselves with it.

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The slide is titled "Impact on knowledge" and contains the following text:

- Two principal functions – research and the transmission of acquired learning– are already feeling the effect, or will in the future.
- Miniaturization and Commercialization of machines is already changing the way in which learning is acquired, classified, made available, and exploited.
- Proliferation of information-processing machines is having, and will continue to have, as much of an effect on the circulation of learning as did advancements in
 - Human circulation (transportation systems) and later,
 - In the circulation of sounds and visual images (the media).

At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for IIT Kharagpur and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the number 13.

When Lyotard talks about the impact on knowledge, he basically talks about two principal functions, research and the transmission of acquired learning and we can say that we already have started to feel the impact of technological development in these two fields. He also says that miniaturization and commercialization of machines is already changing the way in which learning is acquired, classified, made available and exploited.

Miniaturization is related with the ease with which we can use a technology. A beautiful example is the size of the computers are only. In 1980s in Indian universities, the computer

room used to be a one big hall and entry was prohibited. It used to be a very big affair but gradually we find that we moved to desktops, then laptops, smaller and smaller laptops, tablets and now people are talking about technology in which the human dress, the clothes we wear our own skin can also act as a computer terminal.

So you would find that miniaturization is related with the ease with which we can use a technology and then we can use it for acquiring and passing on a knowledge base. Commercialization is related with technologies being more and more cost effective. If it is cheaper and affordable, we find that people can use it with better ease. It would have a bigger market.

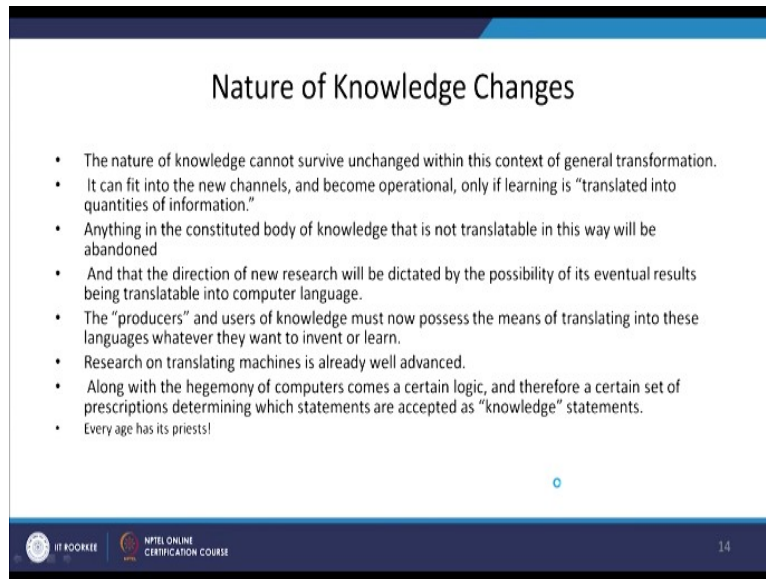
So if the technology is affordable, it can be accessible by the majority of the people and affordable database and affordable or easy and free Wi-Fi makes it very easy to access. It results in proliferation of information and also in a proliferation of information processing machines and this proliferation will have an impact on the way we circulate our learning. Lyotard has compared this particular advancement in knowledge with two other past events.

He has compared them with human circulation that is transportation systems and later on the circulation of sounds and visual images that is the circulation of the media. It would be an interesting point to note that during the times of East India Company's colonization of India, transportation from Bombay to London required 3 months at least.

The sea voyage took 3 months and therefore a person who wanted to go to a different city and come back to a different city had to have at least 8 or 9 month's time to complete this journey. Not so anymore and it has revolutionized our history. Similar to the circulation of sounds and visual images has also changed the way we think. For example, gone are the days of postal delays gone are the days when people had to prepare a copy in their own handwriting or with a piece of carbon so that the knowledge can be circulated.

These inventions are so tech-savvy and the masses are so eager to adapt them that we adapt them with an ease which is unparalleled. With the same ease, we have also exist the technology, its miniaturization and its commercialization and it brings about imperceptible changes in our psyche also. With this we find that digitalization has changed the nature of knowledge.

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Nature of Knowledge Changes

- The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation.
- It can fit into the new channels, and become operational, only if learning is "translated into quantities of information."
- Anything in the constituted body of knowledge that is not translatable in this way will be abandoned
- And that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language.
- The "producers" and users of knowledge must now possess the means of translating into these languages whatever they want to invent or learn.
- Research on translating machines is already well advanced.
- Along with the hegemony of computers comes a certain logic, and therefore a certain set of prescriptions determining which statements are accepted as "knowledge" statements.
- Every age has its priests!

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The nature of knowledge cannot survive on changed in this context. In fact, if knowledge has to survive, it has to be digitalized now. It has to fit into the new channels, it has to become operational, it has to have a capability to be translated into the mediums of computers or digitalization. Otherwise, it loses its value.

Anything in the constituted body of knowledge that is not translatable into the latest medium of data transfer will be abandoned very soon by the people and that the direction of new research will also be directed not only by the research area in which we want to investigate but also it would be condition that affected by its possibility of being translated and presented into the latest data transfer medium.

And the eventual results should also be compatible with computer language transfers. So the producers and uses of knowledge must now possess not only that knowledge but also the means of translating their knowledge into these languages whatever they want to invent or learn. So knowledge which is not commensurate with the latest technology is no knowledge at all and all of us are looking at the scenario now about 70 years after the publication of Lyotard's work.

Research on translating machines is already well advanced and along with the hegemony of computers comes a certain logic and a certain set of prescriptions determining which statements can be accepted as being true knowledge. So which statements are knowledge statements, who decides it, who are the people to decide it, so let us say that every age has its

priests so Lyotard and later on Foucault started to look at this issue about who are the priests to look at this issue about who are the priests of modern day knowledge based civilization.

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**Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself,
loses its “use-value”**

- Exteriorization of knowledge with respect to the “knower.”
- The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training (*Bildung*) of minds, or even of individuals, is becoming obsolete.
- The relationships of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use, is now tending to assume the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume – the form of value.
- Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production; in both cases, the goal is exchange.

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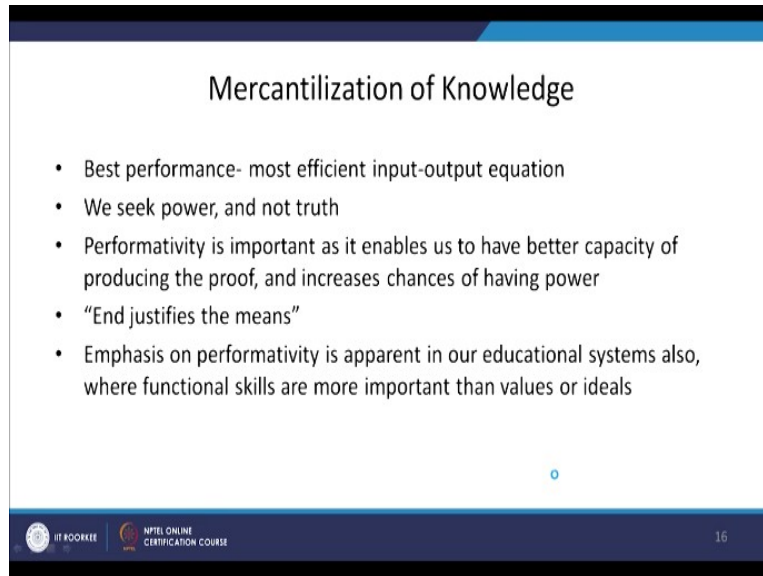
So knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its use-value. Lyotard says that exteriorization of knowledge with respect to the knower has brought about fundamental shifts in the way we understand knowledge and its transfer. There was a time when it was considered that the acquisition of knowledge is related with the training of the mind. Sometimes it was considered that the individual has to be trained in order to have certain knowledge.

So this idea has become absolutely obsolete now. We find that the relationship of the suppliers and the users of the knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending to resume the form which is already been taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume that is the form of value.

Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold; it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production and in both cases the goal is exchanged. So knowledge and itself does not have any value. The value lies in the salability of knowledge and in order to be salable, our knowledge has to be tech-savvy; it has to be translated into the latest method of easy and immediate communication.

So these changes in knowledge structures are imperceptible but they bring about changes in our culture and cognition which have far reaching consequences. In a way we can say that knowledge today has become a commodity.

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The slide is titled "Mercantilization of Knowledge" and features a list of five bullet points. The slide has a blue header and footer. The footer contains the IIT Kharagpur logo, the text "NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE", and the number "16".

- Best performance- most efficient input-output equation
- We seek power, and not truth
- Performativity is important as it enables us to have better capacity of producing the proof, and increases chances of having power
- "End justifies the means"
- Emphasis on performativity is apparent in our educational systems also, where functional skills are more important than values or ideals

So mercantilization of knowledge also brings about many changes. So now since knowledge in itself is not a value so the best performance is something which we equate with being knowledgeable and therefore we do not look for knowledge which has a value in itself but we look for knowledge which has the best input-output equation which is most efficient in its translatable capabilities.

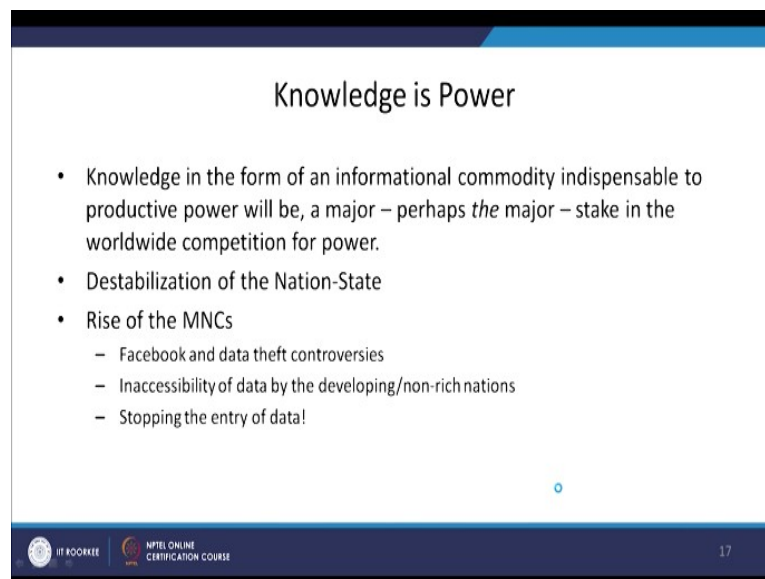
Postmodernist thinkers feel that we seek power, we do not seek truth in today's world and therefore performativity has become important as it enables us to have better capacity of producing the proof and increases chances of having power. The modernist versions of our culture used to have a debate on whether the end justifies the means or whether the means justify the end.

And we find that the whole philosophical approaches have been developed around these two questions but in the postmodernist times we find that the debate itself has become redundant as end definitely now justifies the end. The emphasis is not on knowledge, on finding the truth, on investing one's brain, one's faculties, one's time in finding out what has a value but on finding out what is immediate available knowledge.

So this emphasis on performativity is apparent unfortunately in different fields of our knowledge based systems. For example, the university and school educations where functional skills have become more important than values or ideals. So when Lyotard says that knowledge is power, then we have to understand that knowledge in a particular form is power whereas if knowledge is not transmittable, it becomes redundant.

So in order to be a power, knowledge also should have a translatable capability, it can be translated, it should be translated into the easiest and the fastest technology.

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The slide is titled "Knowledge is Power" and contains the following bullet points:

- Knowledge in the form of an informational commodity indispensable to productive power will be, a major – perhaps *the* major – stake in the worldwide competition for power.
- Destabilization of the Nation-State
- Rise of the MNCs
 - Facebook and data theft controversies
 - Inaccessibility of data by the developing/non-rich nations
 - Stopping the entry of data!

At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for "IIT KOOBEE" and "NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE" on the left, and the number "17" on the right.

So knowledge in the form of an informational commodity is indispensable to productive power and perhaps this type of a knowledge would be the major stake in the worldwide competition for power. Lyotard has also preconceived the destabilization of the nation state and the rise of the MNCs and some of the concerns he had raised are very much evident now in our today's world.

For example, the recent controversies about Facebook and the data theft. Inaccessibility of data by the developing in non-rich nations particularly if a developing country wants to access data, in the European Union, it would have to pay a hefty sum. Similarly, stopping the entry of data by certain countries like China so you would find that very soon what Lyotard had said about a particular type of knowledge being power has become a reality.

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- It is not hard to visualize learning circulating along the same lines as money.
 - Instead of for its “educational” value or political (administrative, diplomatic, military) importance; the pertinent distinction would no longer be between knowledge and ignorance.
 - But rather, as is the case with money, between “payment knowledge” and “investment knowledge”
 - Units of knowledge exchanged in a daily maintenance framework (the reconstitution of the work force, “survival”).
- Versus
- Funds of knowledge dedicated to optimizing the performance of a project.

It is not hard to visualize that learning would circulate the same lines as money. Instead of for its educational value or political importance, the pertinent distinction would no longer be between knowledge and ignorance. Earlier, the world which was considered to be the opposite to knowledge was ignorance but now we would find that we would start discussing between the differences of the payment knowledge and investment knowledge.

So units of knowledge which are exchanged in a daily maintenance framework say for example the constitution of the workforce, the survival skills, etc versus the investment knowledge which would be funds of knowledge dedicated to optimizing the performance of a project. In the second part of his essay, Lyotard has talked about the problem that is legitimation.

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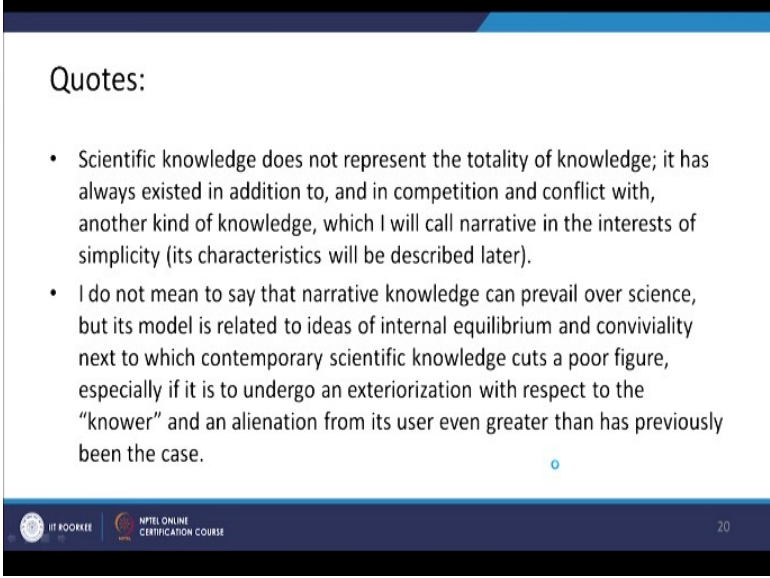
2. The Problem: Legitimation

- “The computerization of society”
- Its effects on public power and civil institutions
- Barring economic stagnation or a general recession
 - resulting, for example, from a continued failure to solve the world’s energy problems
- there is a good chance that this scenario will come to pass: it is hard to see what other direction contemporary technology could take as an alternative to the computerization of society
- Absence of alternatives

He has already talked about the computerization of society in the first part of his essay. Now he is talking about how the computerization of society leaves its impact on public power and civil institutions. He also thinks that unless and until there is a major setback to technological efforts this computerization would continue for some more time and these problems he has listed as major economic stagnation or general recession resulting for example from a continued failure to solve the world's energy problems, etc.

But he also is aware of the fact that technology will also take a step further which would also make computers redundant. However, he is not able to foresee the direction but he is very sure of the fact that this situation could also change because technology would progress still further but he was in no position to suggest any alternatives.

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Quotes:

- Scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge; it has always existed in addition to, and in competition and conflict with, another kind of knowledge, which I will call narrative in the interests of simplicity (its characteristics will be described later).
- I do not mean to say that narrative knowledge can prevail over science, but its model is related to ideas of internal equilibrium and conviviality next to which contemporary scientific knowledge cuts a poor figure, especially if it is to undergo an exteriorization with respect to the "knower" and an alienation from its user even greater than has previously been the case.

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These are the two quotes which I have taken up for defining scientific knowledge and the narrative knowledge. We have already covered the gist of this particular slide.

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- When we examine the current status of scientific knowledge at a time when science seems more completely subordinated to the prevailing powers than ever before and, along with the new technologies, is in danger of becoming a major stake in their conflicts – the question of double legitimation, far from receding into the background, necessarily comes to the fore.
- For it appears in its most complete form, that of reversion, revealing that knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question:
 - who decides what knowledge is,
 - and who knows what needs to be decided?
- In the computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever a question of government.

So when we examine the current status of scientific knowledge at a time when science seems more completely subordinated to the prevailing powers than ever before and along with the new technologies is in danger of becoming a major stake in their conflicts. The questions of double legitimation far from receding into the background have come to the foreground again. For it appears that knowledge and power are ultimately the two sides of the same question.

So Lyotard also says that knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question. The questions we will have to address exactly now or who decides what knowledge is and who knows what needs to be decided. So in the computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever a question of government and power.

When Lyotard talks about the language games in the third part of his article, he thinks that the different discourses of knowledge, different discourses of languages can be compared with a game of chess.

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3. The Method: Language Games

- Different Discourses
- Game of chess
- Each of them has its own rules, structures, moves- none is privileged
- Different language games struggle against diversity and conflict
- Metanarratives have holes which are indicated through Language Games

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As in a game of chess, each particular component has its own rules, structures and moves and none is privileged. In the same way, different language games also a struggle against diversity and conflict. Metanarratives also have many holes which postmodernist critics have always pointed out and they can also be indicated through various language games.

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Language Games :Wittgenstein

- Ludwig Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), puts forth the view that conceptual confusions surrounding language use are at the root of most philosophical problems; the problems are traceable to a set of related assumptions about the nature of language, which themselves presuppose a particular conception of the essence of language.
 - Refers to various types of language use and its actions into which the language is woven
 - Wittgenstein develops this discussion of various types of utterances into the key notion of a language game
- The central component of language games is that they are uses of language, and language is used in multifarious ways.
 - Words – games, water. A word has no meaning apart from its use within a language-games.
 - Sentences : The sentence is only meaningful when it is used to say something, in a context
- What he means by this term is that each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put – in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to move them.

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This idea of language games has been borrowed basically from Wittgenstein by Lyotard. Ludwig Wittgenstein has mentioned this particular phrase in his book *Philosophical Investigations* which was published in 1953. He has put forth the view that conceptual confusion surrounding language use are at the root of most philosophical problems and the problems are traceable to a set of related assumptions about the nature of language which themselves presuppose a particular conception or the essence of language.

He has also referred to various types of language uses and the actions of language in which the whole tapestry is woven. He has developed the discussion of various types of utterances into the key notion of a language game. The central component of language games is that they are uses of language and of course language is used in a multifarious way. We can use a word or a sentence to mean so many different ways so many different interpretations.

The word games can also have a multiplicity of meanings and connotations. We use this word as a part of war games, board games, language games example. The word water can also have immense interpretations. One may say water because one wants to drink it, one may use water to want somebody else that there is maybe some poison in it. So a word has no meaning according to Wittgenstein apart from its use within a language game.

In the same way, a sentence is only meaningful when it is used to say something in a particular context. What he means what Wittgenstein means by this term is that each of the various categories of utterances can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put in exactly the same way as a game of chess is defined by a set of rules. Determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words the proper way to move them.

So if one knows what is the proper way to play the language games the language would become power for him. Here we can give this illustration by a dean's statement that the university is opened. When the dean says that the university is open then it can be taken up as a denotative sentence made in a context of a conversation or an interview.

It may also have different meanings for example the university is open, it is running smoothly or the university is open even though it should not be open normally in a particular period.

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- Dean: "University is open"
- The first denotative utterance made in the context of a conversation or an interview
- It positions
 - its sender (the person who utters the statement),
 - its addressee (the person who receives it),
 - and its referent (what the statement deals with) in a specific way
- The utterance places (and exposes) the sender in the position of "knower" (he knows what the situation is with the university),
 - the addressee is put in the position of having to give or refuse his assent
 - and the referent itself is handled in a way unique to denotatives, as something that demands to be correctly identified and expressed by the statement that refers to it.

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It positions of sender the person who utters this statement its addressee the person who receives it or who is listening to it and its referent what the statement deals with in a specific way. The utterance places and exposes the sender in the position of knower; he knows what the situation is with the university.

The addressee is put in a position of having to give or refuse his assent and the referent itself is handled in a way which is unique to denotatives, as something that demands to be correctly identified and expressed by the statement that refers to it. So the single statement may have a variety of meanings and then herein we find that the language games come into play.

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Three observations about language games

- The first is that their rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimation
 - but are the object of a contract, explicit, or not, between players (which is not to say that the players invent the rules).
- The second is that if there are no rules, there is no game
 - that even a minuscule modification of one rule alters the nature of the game
 - that a "move" or utterance that does not satisfy the rules does not belong to the game they define.
- Thirdly, every utterance should be thought of as a "move" in a game.

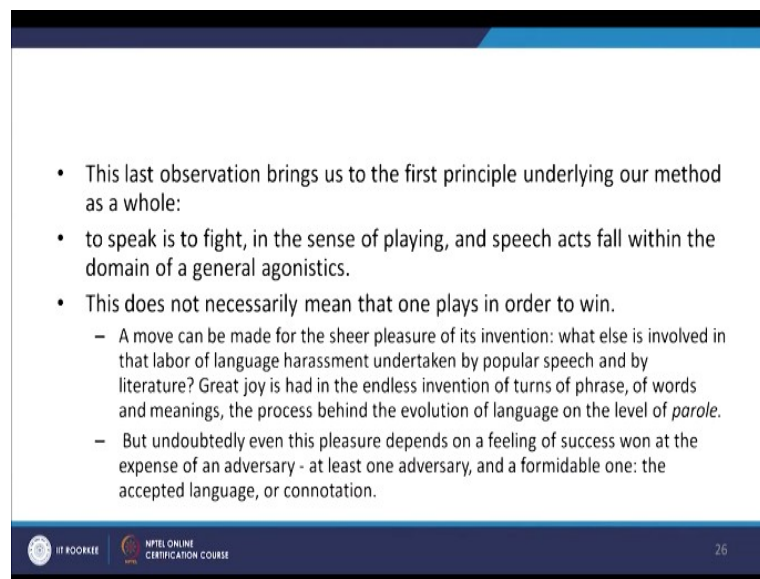
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Liotard has made three observations about language games. The first is that the rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimation but they are the object of a contract, explicit

or not between players which is not to say that the players invent the rules. The second is that if there are no rules, there is no game and even a minor modification of one rule alters the nature of the game.

Similarly, a move or utterance that does not satisfy the rules does not belong to the game they define and thirdly every utterance should be thought of as a move in a game. The last observation brings us to the first principle underlying our method as a whole.

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The slide contains the following text:

- This last observation brings us to the first principle underlying our method as a whole:
- to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics.
- This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win.
 - A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention: what else is involved in that labor of language harassment undertaken by popular speech and by literature? Great joy is had in the endless invention of turns of phrase, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the level of *parole*.
 - But undoubtedly even this pleasure depends on a feeling of success won at the expense of an adversary - at least one adversary, and a formidable one: the accepted language, or connotation.

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To speak is to fight in the sense of playing and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics. This does not mean necessarily that one is playing in order to win. Sometimes people may play the language games for the sheer play of inventing new language games and then you Lyotard gives example of literature, popular speech, irony, etc. In the same way, he says that even this pleasure depends on the feeling of success won at the expense of an adversary.

There has to be an adversary and if it is a formidable one, the accepted game would be more fruitful and fulfilling to the players.

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4. The Nature of the Social Bond : The Modern Alternative

- If we wish to discuss knowledge in the most highly developed contemporary society, we must answer the preliminary question of what methodological representation to apply to that society.
- Simplifying to the extreme, it is fair to say that in principle there have been, at least over the last half-century, two basic representational models for society:
 - either society forms a functional whole,
 - or it is divided in two.
- An illustration of the first model is suggested by Talcott Parsons (at least the postwar Parsons) and his school, and of the second, by the Marxist current (all of its component schools, whatever differences they may have, accept both the principle of class struggle and dialectics as a duality operating within society – Haves and Have-nots).

In the fourth part, of his essay Lyotard has discussed the nature of the social bond. He says that if we have to discuss language in the most highly developed contemporary society, we should also be able to answer a one underlying question of what methodological representation can be apply to the society. How do we view our society, is it an organized whole or is it not?

Lyotard has simply said that there have been over the last half century two basic representational models for the society. First is either society forms a functional whole and this idea has been suggested particularly by Talcott Parsons or it is divided in two and this idea of a binary of a dyad is accepted by the Marxist people. Despite their differences in other approaches, all Marxist Schools believe in the principle of class struggle and dialectics as a duality operating within society.

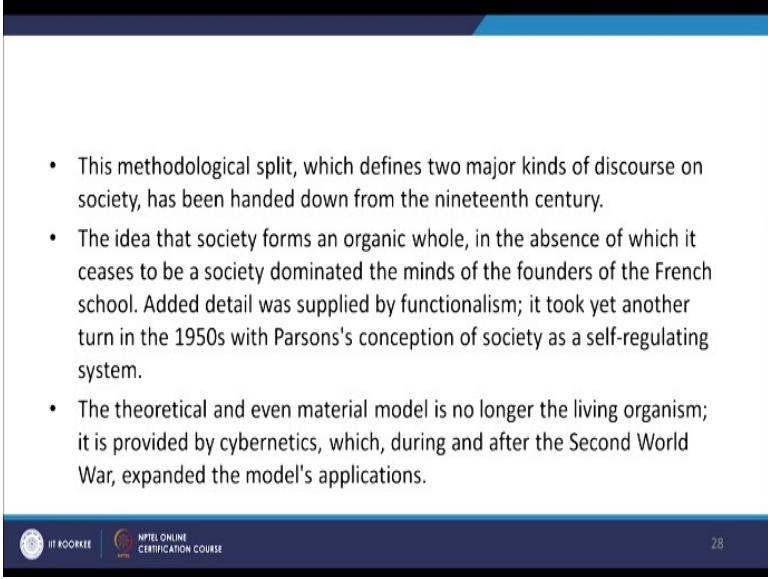
And this is a dialectics of the haves and the have not's. So we do have two primary models, either it can form as a functional whole or it can be divided in two. Talcott Parsons, a faculty of the Harvard University is particularly known as a structural functionalist and he had said that in order to function one society has to have stability and order and uniformity, it should have a common value system in order to survive.

A common value system also leads us to a stratification because then a person is just in position in society at a particular level on the basis of one's adherence to common values. One who performs well and follows all the common things is given a particular slot and the

person who does not perform equally good is placed at the bottom also. There are certain dangers also which are inbuilt in Parsons argument.

For example, in this type of a structure, obedience and adherence to moral values common values becomes more important than efficiency and sometimes individual efficiency is also surrendered.

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The slide contains three bullet points discussing the evolution of societal models. The first point mentions a methodological split from the 19th century. The second point discusses the idea of society as an organic whole, influenced by the French school and functionalism, with a turn in the 1950s towards Parsons's self-regulating system. The third point states that the living organism model is replaced by cybernetics after the Second World War.

- This methodological split, which defines two major kinds of discourse on society, has been handed down from the nineteenth century.
- The idea that society forms an organic whole, in the absence of which it ceases to be a society dominated the minds of the founders of the French school. Added detail was supplied by functionalism; it took yet another turn in the 1950s with Parsons's conception of society as a self-regulating system.
- The theoretical and even material model is no longer the living organism; it is provided by cybernetics, which, during and after the Second World War, expanded the model's applications.



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This methodological split which defines two major kinds of discourse in our society have been handed down from the 19th century and this idea that society forms an organic whole in the absence of which it ceases to be a society dominated the minds of the founders of the French school. Added detail was supplied by the functionalism and it took yet another turn in the 1950s with Parsons concept of society as a self-regulating system.

The theoretical and even material model is no longer the living organism. The living organism is nowadays provided by cybernetics which during and after the Second World War expanded the model's application.

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- In Parson's work, the principle behind the system is still optimistic:
 - It corresponds to the stabilisation of the growth economies and societies of abundance under the aegis of a moderate welfare state.
- In the work of contemporary German theorists, *systemtheorie* is technocratic, even cynical, not to mention despairing; the harmony between the needs and hopes of individuals or groups and the functions guaranteed by the system is now only a secondary component of its functioning.
 - The true goal of the system, the reason it programs itself like a computer, is the optimisation of the global relationship between input and output, in other words, performativity.
 - Even when its rules are in the process of changing and innovations are occurring, even when its dysfunctions (such as strikes, crises, unemployment, or political revolutions) inspire hope and lead to belief in an alternative, even then what is actually taking place is only an internal readjustment, and its result can be no more than an increase in the system's "viability."
- The only alternative to this kind of performance improvement is entropy, or decline.



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In Parson's work, the principle behind the system could still be considered as basically optimistic because it corresponded to the stabilization of the growth economies and the societies of abundance under the scheme of a moderately welfare state. In the work of contemporary German theorists; however, it took the shape of a technocratic and almost cynical power.

And this harmony between the needs and hopes of individuals in groups was not a guarantee that it would be accepted by the system. So the individual harmony in the harmony of an individual within a system becomes secondary. It does not have the primacy as a aim. The true goal of the system, the reason it programs itself like a computer is the optimization of the global relationship between input and output and in other words performativity.

Even when its rules are in the process of changing and innovations are occurring, even when its dysfunctions for example strikes, crises, unemployment, political revolutions take place and they may also inspire hope for a revision. They are ultimately nothing but an internal readjustment and its result can be no more than an increase in the viability of the system. The only alternative to this hope or to this kind of performance unfortunately is decline or entropy.

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- But this realism of systemic self-regulation, and this perfectly sealed circle of facts and interpretations, can be judged paranoid only if one has, or claims to have, at one's disposal a viewpoint that is in principle immune from their allure. This is the function of the principle of class struggle in theories of society based on the work of Marx.
- "Traditional" theory is always in danger of being incorporated into the programming of the social whole as a simple tool for the optimisation of its performance; this is because its desire for a unitary and totalising truth lends itself to the unitary and totalising practice of the system's managers.
- "Critical" theory, based on a principle of dualism and wary of syntheses and reconciliations, should be in a position to avoid this fate.

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But this realism of systematic self-Regulation and this perfectly sealed circle of facts and interpretations can be just paranoid only if one has it, one's disposal a viewpoint that in principle you know we can be immune from this allure and then this idea leads us to the Marxist philosophy. Traditional theory is always in danger of being incorporated into the programming of the social whole as a simple tool for the optimization of its performance.

This is because its desire for a unitary and totalizing truth lends itself to the unitary and totalizing practice of the system's managers. Critical theory based on the principle of dualism and wary of synthesis and reconciliation should be in a position to avoid this fate.

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- The sole purpose of this schematic (or skeletal) reminder has been to specify the problematic in which Lyotard frames the question of knowledge in advanced industrial societies.
- For it is impossible to know what the state of knowledge is - in other words, the problems its development and distribution are facing today - without knowing something of the society within which it is situated.
- And today more than ever, knowing about that society involves first of all choosing what approach the inquiry will take, and that necessarily means choosing how society can answer. One can decide that the principal role of knowledge is as an indispensable element in the functioning of society, and act in accordance with that decision, only if one has already decided that society is a giant machine.

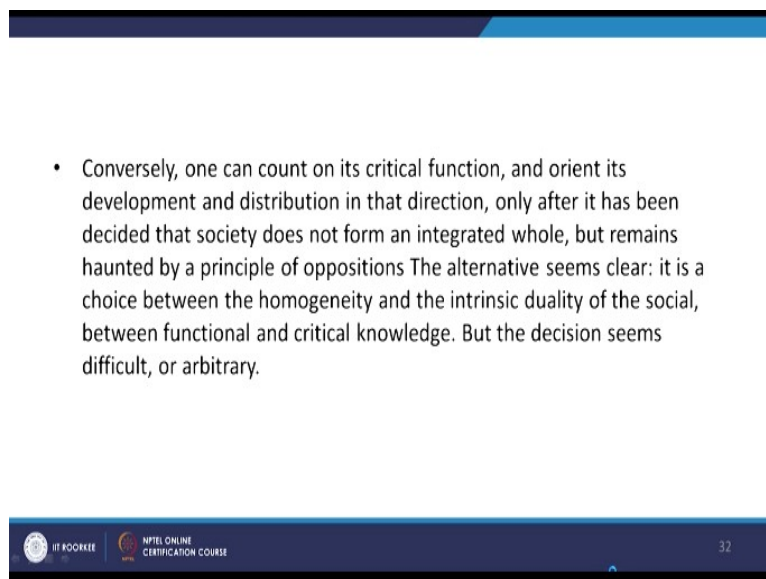
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This discussion contextualizes Lyotard's critique of metanarratives. The sole purpose of this discussion of this schematic reminder has been to specify the problematic in which Lyotard

frames a question of knowledge in advanced industrial societies. The knowledge is going to face the questions about the shape it has to take in its development and how it would be distributed.

And today more than ever knowing about the society involves first of all choosing what approach the enquiry will take and that also necessarily means choosing how society can answer it. So the society has to decide the approach whether it is going to be a giant mechanism or is it going to be a society which has certain duality in it.

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• Conversely, one can count on its critical function, and orient its development and distribution in that direction, only after it has been decided that society does not form an integrated whole, but remains haunted by a principle of oppositions. The alternative seems clear: it is a choice between the homogeneity and the intrinsic duality of the social, between functional and critical knowledge. But the decision seems difficult, or arbitrary.

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Conversely, one can count on its critical function we would find that homogeneity ultimately leads to functionality in our social structure. On the other hand, when we look at the duality inbuilt in the society it leads us to a critical functionality. So you would find that one can count either on the critical function and orient the distribution and development of the knowledge accordingly or otherwise if we decide not to take the society as an integrated whole we remain haunted by the principle of opposition.

So we have to take this decision but this decision seems rather arbitrary because Lyotard does not know who is going to take this decision and later on we would find that this is exactly the point which is taken up by Foucault in his discussions of knowledge and power.

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• It is tempting to avoid the decision altogether by distinguishing two kinds of knowledge.

• One, the positivist kind, would be directly applicable to technologies bearing on men and materials, and would lend itself to operating as an indispensable productive force within the system.

• The other the critical, reflexive, or hermeneutic kind by reflecting directly or indirectly on values or aims, would resist any such "recuperation."

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It is tempting to avoid the decision altogether by distinguishing these two kinds of knowledge. One is the positivist kind; it would be directly applicable to technologies bearing on men and materials. On the other hands, the other type of knowledge maybe a value based knowledge which would be critical and reflexive and hermeneutic in nature.

So you would find that we have to struggle with simultaneity and plurality and this discussion this fuzziness of the modernist approach, modernist questions about knowledge, its development and its circulation lead us to the next part of Lyotard's question which we will be able to take up in the next module. Thank you.