

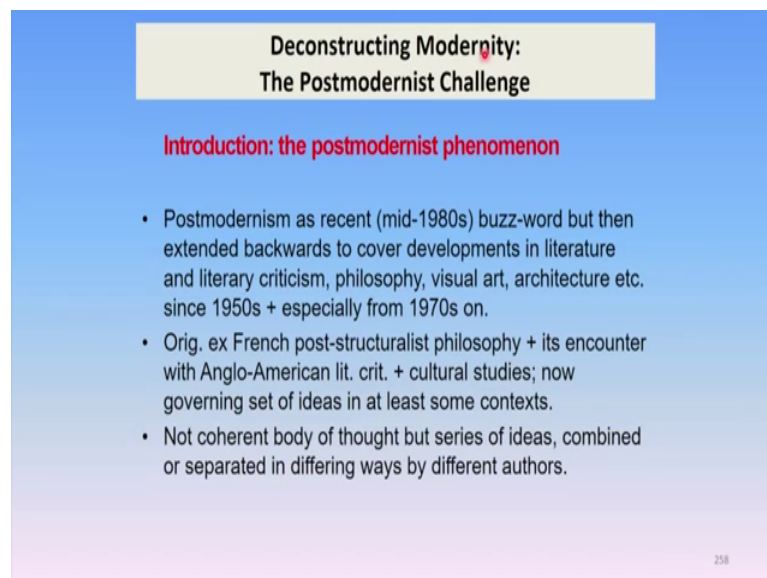
**Sociological Perspectives on Modernity**  
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**Lecture – 25**  
**Deconstruction of Modernity: The Postmodernist Critique I**

Welcome to the 25th lecture of the course on sociological perspectives on modernity. We are in the we are discussing the deconstruction of modernity through the lenses of feminism cultural studies and post modernism. We have already covered feminism the feminist challenge to critical modernist paradigm in sociology and also cultural studies challenge to critical modernist paradigm in sociology.

In this and today we are going to discuss the post modernist challenge to critical modernist paradigm in sociology as a part of deconstruction of modernity. Post modernist challenge to critical modernist paradigm in sociology will be divided into 3 lectures.

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**Deconstructing Modernity:  
The Postmodernist Challenge**

**Introduction: the postmodernist phenomenon**

- Postmodernism as recent (mid-1980s) buzz-word but then extended backwards to cover developments in literature and literary criticism, philosophy, visual art, architecture etc. since 1950s + especially from 1970s on.
- Orig. ex French post-structuralist philosophy + its encounter with Anglo-American lit. crit. + cultural studies; now governing set of ideas in at least some contexts.
- Not coherent body of thought but series of ideas, combined or separated in differing ways by different authors.

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In today's lecture we are going to discuss the postmodernist phenomenon, post modernist aesthetics, and post modernity post modernity as a historical condition. In the in the second one in the next lecture we will discuss post modernism as ontology, as well as epistemology ok.

And in the third six third lecture we will discuss feminism and post modernism as a test case we will start with the post modernist phenomenon, post modernism in fact, emerged in the 1980s as a as a buzz word, as a as a globalized phenomenon, but then extended backwards to cover developments in literature and literary criticism, philosophy, visual art, architecture and so on.

Since the 1950s especially from the 1970s onward ok, it has its own intellectual antecedents namely French post structuralist philosophy and its encountered with a Anglo American literary criticism and cultural studies and now governing the set of ideas at least in some contexts. It is it is I mean I mean it is not a coherent school of thought or body of thought, but a series of ideas combined or separated in different ways by different authors ok.

If you look at Derrida, if you look at Foucault, if you look at I mean a Lacan and so on ok. You will find that they also do not have any particular I mean they do not have they do not have any agreement on what constitutes post modernism, postmodern condition, what constitutes post modernism ok. There are 3 central ideas through which post modernism is embedded one is culture, secondly society and thirdly meta narratives ok. We will discuss one by one. What are these 3 central ideas? Culture has produced and received is postmodern in form and content I mean post modernist aesthetics versus modernist aesthetics.

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#### Three central ideas:

- (a) "Culture" as produced and received is postmodern in form and content (postmodernist vs. modernist aesthetics);
- (b) "Society" (esp. political economy) can now be seen as having moved into a "postmodern" condition (postmodernity vs. modernity);
- (c) For a variety of reasons, the "metanarratives" which legitimate the knowledge of modern intellectuals can no longer be sustained (postmodernism vs. "the enlightenment project").

Suppose what are what is what was modernist aesthetics I mean industrial revolution, a reasoning capacity, rationally, critic to religion, and so on and what is post modernist aesthetics we will we will discuss ok.

Secondly, society can now be seen as having moved into a postmodern condition again post modernity versus modernity. Society especially political economy for post modernists and thirdly for a variety of reasons the metanarratives which legitimate the knowledge of modern intellectuals can no longer be sustained I mean postmodernism versus the enlightenment project, I mean all industrial revolution rationality critical thinking reasoning capacity and so on ok.

Then prima facie see if we have to look at these 3, 3 central ideas that culture is as produced and received is postmodern informant content. Society especially political economy can now we seen as having moved into a postmodern condition and the meta narratives which legitimate the knowledge of modern intellectuals can no longer be sustained.

Then what is this post postmodernist aesthetics I mean we have discussed modernist aesthetics post modernist aesthetics see for the sake of this course this is not very important to discuss post modernist aesthetics rather it is very important to discuss post modernity as a historical condition ok.

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### Postmodernist aesthetics

- Largely irrelevant for our purposes: related to argument about "modernist aesthetics".
  - \* Dominant version is related to a traditionalist view of "culture" as "cultural" artefacts (esp. literature, but also extended eg to film, television, advertisements, etc.); sometimes (but by no means always) taken one step further into discussion of reception of these by audience. More commonly involves projection of analysis of "text" onto assumptions about audience as "constituted" by text, rather than as using text for their own purposes (Weber: "elective affinity").
  - \* Against this, Angela McRobbie (*Postmodernism and popular culture*) defends a more sociologically-informed analysis which broadens out notion of cultural production and reception as practices and attempts to recover the everyday meanings e.g. of clothes shopping.
  - \* Arguments about production of "postmodern" culture, however, lead into discussion on "postmodernity" as historical condition; arguments about reception of "postmodern" culture – or the modes of perception revealed or created by it – lead into discussion on "postmodernism" as an attack on "modern" forms of knowledge and their assumptions and legitimation.

But to, but before dwelling upon post modernity as a historical condition it is always better to give some kind of an overview of post modernist aesthetics. Very quickly we will cover this portion that that post modernist aesthetics. I mean it is largely irrelevant for our purposes related to argument about modernist aesthetics ok.

The dominant version is related to a traditionalist view of culture as cultural artifacts especially literature, but also extended such as to film, television, advertisements, and so on sometimes, but by no means always taken one step further into discussion of reception of these by audience.

How do we receive it suppose in a movie? How do we receive it a movie like Lagaan? How do we receive movie like 3 Idiots or PK ok. These are very important dimensions Lagaan is a is a movie the way suppose I receive it is against colonialism against power structure against all forms of domination, subordination subjugation, and exploitation. Lagaan again is a movie which speaks against I mean a speaks against the payment of Lagaan that that payment that has to be maintained also the commodities that that farming communities produce.

If you if you look at suppose 3 idiots this is an alternative way of learning cannot be done by wrote learning is not the way to learn things if you really want to learn ok. Then you have to express your ideas in novel which the inter education system the entire marking system was interrogated in that movie 3 idiots.

If you if you look at suppose PK, the entire either to existing systems of superstition religious bigotry obscurantism orthodoxy which questioned in PK thats why these 3 and of course, many more are there and if you if you go to [FL] by all Demantoids movie Balraj Sahni and others acted many movies made by produced by Raj Kapoor and so on ok.

They were beyond their times and the way the audience tries to receive it suppose Lage Raho Munna Bhai. How the audience received? How as a spectator I am going to receive it that is why the dominant version is related to a traditionalist view of culture ok. More, but, but it is very important how as part of audience we are going to receive it, when I receive it reception is very often operational at 3 levels. one is acceptance, secondly rejection and thirdly ambivalence.

I do not know whether what is the projected portrayed in that movie in certain movies I will accept it, I may accept it, I am a reject it on together ok. But at times I do not know whether to accept it or reject it maintaining the ambivalence that actually I do not know whether it is good or bad whether it is right or wrong I am not able to accept or reject it, I am trying to maintain my ambivalence.

This is how we tend to receive particular movie your or an advertisement and so on suppose and some while polishing your shoes you will find that that a school going child he is trying to polishes pair of shoes and then good polish, I mean shoe polish advertisement.

How do you look at it somebody may say that yes that little child is very self sufficient he knows how to carry out his job before going to school, but somebody may say that know it amounts to child labor. How you tend to receive them let us important the way all these all such advertisements about cosmetics and so on.

The way they have been gaining momentum in the world of advertisements and so on I tend to feel that there is absolute rescission in such advertisements that black being black cannot be celebrated you always tend to be you should be white to be celebrated that is absolute racism on the basis of skin color that is why how you receive them more commonly involves the projection of analysis of text on to assumptions about audiences constituted by text rather than as using text for their own purposes.

For example Weberian elective affinity against this position McRobbie angela McRobbie in postmodern and popular culture. Defense a more sociologically informed analysis which broadens our notion of cultural production and reception as practices and attempts to recover the everyday meanings such as of clothes shopping.

Arguments about production of postmodern culture nevertheless lead in to discussion on post modernity as a as a historical condition and arguments about reception of postmodern culture or the modes of perception revealed or created by it lead in to discussion on post modernism as an attack on modern forms of knowledge and their assumptions and legitimacy.


And for from this that that arguments about production of postmodern culture that which lead us to our discussion on post modernity as a historical condition assumes greater

significances in this context ok. This is I mean when we say post modernity as a historical condition ok.

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**Postmodernity as a historical condition**

- This is effectively one construction placed on a series of observations about contemporary trends which have also been deployed in relation to now-discounted theories about post-industrialism, as well as in relation to arguments about disorganised capitalism (Lash and Urry), radicalised modernity (Giddens), etc.



The slide features two book covers. On the left is 'The End of ORGANIZED CAPITALISM' by Scott Lash & John Urry, with a white cover and a colorful abstract illustration. On the right is 'Anthony Giddens The Consequences of Modernity', with a green cover and white text. A small number '261' is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide.

This is effectively one construction placed on a series of observations about contemporary trends which have also been deployed in relation to now discounted theories about post industrialism, I mean you can look at Aravind Tuffler Daniel Bell and so on.

Even if you can if you want to look at even Marshall McLuhan who coined the term globalization that that as well as in relation to arguments about disorganized capitalism by Lash and Urry and radicalized modernity by Anthony Giddens and so on ok.


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**The argument can be presented as a series of contrasts:**

(a) Against "Fordist" production methods (based on economies of scale) there is a shift to "post-Fordist" organisation of production (with increased "flexibility", subcontracting, small-batch production, etc) with an increasingly important role for knowledge (managerial skill, scientific expertise, information technology, etc.);

(b) Against an economy based on material production for arguably real needs there is a shift to the production of symbols, cultural artefacts, etc.;

(c) Against the post-WWII welfare state compromise there is a shift to a neo-conservatism based on the decline of collective bargaining and the weakening of the nation-state;

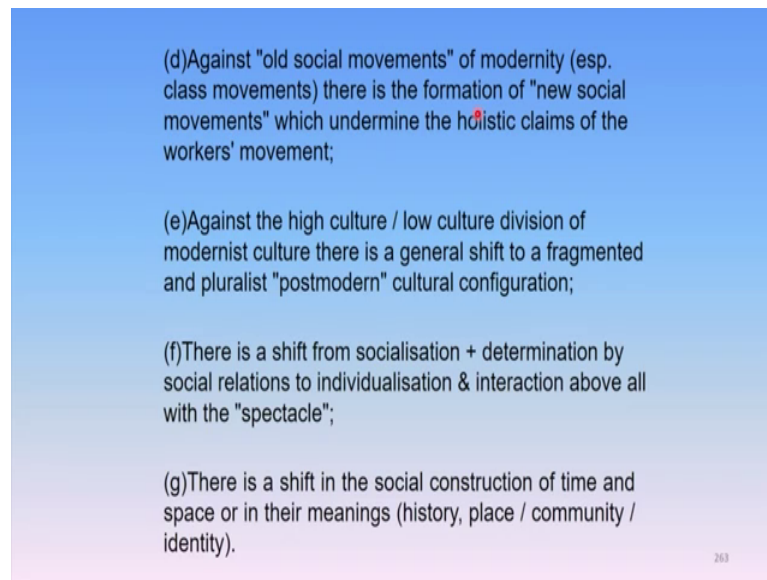


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Radicalized modernity or radicalized rationality the argument can be presented as a series of contrasts. The argument I mean I mean against the Fordist production methods I mean based on economies of scale that large scale production, assembly line products, polished method production. I mean there is a shift from Fordist to post Fordist organization of production which increased flexibility, subcontracting, small batch production and so on with an increasingly important rule for knowledge I mean managerial skill, scientific expertise, information technology and so on ok.

The argument also can be presented like this that against an economy based on material production for arguably real needs there is a shift to the production of symbols cultural artifacts and so on. Against the post second world war welfare state compromise there is a shift to a new conservatism based on the decline of collective bargaining and the weakening of the nation state ok.

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There are 7 contrasts that that we are going to present you then you will also find against old social movements of modernity, old social movements which are I mean which we are based on class position economic class position I mean industrial workers movements and so on.

Now there is the formation of new social movements which undermine the holistic claims of the workers movements I mean new social movements I mean they include women, environmentalists and so on. Even peasantry against the distinction between high and low culture and low culture I mean against the high culture low culture division of modernist cult there is a general shift to a fragmented and pluralist post modern cultural configuration.

There is a shift from socialization coupled with determination by social relations to individualization and interaction above always the spectacle and there is also a shift in the social construction of time and space or in their meanings I mean history plays community identity and so on.

We have already discussed this I mean in the context of Giddens Anthony Giddens I mean structuration theory, duality of structure, time space distancing and so on ok. Then what are these contrasts these 7 contrasts that one is I mean there is a shift from Fordist production methods to post Fordist organization of production with increased flexibility, subcontracting, small batch production with an increasingly important role for



knowledge at the I mean managerial skill scientific expertise information and communication technologies and so on one.


Secondly, there is a shift to the production of symbols cultural artifacts and so, on I mean from material production to the production of symbols. Thirdly there is a shift from the post second world war welfare state compromise to a new conservatism based on the decline of collective bargaining and the weakening of the nation state and there is a shift from old social movements to new social movements.

There is a shift from high culture and low culture devalued to an to a fragmented in pluralist post modern cultural configuration. There is shift from socialization plus determination by social relations to individualization and interaction above all with the spectacle and there is a shift in the social construction of time and space or in their meanings are generated through history, time, and space, plays, community, identity and so on ok. I mean we can we can go on and on with these shifts what does it imply?

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- This list also points to the wider claims being made by arguments about the "postmodern condition":

(a) They can be taken to pull the carpet away from the Marxist analysis of capitalism as a mode of economic organisation; from a strategy oriented around the working class as the central agent of social transformation; and from a hope for greater "substantive rationality" through education, socialisation, science, increased rational control of the environment, etc. What is generally missed in this kind of argument is that it is a very limited kind of Marxism (very often one belonging to "postmodernist" authors themselves, in an earlier incarnation) which is being taken to stand for the whole of Marxism. In particular, a 1970s mix of Lenin, Trotsky and Althusser is being taken to represent the totality of the meanings and practices both of Marxist authors and of the workers' movement.



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What do these contrasts imply? I can I can go on and on with such contrasts this is this is just one possible list, but it identifies the kind of things that are being pointed to and this list points to the wider claims being made by arguments about the postmodern condition ok. This I mean postmodern condition I mean this is very important and here we will we will I mean we are going to discuss many many things I mean looked at Lacan Frederic Jameson and so on David Harvey and so, on ok.

I mean this postmodern condition I mean they can be taken to pull the carpet away from the Marxist analysis of capitalism as a mode of economic organization from a strategy of oriented around the working class as the central agent of social transformation and from a hope of hope for greater substantive rationality through education, socialization, science, increased rational control over of the environment and so on.

What is what is generally missed in this kind of argument that it is a very limited kind of Marxism very often one belonging to post modernist authors themselves in an earlier incarnation which is being taken to stand for the whole lock Marxism in particular a 1900 and 1970s mix of Lenin, Trotsky, Althu, and Althusser I mean that is being taken to represent the totality of the meanings and practices of both Marxist authors and of the workers movement this is this is very important ok.

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• (b) They can be taken as relating to a further development within capitalism itself, in which case the challenge is to reformulate a form of historical materialism which is not contradicted by these developments and dispenses with the "local" analyses of Marx, Lenin, etc. for the sake of retaining the more general elements of historical materialism. This is the line taken by two of the central responses to the "postmodern challenge":

**Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*; David Harvey, *The condition of postmodernity*.**

Both of these authors take the line that the "postmodernists" are pointing to something of relevance (and Jameson in particular finds the concept of "postmodernism" a useful one in *cultural* analysis), but do not accept that these points need to mean a retreat from Marxism

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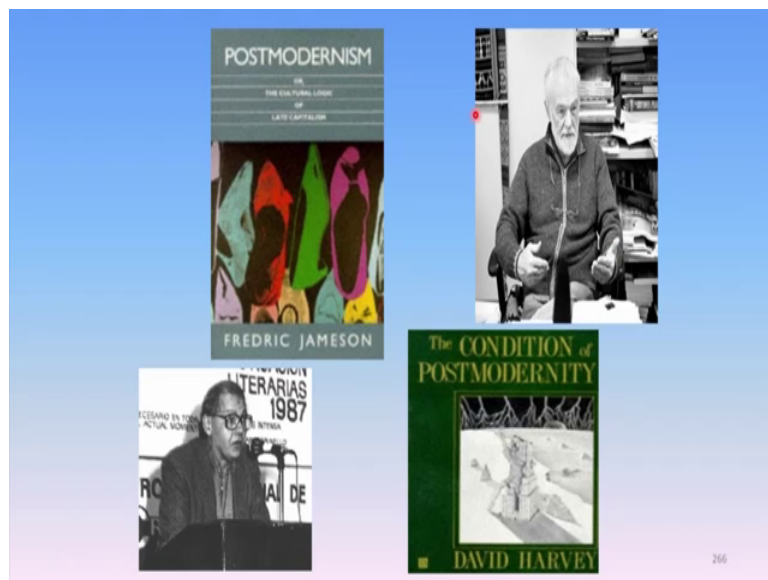
Secondly they can also be taken as relating to a further development within capitalism itself in which case the challenge is to reformulate a form of historical materialism which is not contradicted by these developments and dispenses with the local analysis of Marx Lenin and so on for the sake of retaining the more general elements of the materialist conception of history popularly known as historical materialism.

And this is the line taken by two of the central responses to the postmodern challenge one is Frederic, Jameson and we will also discuss Krishan commerce reflections on this

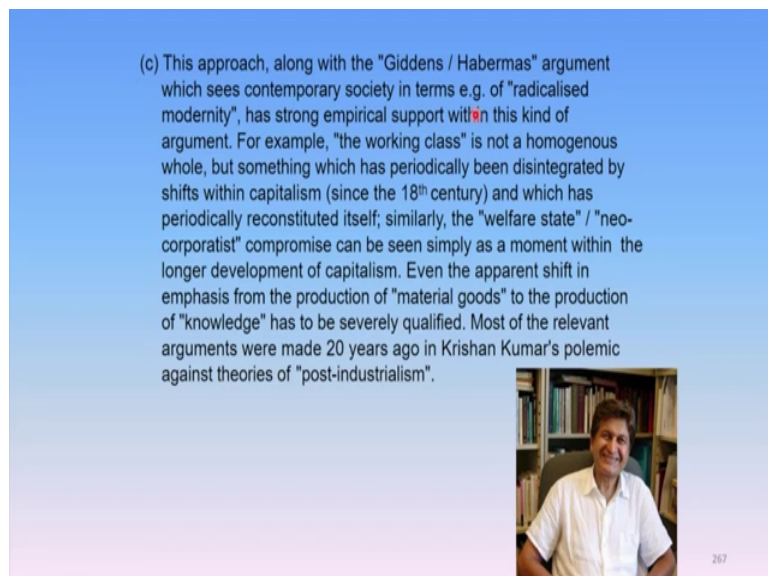
what Frederic, Jameson in post modernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism and David Harvey's the condition of post modernity.

These two are the central responses to the postmodern challenge both of these authors take the line that the post modernists are pointing to something of relevance and Jameson in particular finds the concept of post modernism are useful one in cultural analysis, but do not accept that these points need to mean a retreat from Marxism this is very important.

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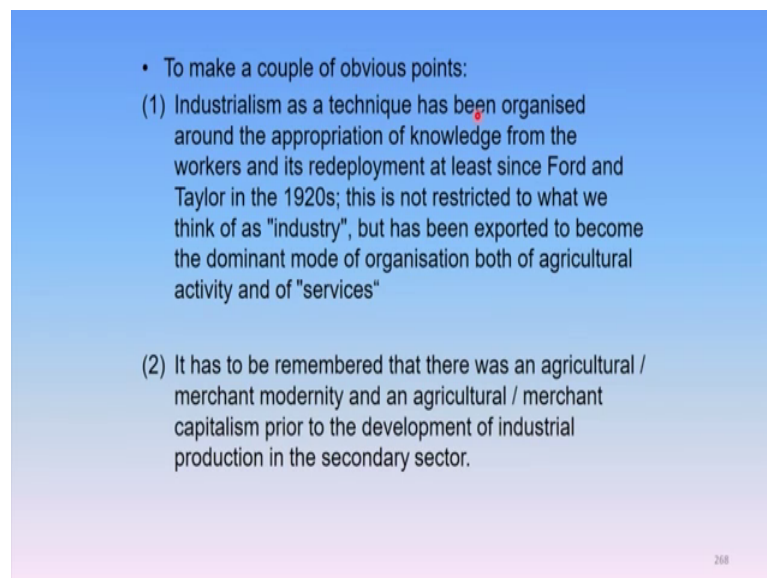


And then such approach along with the arguments posed by Giddens and Habermas which sees contemporary society in terms of radicalized modernity ok. So, term used by radicalized modernity was used by Giddens and such approaches strong empirical support within this kind of augment.

For example the working class is not a homogeneous whole, but something which has periodically been disintegrated by shifts within capitalism since the 9 since the 18th century and which has periodically called reconstituted itself similarly the welfare state are similarly the welfare state or the new corporatist compromise that can be seen simply as a movement within the longer development of capitalism.

Even the apparent shift in emphasis from the production of material wounds to the production of knowledge has to be severely qualified. Most of the relevant arguments were made twenty years ago in Krishan Kumars polemic against theories of post industrialism ok. I mean that that post modernity post modernity as a as a historical condition must be grounded.

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- To make a couple of obvious points:
  - (1) Industrialism as a technique has been organised around the appropriation of knowledge from the workers and its redeployment at least since Ford and Taylor in the 1920s; this is not restricted to what we think of as "industry", but has been exported to become the dominant mode of organisation both of agricultural activity and of "services"
  - (2) It has to be remembered that there was an agricultural / merchant modernity and an agricultural / merchant capitalism prior to the development of industrial production in the secondary sector.

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Just to make a couple of obvious points one industrialism as a technique has been organized around the appropriation of knowledge from the workers and its redeployment of at and redeployment at least since ford and Taylor in the 1920s this is not restricted to what we think of as industry, but has been exported to become the dominant mode of organization both of agricultural activity and of services.

And secondly, it is to be recollected it has to be remembered that there was an agricultural merchant modernity and an agricultural merchant capitalism prior to the development of industrial production in the secondary sector ok. In if I have to capture these couple of obvious points if you if you look at Alvin Toffler's in the third wave I mean the first wave is the first wave is the agricultural society the second wave is the industrial society and the third wave is the information society which is very often known as the post industrial society even manual castles and Daniel bell and so on they have also reflected on this ok.

What are the constituents of what are the grounding principles of such post industrialism or the information society ok. I mean standardization, specialization, synchronization, maximization, concentration, and centralization. These are the 6 grounding principles of the information society or post industrial society.

This is this is very important there is a third wave that that Toffler talked about or the coming of post industrial society which Daniel bell reflected on or the network society which castles talked about or the void society has James Martin talked about ok.

In other words the claim that post modernity is a specific historical condition which displaces modernity has generally been made in particular within sociology by pointing out that what is singled out as modernity is in fact, a very limited and specific part of modernity so that what is now happening is better understood as another stage in the longer history of modernity ok.

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- In other words, the claim that "postmodernity" is a specific historical condition which displaces modernity has generally been met, in particular within sociology, by pointing out that what is singled out as "modernity" is in fact a very limited and specific part of modernity, so that what is now happening is better understood as another stage in the longer history of modernity. I'll be going into this response more closely in the next couple of lectures. For the moment, it's enough to point out that most sociologists do not accept the claim that modernity is over, while many would accept the proposition that "postmodernism" does represent a new *cultural* configuration linked to a new phase in the development of modernity as a social configuration. This is most commonly presented in a Marxist form, but a Weberian version of the argument is certainly possible, and has been made both by Giddens and by Bryan Turner.

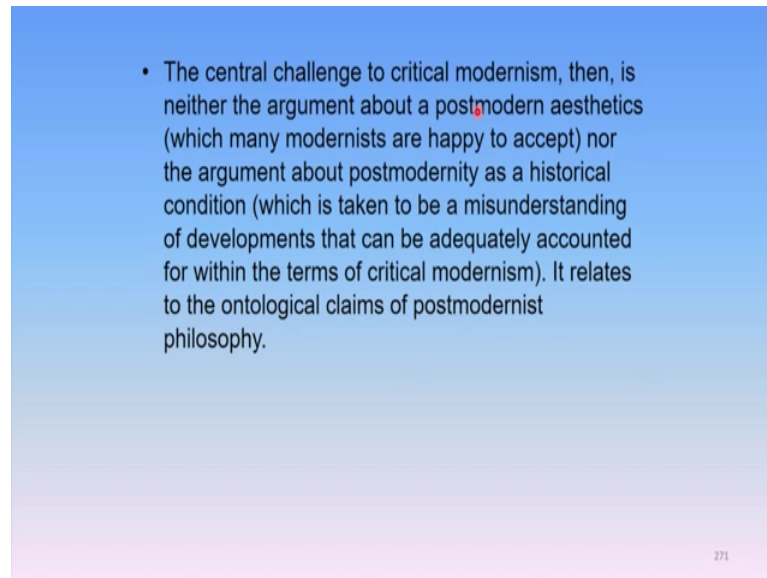
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I will be going into this response more closely in the couple in the next couple of lectures. For the moment it is enough to point out that most sociologists do not accept the claim that modernity is over while many would accept that accept the proposition that post modernism certainly represents a new cultural configuration linked to a new phase in the development of modernity as a as a social configuration.

This is most commonly presented in a in a Marxist form, but Weberian version of the argument is certainly possible and has been made both by Giddens and Bryan Turner that what we talk about post modernism modernists argue the proponents of modernity they argue that to know what is post modernism it is an extension of modernity.

But for the proponents of post modernism post modernism is not an extension of modernity rather post modernism is a is a perspective which has been able to refute or reject modernity in totality the central challenge to the central challenge to critical modernist paradigm in sociology ok.

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Then is neither the argument about the postmodern aesthetics which many modernists are happy to accept nor the argument about post modernity as a historical condition which is taken to be misunderstanding of developments that can be adequately accounted for within the terms of critical modernist paradigm in sociology it relates to the ontological claims of post modernist philosophy ok.

What we are going to do in the next lecture that we will discuss post modernism as ontology, post modernism also as epistemology because from the very beginning I mean when we when we started discussing Wallenstein Habermas and Giddens especially Giddens.

In the context of Giddens we started with the distinction between modernity and post modernism if modernity is based on certain epistemological foundation post modernism rejects any kind of epistemological foundation this is very important that is why that that all these ontological claims of post modernist philosophy must be understood against the backdrop of such anti foundational crisis I mean this that that the way post modernists go ahead in rejecting any kind of any kind of epistemological foundation ok.

Then in this lecture what we have discussed quickly we started our discussion on deconstruction of modernity through the lens of post modernism and we have discussed the post modernist phenomenon then how post modernist how post modernism emerged



in the mid 1980s as a buzzword, but then extended backwards to cover developments in literature and literary, criticism, philosophy, visual art, architecture and so on.

Since the 1950s and also especially from the 1970s onward it has its intellectual antecedents in French post structuralist philosophy and its encounter with Anglo American literary criticism and cultural studies and now governing the set of ideas in at least some contexts.

We have discussed how post modernism is based on 3 central ideas namely culture, society, and meta narratives. Culture has produced and received is postmodern informant content; society specially political economy can now be seen as having moved it to a postmodern condition and for a variety of reasons the meta narratives which legitimate the knowledge of modern intellectuals can no longer be sustained and so on ok.

And then we have discussed post modernist aesthetics I mean how do people receive literature film television advertisements and so on because they I mean I mean the dominant version is related to traditionalist view of culture as cultural artifacts I mean sometimes taken one step further into discussion of reception, but of these by audience ok.

We have also discussed McRobbies post modernism and popular culture I mean how we have we have made some arguments about the production of postmodern culture nevertheless lead into discussion on post modernity as a historical condition ok. Arguments about reception of postmodern culture or the modes of perception revealed or created by it leading to discussion on post modernism as an attack on modern forms of knowledge and there assumptions and legitimacy.

Then we have discussed post modernity as a historical condition how this is your this is effectively one construction placed on a series of observations about contemporary trends which have also been deployed in relation to now discounted theories about post industrialism as well as in relation to arguments about disorganized capitalism and radicalized modernity ok.

And we have we have pushed we have made we have presented this argument as a series of contrasts I mean the shift from Fordist production methods to post Fordist organization of production with increased flexibility, sub contracting, small batch



production with an increasingly important role of knowledge and so on. And secondly, as I mean there is a shift from material production to the production of symbols cultural artifacts and so on.

The thus there is a shift from post second world war welfare state compromised to new conservatism based on the decline of collective bargaining and the weakening of the nation state ok. We have also discussed the shift from old social movements to new social movements, we have also discussed the shift from high culture low culture divide a of modernist culture to of more fragmented and pluralist post modern cultural configuration ok.

We have also discussed how there is a shift from socialization coupled with determination by social relations to individualization and interaction above all with the spectacle and this is particularly related to Anthony Giddens that there is a shift in the social construction of time and space or in their meanings I mean history plays community and identity and so on.

And then we have we have discussed how they can be taken to pull the carpet away from the Marxist analysis of capitalism as a mode of economic organization from a strategy oriented around the working classes the central agent of social transformation and from a hope for greater substantive rationality through education socialization science increased rational control of the environment and so on ok.

And then we have discussed how they can be taken as relating to a further development within capitalism itself in which case the challenge is to reformulate form of historical materialism which is not contradicted by these developments and dispenses with the local analysis of Marx Lenin and so on for the sake of retaining the more general elements of the materialist conception of history.

And this is the line taken by two of the central responses to the postmodern challenge namely Frederic Jameson, and David Harvey both Jameson and Harvey take the line that the postmodernists are pointing to something of relevance, but they do not accept that these points lead to mean or retreat from Marxism ok.

And this approach along with Giddens Habermas argument which sees contemporary society in terms of radicalized modernity has strong empirical support within this kind of

argument I mean we have discussed how working class what is your working class it is no longer of homogeneous category there such questions were posed a phrase ok.

And then we made two quick points that how industrialism as a technique has been organized around the appropriation of knowledge from the workers and its redeployment at least since Ford and Taylor in the 1920s and this is not restricted to what we think of as industry, but has been exported to become the dominant mode of organized in both of agricultural activity and of services.

It has to be remembered that there was an agricultural merchant modernity and an agricultural merchant capitalism prior to the development of industry production in the secondary sector ok. And then we have also discussed how the claim that post modernity is a specific historical condition which displaces modernity that has generally been met in particular within sociology by pointing out that what is singled out as modernity is in fact, a very limited and specific part of modernity.

So, that what is now happening is better understood as another stage in the longer history of modernity ok. In the in the that the proposition that post modernism represents a new cultural configuration linked to a new phase in the development of modernity as a as a social configuration that post modernity as a historical condition that that this is most commonly presented in a in the Marxist framework.

But a Weberian version of the argument is certainly possible we have already discussed this and through the works of Anthony Giddens and Bryan Turner we can we can still we can one can examine post modernity as a historical condition. In the next lecture we are going to discuss post modernism as ontology, post modernism as epistemology and then we will discuss feminism and post modernism as a test case ok.

Thank you.