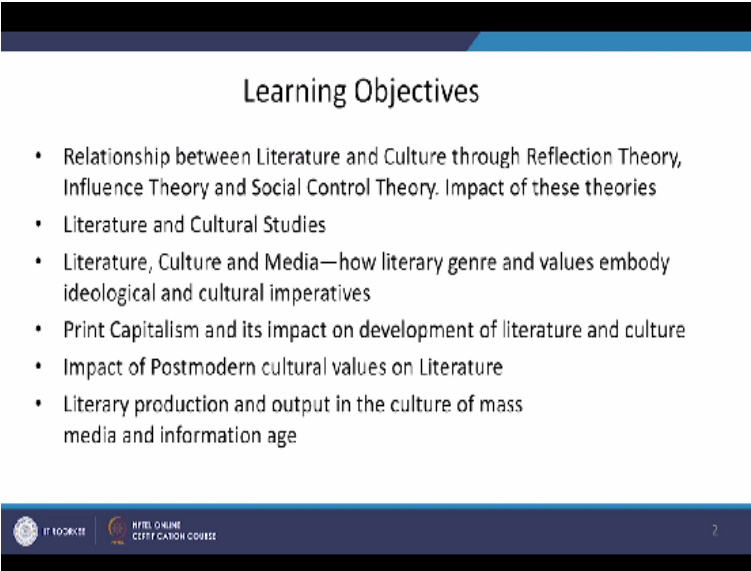


**Literature, Culture and Media**  
**Prof. Rashmi Gaur**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology - Roorkee**

**Lecture – 04**  
**Relationship Between Literature and Culture**

Welcome dear participants. In this module, we would be looking at the relationship between literature and culture.

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**Learning Objectives**

- Relationship between Literature and Culture through Reflection Theory, Influence Theory and Social Control Theory. Impact of these theories
- Literature and Cultural Studies
- Literature, Culture and Media—how literary genre and values embody ideological and cultural imperatives
- Print Capitalism and its impact on development of literature and culture
- Impact of Postmodern cultural values on Literature
- Literary production and output in the culture of mass media and information age

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When we look at the relationship between literature and culture, we largely look at 3 parallel theoretical frameworks, the Reflection Theory, the Influence Theory and the Social Control Theory. In this module, we would look at these theories and analyze the impact of them. In the next module, we would look at literature and cultural studies and how literary genre and values embody ideological as well as cultural imperatives.

We would also look at in the course of our discussion during the next module, the print capitalism and its impact on the development of literature and culture as well as impact of postmodern cultural values on literature. Literary production and output in the culture of mass media and information age would also be taken up after that.

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## Relationship Between Literature and Society

- Multifaceted
- Discussed by literary critics, as well as by sociologists
- In his essay, "The Relationship of Literature and Society" (1954), Albrecht examines three characterizations of this relationship: 1) that literature reflects society; 2) that literature influences society; and 3) that literature functions to maintain or justify the social order, and in effect exerts social control
- Relationship between literature and society:
  - Reflection, influence and social control
- Simultaneous complementarity of these three notions



The relationship between literature and society is primarily a multifaceted one. It is discussed not only by literary critics but also by different sociologists. It is pertinent to quote Albrecht here who has said that we can look at the relationship between literature and society from the point of view of 3 different characteristics. One way of looking at this relationship is that literature reflects society.

The second way to analyze this relationship is to suggest that literature influences society. And in the third type of relationship, we can see that literature functions to maintain or justify the social order, and in effect exerts certain type of social control. So we would review these basic 3 different types of relationship and also look at whether there is a simultaneous complementarity as far as these 3 notions are concerned.

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- On "Reflection":
  - Literature reflects norms and values, beliefs, attitudes. Reveals ethos of culture. Processes of class struggles and conflict. Diversity amidst social facts, truths, experiences
- On "Influence"
  - Not strictly the obverse of reflection— social order, stability and cultural imperatives are involved
- Social Control:
  - Articulates closely with one aspect of reflection. Functions as a method of social control, to a limited extent in complex and dynamic societies



When we talk about the reflection based relationship, we have to look at literature as reflecting the cultural norms and values, beliefs, attitudes. The contemporary processes of class struggle and conflict and it should also reflect the diversity amidst different types of social experiences and facts. When we talk about the influence aspects, we find that it should not be taken up strictly as an obverse of reflection. It looks at social order, stability and cultural imperatives to find out to what extent literature is able to influence a society.

The idea of social control articulates closely with one aspect of reflection. It functions as a method of social control to a limited extent in complex and dynamic societies.

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- Thus, literature 'reflects' society—values and norms
- literature 'influence' or 'shapes' society and its norms and values
- literature 'functions socially to maintain and stabilize, if not to justify and sanctify, the social and cultural order, which may be called the "social-control" theory' (MC Albrecht 1954)
  - Uses of Literature as propaganda and cultural control in totalitarian societies vs. Literature as protest



Thus literature simultaneously reflects values and norms of the society. It also shapes the society, the norms and values of the society and it also functions socially to maintain and stabilize, if not to justify and sanctify, the social and cultural order, which may be called the social-control theory. This aspect of the relationship between literature and society is particularly discernible in those societies which are under totalitarian regimes and where literature is used only as propaganda and as a cultural tool.

It is within these social setups that literature can also be used effectively as a medium of protest.

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- **Origins: Reflection Theory**
  - Spirit of nationalism in Europe
  - environmentalism of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers and thinkers, which analyzed the physical and the social worlds without appealing to a providential God or teleology – Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz
  - Manifestation of a change in the perspective of humans – Empiricism of Bacon and Hobbes, Cartesian Dualism and the Contractual theories of the origin of the State, Kant's pure reason
  - Crystallization of the change in perspective in 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of history, formulation of the theory of evolution
  - Sociological theories of societies and the change in character throughout the ages
- **Function of reflection theory**
  - Explains—in social, cultural and historical terms—the role and function of literature
  - Stressed social and cultural determinism
  - Literature as Sociology

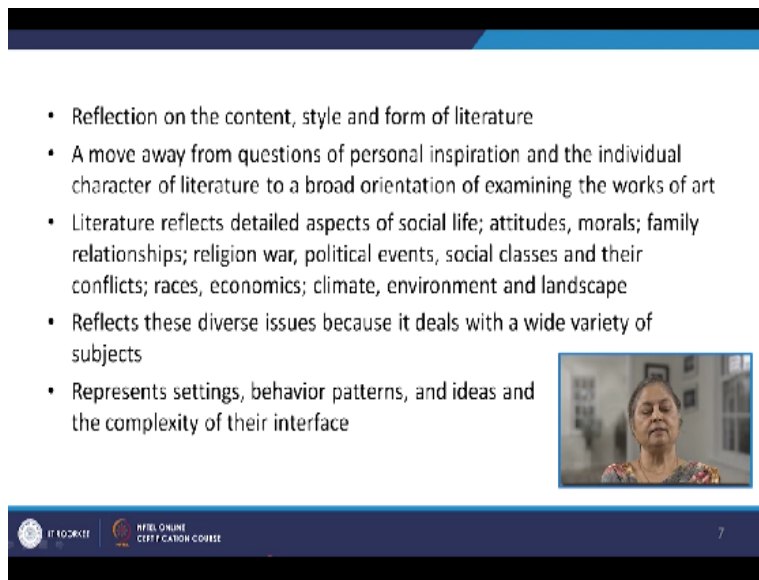
The origins of the Reflection Theory can be traced with the development of the spirit of nationalism in Europe. It is during the 17th and 18th century that philosophers and thinkers started to shift towards an environmentalist consciousness and they analyzed the physical and the social worlds without appealing to the providential God or teleology for that matter. And we can refer to the works and ideas of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, or Leibniz.

There was a manifestation of a change in the perspective of human beings and it is reflected in different contemporary thought patterns. It is reflected in the empiricism of Bacon and Hobbes as well as in the Cartesian dualism and the contractual theories of the origin of the state propounded by Hobbes, Locke and later on by Rousseau. It is also discernible in Kant's ideas on pure reason. In the 19th century, we find that there was a crystallization of the change in perspective in terms

of philosophy of history and there was a formulation of the theory of evolution also.

At the same time, we find that the sociological theories of societies and the change in character throughout the ages is also a reason for the continuing popularity of the reflection theory. The reflection theory explains in social cultural as well as historical terms the role and function of literature. It stresses the social and cultural determinism and it also treats literature as a part of sociology. So sociologists also favour this particular relationship.

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- Reflection on the content, style and form of literature
- A move away from questions of personal inspiration and the individual character of literature to a broad orientation of examining the works of art
- Literature reflects detailed aspects of social life; attitudes, morals; family relationships; religion war, political events, social classes and their conflicts; races, economics; climate, environment and landscape
- Reflects these diverse issues because it deals with a wide variety of subjects
- Represents settings, behavior patterns, and ideas and the complexity of their interface

The slide features a list of five bullet points on the left side. To the right of the list is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair, wearing a colorful patterned top, looking directly at the camera. At the bottom of the slide, there is a dark blue footer bar containing the logos of 'IT TO EXCEL' and 'RTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE' on the left, and the number '7' on the right.

In this theory, we find that critics reflect to the content, style and form of literature and they have moved away from the questions of personal inspiration towards a broad orientation of social norms. So earlier it was considered that literature is a product of a different type of a creative and excellent mind. But we find that when this theory originated, people started to suggest that literature reflects detailed aspects of social life, the attitudes, the morals, the family relationships, the religion as well as war, political events, etc.

So literature reflects these diverse issues because it is able to deal with the wide variety of subjects without any difficulty. And therefore, it represents the behaviour patterns, the dominant ideas as well as the complexities of the interfaces of these emotions and ideas.

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- Most widely accepted notion—Most literature reflects mainly the dominant or significant cultural values and norms
  - DeVoto says, "Literature is a record of social experience, an embodiment of social myths and ideals and aims, and an organization of social beliefs and sanctions"
  - Literature as a powerful cultural artifact
  - Cultural apparatus for the dominant class
  - But, also the vehicle of dissent

Serious criticism:

- Some like Mueller believe that the reflection theory is "too all-embracing" to be valuable
- Supports simple-minded and intellectually regressive formulations (Alan John Segul)




This particular theory is perhaps the most widely accepted notion as far as the relationship between literature and society is concerned. Most literature normally reflects the dominant or the significant cultural values and norms. DeVoto suggests that literature is a record of social experiences and embodiment of social myths and ideals and aims, and an organization of social beliefs and customs.

So literature in a way becomes a powerful cultural artifacts and at the same time we find that in the course of other types of relationship, it can also become a cultural apparatus for the dominant class as well as a vehicle of dissent for the people who are being dominated. Still we find that this theoretical approach has come into a lot of serious criticism. There are critics like Mueller, who believe that the reflection theory is too all-embracing to be valuable in any strict term. Critics like Alan John Segul suggests that it is rather simple-minded and intellectually regressive formulations that are supported by the reflection theory.

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- Literature reflects the spirit of the age: A product of its times. The importance of context. New historicist approach to literature emphasizes the significance of historical and material contexts in the production of texts, their reception and the likely interpretations of the texts
  - Meaning doesn't exist in a vacuum; meanings will change over time; Readers in each age rereads literature and imbues it with their own contemporary contexts
- Wolfenstein and Leites: "the common day-dreams of a culture are in part the sources, in part the products of its popular myths, stories, plays and films"
- Audience shapes the content of the writer's work. Writers target specific audience. Audience outside these readers are likely to derive different meanings
  - Jane Austen's readers were primarily upper class women. Dickens's ridicule of the upper classes endeared him to the growing body of the middle class readers



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Literature reflects the spirit of the age. It is considered to be a product of its time. And therefore, we cannot belittle the significance of the context within which a piece of literature has been produced. The new historicist approach to literature emphasizes the significance of historical and material contexts in the production of texts, their reception and also the likely interpretations of the texts.

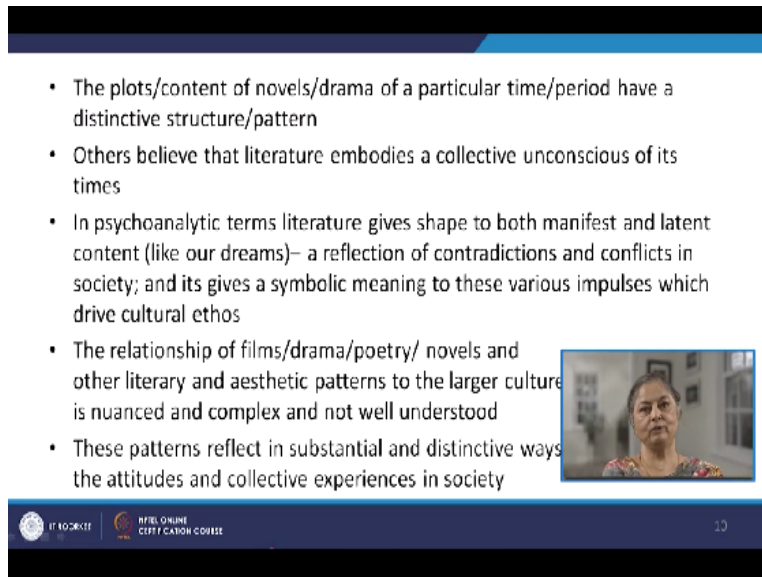
We can say that the meaning does not exist in a vacuum. It is true that meaning changes over a passage of time. But at the same time, the meaning which is being created by the author also belongs to a particular age. And in the same manner, it is equally true to say that readers in each age reread literature, recreate the meaning and imbue literature with their own contemporary contexts.

Wolfenstein and Leites say that the common day-dreams of a culture are in part the sources, in part the products of its popular myths, stories, plays and films. Literature can never be truly isolated from the context. In a way we find that the audiences which are also a part of the context shape the content of the writer's work. Writers also have targeted groups of specific audience and they normally try to focus their messages according to these targeted audiences.

So the context can never be truly dissociated from a literary product. And at the same time, we have to act that the different ages create their own expectations and meanings as far as any

particular piece of literature is concerned.

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- The plots/content of novels/drama of a particular time/period have a distinctive structure/pattern
- Others believe that literature embodies a collective unconscious of its times
- In psychoanalytic terms literature gives shape to both manifest and latent content (like our dreams)– a reflection of contradictions and conflicts in society; and its gives a symbolic meaning to these various impulses which drive cultural ethos
- The relationship of films/drama/poetry/ novels and other literary and aesthetic patterns to the larger culture is nuanced and complex and not well understood
- These patterns reflect in substantial and distinctive ways the attitudes and collective experiences in society

The plots of the novel or the content which is within any particular genre of literature have distinctive structure and pattern. And at the same time, it can be said that literature embodies a collective unconscious of its time. In psychological terms, it can be said that literature is able to represent and shape both the latent as well as the manifest content. It is the reflection of the contradictions and conflicts in society and also gives a symbolic meaning to these varied impulses which drive the cultural ethos.

These patterns reflect in substantial and distinctive ways the attitudes as well as the collective experiences within a society.

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- The notion that literature reveals the essential worldview of societies overlaps with the idea that it represents stress patterns, norms and values
  - but this reflection of ethos underscores the assimilative nature of culture which is structured around hegemonic ideas and beliefs
- The status of literature/arts as reliable index of culture is questionable
  - Should be treated as only one index among others
  - Their individual value and relevance varies within and across culture and societies
  - Reflection theory states that literature/other arts 'may be an index of cultural change, but . . . cannot account for shifts in "mentality" . . . they are a symptom, not a cause. As such, they are passive, essentially static agents' (Albrecht)



The notion that literature reveals the essential worldview of societies overlaps with the idea that it represents the stress patterns, norms and values. but this reflection of ethos also underscores the assimilative nature of cultures which is constructed around hegemonic ideas and beliefs and therefore, the status of literature or for that matter fine arts as a reliable index of culture remains questionable. Should it be treated as only one index among others?

Is it the only reliable and authentic index? Their individual value and relevance varies within and across culture and societies. And reflection theory states that literature or other arts may be an index of cultural change. But at the same time, we have to admit that literature alone cannot account for shifts in mentality. They are a symptom and not a cause and as such as Albrecht has remarked, they are passive, essentially static agents.

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## Another type of reflection:

### Dialectical Materialism of Marx and his followers

- Use the economic system as the independent variable over 'ethos or soul'
- Believe that literature/art, and other 'ideologies' are determined by 'the mode of production in material life' (Marx and Engels' *Literature and Art*) and 'by the ideas of the ruling class, which are in every epoch the ruling ideas' (Marx and Engels' *German Ideology*)
- In this dialectical process—displayed in the class struggle—'art expresses the tendencies of a rising, and therefore revolutionary class' (Marx and Engels' *Literature and Art*)
- Though relationship between economic structure and ideological forms is not direct and simple
- Veblen, Caudwell, Fox, Calverton, Parrington, and Hicks have variously elaborated and interpreted these ideas



Another type of reflection can be looked at in the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx and his followers. The Marxist theory has used the economic system as the independent variable over ethos or soul. The Marxist believes that literature and art as well as other ideologies are determined by the mode of production in material life. And they also suggest that they are determined by the ideas of the ruling class which are in every epoch the ruling ideas.

In this dialectical process, which is displayed in the class struggle, art expresses the tendencies of a rising, and therefore revolutionary class. Though relationship between economic structure and ideological forms is never direct or simple. Still as far as the Marxist belief is concerned, this is the only way of understanding the literary production. Various other Marxist philosophers have elaborated on these ideas. Primarily we can refer to Veblen, Caudwell, Fox, Calverton, Parrington, and Hicks in this context.

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- Some are strictly Marxist; others select and adapt traditional Marxist ideas
- 'Veblen shows the intrusion of economic motives, conspicuous waste, and expensiveness on the character of aesthetic objects' (Albrecht)
- Caudwell and Fox show the relationship between economic conditions and bourgeois ideologies on one hand, and the form and content of literature especially novel and poetry on the other. They assume that literary genius will emerge in a classless society
- Parrington relates regional and class differences to economic conditions in order to distinguish the major periods of American literary and social history
- Calverton and Hicks trace the class and economic position of writers in order to demonstrate their economic/religious/political philosophies



Veblen has shown the intrusion of economic motives, conspicuous waste, and expensiveness on the character of aesthetic objects. Unlike his Caudwell and Fox show the relationship between economic conditions and bourgeois ideologies on one hand, and the form and content of literature especially novel and poetry on the other. They assume that the literary genius will emerge only in a classless society.

Parrington relates regional and class differences to economic conditions so that he can distinguish the major periods of American literary and social history and systematize this understanding. Calverton and Hicks have traced the class and economic position of writers in order to demonstrate their economic, religious and political philosophies claiming that there is a necessary link and association between the class of which these writers are a product and the literature they end up producing later on.

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- Tomars adopts Maclver's concepts of corporate and competitive classes and describes the impact on subject matter and style; investigates interclass relationships and their complexity
- Gordon explores how novelists have been able to represent cultural qualities which distinguish several social classes in the US
- Though influential, the Marxist approach poses some difficulties
  - For instance, it is questionable whether "proletarian" literature contributes to lower-class solidarity and unity, and if it does, then, to what extent?
  - The role of proletarian literature in encouraging class struggle remains inadequately explored



Tomars has adopted Maclver's concept of corporate and competitive classes and describes the impact on subject matter and style and also investigates interclass relationships and their complexity. Gordon has explored how novelists have been able to represent cultural qualities which distinguish several social classes in the American society. Marxist approach has been a highly influential approach.

However, it also poses certain difficulties. For example, it remains questionable whether the proletarian literature contributes to lower-class solidarity and unity, and if it does, then to what extent? the role of proletarian literature in encouraging class struggle also remains inadequately explored.

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- It is remarked that the Marxist analysis tends to be overly negative and pedantic in its judgments
- Lack of thorough analysis and objective investigation of hypotheses. Sole emphasis on classes limits the scope of literary analysis; cannot account how bourgeois writers can express the ideas and goals of the proletariat in their works
- The idea that classless society will provide the impetus for improvement of literary/ artistic greatness is merely wishful thinking and hopeful propaganda
- Nevertheless, Marxist approach to literature is dynamic and emphasizes the social and economic aspects of society rather than merely the cultural traits



Some critics also feel that the Marxist analysis tends to be overly negative and also pedantic in its judgment. They do not possess a thorough analysis and at the same time they do not perhaps care for an objective investigation of hypotheses. The sole emphasis on classes limits the scope of their literary analysis and also they cannot account how the bourgeois writer can express the ideas, goals and sentiments of the proletariat in their works.

The idea that it is only within a classless society that there may be an impetus for improvement of literary or artistic greatness is also not supported by facts. And it perhaps looks only like a wishful thinking or hopeful propaganda. Nevertheless, we find that the Marxist approach to literature is dynamic and emphasize the significance of social and economic aspects of society rather than limiting once analysis to the cultural traits only.

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## Gaps and Issues in Reflection Theory

- Dependability of literature/art as indexes of the state of society/culture need to be checked against other indexes
  - Cannot solely be the source for deducing the spirit of the age from literary sources
  - Amounts to 'literary fallacy' according to DeVoto
- Evidently the phrase "reflection of society" is a misleading term
  - Much of what literature reflects is cultural in nature, not social (Sorokin)
- Marx and others have stressed the importance of politics and economics; the influence of social classes
  - Need to explore other aspects
  - Not clear which social processes are responsible for developing and sustaining differences in aesthetic taste or determine what is called artistic genius




If we look at the reflection theory, we find that there are certain gaps in its application. The dependability of literature as indexes of the state of society or culture need to be checked continuously against other indexes. Literature alone cannot be the source for deducing the spirit of a particular age and if we try to do it, it would amount to what can be termed as a literary fallacy. The phrase reflection of a society may also be a misleading term because much of what literature reflects is cultural in nature and not social.

Marx and other Marxist critics have stressed the importance of politics and economics and also the influence of social classes which produce a particular type of literature. It becomes clear to us that there is a need to explore other parallel aspects also and it is also not very clear whether what type of social processes are responsible for developing and sustaining differences in aesthetic taste or to determine what may be called an artistic genius.

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- Reflection theory: Content with looking at literature as a passive reflector of events/occurrences
- Accounts for some of the content; some broader aspects of literary/artistic styles
- Doesn't quite grapple with social conditions which are responsible for the existence and popularity of particular literary/artistic forms in particular periods
- Provides interpretive frames of reference which may have their complement in real-life attitudes (Wolfenstein and Leites)
- Emphasizes the external product as an artifact
- Leads some theorists to ignore/overlook and deny the potential role of the arts in social change



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As we can make out the reflection theory is content at looking literature as a passive reflector of contemporary events and occurrences. It does account for some of the content as it may represent certain broader aspects of literary and artistic styles too. But it is not able to sufficiently grapple with social conditions which are responsible for the popularity of particular artistic forms in particular periods.

Despite it as Wolfenstein and Leites have suggested, this theoretical approach is able to provide interpretive frames of reference which might have had complements in real-life attitudes. It also emphasizes the external product as an artifact and leads certain theorists to ignore the significance of literature and its role in providing social change in contemporary times.

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- Reflection theory has been valuable in challenging older insights and established traditions
  - Paid due attention to the cultural features of literature in addition to its narrowly formal aspects
  - Stressed the idea of artists as products and agents of social forces over the idea of individual geniuses/great men with creative imaginations
  - Popularized historical and social modes of analysis of literature over the established modes of exclusively biographical and aesthetic approaches to literary studies
  - Offers 'concepts of cultural relativism in place of absolutist aesthetic principles and social determinism in place of artistic individualism' (Albrecht)
  - Influence on the works of 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists, like Franz Boas



Reflection theory has also been valuable in challenging older insights and established traditions. And paid due attention to the cultural features of literature in addition to its narrowly formal aspects. It stressed the idea of artists as products as well as agents of social force over the idea of individual geniuses or great men with creative imaginations. It also popularized historical and social models of analysis of literature over the established modes of exclusively biographical or aesthetic approaches which existed before that.

It also offer concepts of cultural relativism in place of absolutist aesthetic principles and social determinism in place of artistic individualism. It is because of this particular aspect of its influence that the early 20th century anthropologist particularly anthropologist like Franz Boas have been deeply influenced in their work by it.

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## Influence of Literature on Society and Culture

- Emphasis on reflection tends to distract attention from the question of literature's impact on society
  - Both Reflection and influence are often regarded as mutually inclusive; opposite sides of the same coin
- Influence is not a simple cause-effect relationship
  - It is selective; determined principally by an individual's background and needs
  - 'A person may focus on particular items such as hair or dress styles, manners, methods or robbery, or courtship techniques, but opposing forces may also be present to cancel or modify the effect of these influences' (Albrecht)



The influence of literature is also easily discernible on society and culture and this is the second approach which we try to study in this module. The emphasis on reflection tends to distract attention from the question of literature's impact on society. And both reflection and influence are often regarded as mutually inclusive, opposite sides of the same coin. However, influence is not a simple cause and effect relationship.

It is always selective and it is determined principally by the individual's background, needs and temperaments. We can quote Albrecht here who says and I quote, "A person may focus on particular items such as hair or dress styles, manners, methods or robbery, or courtship techniques, but opposing forces may also be present to cancel or modify the effect of these influences."

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- The theory that literature/some forms of literature corrupt has been persistent throughout civilization
  - Goes back to Plato's *The Republic*; wanted to ban the poet in his ideal state and thought that laws of the society will be altered by shifts in modes of music
  - Criticizes the 'falsehood' of art especially drama—'thrice removed from reality'
- Aristotle, in *Poetics* elevates drama; focusses on the state of 'catharsis' induced by high classical drama
- The idea of the corrupting influence of literature and art was adopted by the Church, remained predominant throughout the middle ages; reached its peak in 16<sup>th</sup> century Catholicism and Puritanism




The theory that literature or some forms of literature corrupt has been persistent throughout our civilization. The origins of this idea can be traced in Plato's *Republic* in which he wanted to ban the poet from entering his ideal state and thought that laws of the society can be corrupted and changed by shifts in the tunes of the music. He also criticized the falsehood of art especially drama and thought that it is thrice removed from reality.

Aristotle, in *Poetics* elevated drama and focussed on the state of catharsis induced by high classical drama. But the idea that literature and art have a corrupting influence on individual and social morals was adopted by the Church and remained predominant throughout the middle ages and it reached its peak in 16th century Catholicism and Puritanism.

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- The Renaissance changed the attitude towards art/literature
  - Enlightenment; philosophy, Gutenberg Revolution; the revival of the arts
- Literature/arts have differential effects based on content, individual needs, social-cultural background
- The complexity of the problem of systematically understanding influence remains as yet underexplored
  - Defies adequate testing
- The naivety of one-directional kind of influence has been thoroughly questioned
  - This kind of approach finds clear expression as far as TV studies are concerned




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This attitude towards literature and arts was changed only with the advent of the Renaissance. It was further strengthened by the enlightenment philosophy by Gutenberg Revolution leading to the popularity of the print media in the revival of the arts. Literature has had differential effects based on content, individual needs, and social-cultural background of the readers as well as of the authors.

The complexity of the problem of systematically understanding influence remains as yet underexplored because it defies adequate testing and these decisions are normally subjective. The naivety of one-directional kind of influence has been thoroughly questioned also as this kind of approach finds clear expression as far as TV studies are concerned.

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- The idea that literature and films are socially disruptive affords massive power to aesthetic and entertainment media
- Gives rise to fears and anxieties in time of rapid social and cultural change; the disorder and chaos in society furthers this
  - Obscures actual causes of change and fear and projects them onto artistic forms—an easy outlet to vent, curbs artists
  - Channeling and not a dislocation of anxiety remains possible




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It gives rise to fears and anxieties in times of rapid social and cultural change. The disorder and chaos in society furthers this idea. It obscures actual causes of change and fear and projects them on to artistic forms which is an easy outlet to vent and to curb artists. It gives an opportunity to control the artist and artistic production to the totalitarian states. The channelling and not a dislocation of anxiety remains possible in this climate.

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### Literature and Cultural Consciousness

- Cultural consciousness and the ways in which literature aids in the creation of that consciousness
  - As an end in itself, as a means of development of cultural consciousness for a particular group of people
  - The function of national, regional, or ethnic literatures
- Political social-cultural component within literature
  - General and/or specific "usefulness" in the social domain
  - Can have a liberating and debilitating effect
  - The use of literature and history by the White imperialists to justify and legitimize their empire
  - The use of literature for establishing cultural power base
  - Validity of inter- and intra-cultural arenas of power



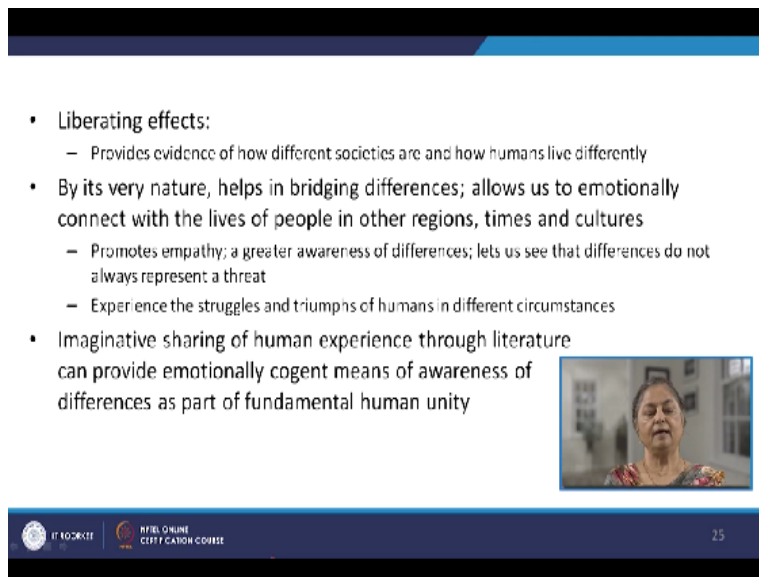
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The cultural consciousness and the ways in which literature aids in the creation of this consciousness are relatively better documented. Literature can be considered as an end in itself, as a means of development of cultural consciousness for a particular group of people. And this is normally considered to be the function of national, regional, as well as ethnic literature. The

political social and cultural component within literature is also quite clear.

We find that in the social domain, this dimension of literary utility is normally understood to be a usefulness of literature. This particular component within literature can have a liberating as well as a debilitating effect. The use of literature and history by the White imperialists was done to justify and legitimize their empire. It also validates inter and intra-cultural arenas of power in the psyche of the people.

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- Liberating effects:
  - Provides evidence of how different societies are and how humans live differently
- By its very nature, helps in bridging differences; allows us to emotionally connect with the lives of people in other regions, times and cultures
  - Promotes empathy; a greater awareness of differences; lets us see that differences do not always represent a threat
  - Experience the struggles and triumphs of humans in different circumstances
- Imaginative sharing of human experience through literature can provide emotionally cogent means of awareness of differences as part of fundamental human unity

As a liberating effect, we find that literature provides evidence of how different societies are and how do human being within these societies behave with each other and how is it that their lives are different. By its very nature, literature helps in bridging differences. It allows us to emotionally connect with the lives of the people who may be living in different regions, in different times, in different cultures.

And thus literature promotes empathy, creates a greater awareness about the differences and lets us see that difference do not always represent a threat to a different set of people. It helps us to experience a struggle and triumphs of human beings in different circumstances. The imaginative sharing of human experience through literature can also provide emotionally cogent means of awareness of differences as part of fundamental human unity.

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## Literature and Social Control

- Many critics and theorists argue that "art is at once a social product and an established means of social control"
- If literature reflects, then it also sanctions and fortifies cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs
  - The "social control" function of literature is suggested by Berelson and Salter
  - Warner and Henry elaborate on this directly and systematically
  - They remark that "literature does not just "entertain" its readers, but it releases their antisocial impulses, anxieties, and frustrations and provides them with both a feeling of being instructed and a sense of security and import'

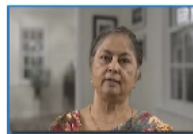


At the same time, we find that literature can also act as an agent of social control. Many critics and theorists argue that art is at once a social product and an established means of social control. If literature reflects, it also sanctions and fortifies cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs. The social control function of literature was primarily suggested by Berelson and Salter and later on Warner and Henry had elaborated on this directly and systematically.

They remark that literature does not only entertain its readers, but it also releases their antisocial impulses, anxieties, and frustrations and provides them with both a feeling of being instructed and a sense of security and import.

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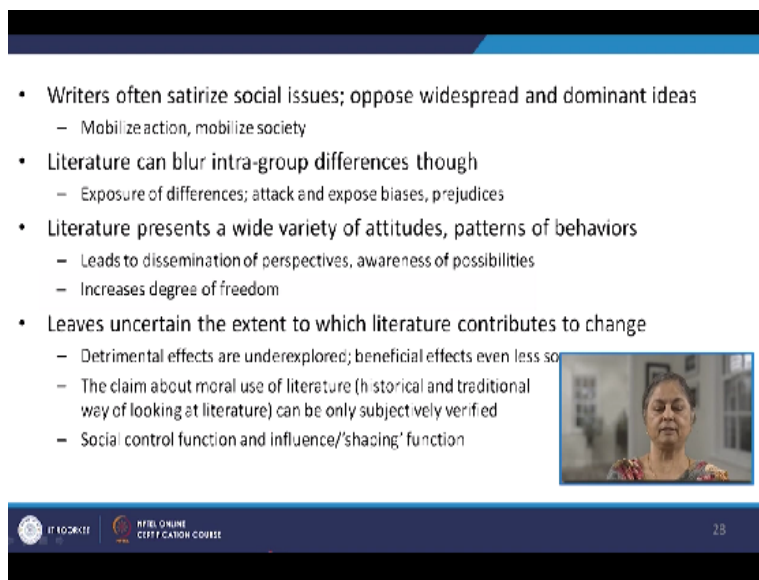
- In complex societies, social control through literature is limited to norms and values common to all groups or particular class/group control -- A group/class is likely to respond to literature/art that reinforces their own values, norms and meanings
- In case of conflicting values, literature can in some way further that antagonism; be a source of division rather than unity in intergroup matters
- Can sustain status quo of the "common man," yet 'operate simultaneously, though perhaps unintentionally, to confirm and strengthen an entrenched economic power elite' (Albrecht)
- Perpetuating the status quo of familial system and other institutions can impede or affect the possibility of radical social change



In complex societies, social control through literature is limited to norms and values which are common to all groups or to a particular dominant class or a group. A group or a class is likely to respond to literature or art that reinforces their own values, norms and meanings. And therefore, this function of literature is particularly used by the dominant group of people. In case of conflicting values, literature can in some way further that antagonism too and can also be found to be a source of division rather than unity in intergroup matters.

It can also sustain status quo of the common man, yet operate simultaneously, though perhaps unintentionally, to confirm and strengthen an entrenched economic power elite. So perpetuating the status quo of the familial system and other institutions can impede the possibility of radical transformation within society. And thus we find that sometimes directly and often indirectly, literature is a means of social control also.

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- Writers often satirize social issues; oppose widespread and dominant ideas
  - Mobilize action, mobilize society
- Literature can blur intra-group differences though
  - Exposure of differences; attack and expose biases, prejudices
- Literature presents a wide variety of attitudes, patterns of behaviors
  - Leads to dissemination of perspectives, awareness of possibilities
  - Increases degree of freedom
- Leaves uncertain the extent to which literature contributes to change
  - Detrimental effects are underexplored; beneficial effects even less so
  - The claim about moral use of literature (historical and traditional way of looking at literature) can be only subjectively verified
  - Social control function and influence/'shaping' function

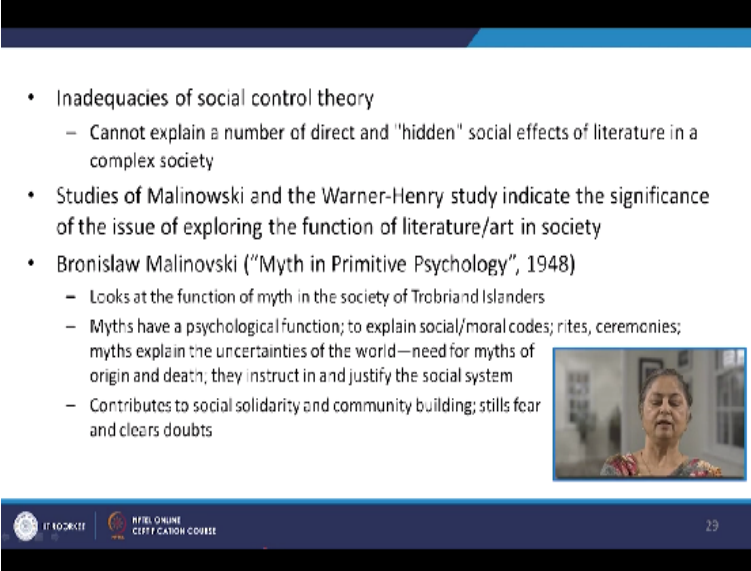
It is the common occurrence to see writers, satirizing social issues and opposing dominant and widespread ideas. Their satire also enables the society to mobilize action and channel their arguments in a better and more systematic manner. Literature can also help us in blurring the intra-group differences by exposing the differences and by attacking the biases and prejudices occurring within different society.

Literature also provides a wide variety of attitudes and indicates different patterns of behaviour

and thereby creating an awareness of different possibilities and leads to dissemination of proper and different perspectives and thereby we can say that increases the degree of freedom. It is also uncertain the extent to which literature can directly contribute to change. The detrimental effects of literature are normally underexplored where as beneficial effects are perhaps never even talked about.

The claim about the moral use of literature can only be subjectively verified and therefore, when we talk about the social control function, the influence of the shaping function of literature, we have to be aware of this aspect.

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- Inadequacies of social control theory
  - Cannot explain a number of direct and "hidden" social effects of literature in a complex society
- Studies of Malinowski and the Warner-Henry study indicate the significance of the issue of exploring the function of literature/art in society
- Bronislaw Malinowski ("Myth in Primitive Psychology", 1948)
  - Looks at the function of myth in the society of Trobriand Islanders
  - Myths have a psychological function; to explain social/moral codes; rites, ceremonies; myths explain the uncertainties of the world—need for myths of origin and death, they instruct in and justify the social system
  - Contributes to social solidarity and community building; stills fear and clears doubts

The social control theory, therefore, proves to be inadequate as it cannot explain a number of direct and hidden social effects of literature in a complex society. The studies of Malinowski and the studies by Warner and Henry indicated the significance of the issue of exploring the function of literature and art in society. And these studies also indicate that literature does have a particular role but at the same time, it has certain limitations.

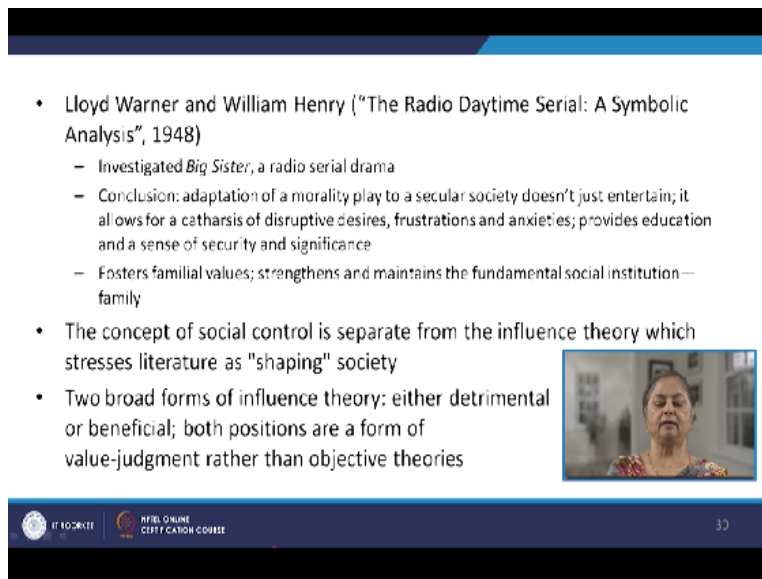
And these ideas become clear in their conclusions. Bronislaw Malinowski had published his study in 1948 which was based on the function of myth in the society of Trobriand Islanders. Malinowski found that myths have a definite psychological function and they are able to explain the social and moral codes to the tribals. They also explained and uphold the rights, the



ceremonies and also explained the uncertainties of the world.

And therefore, he felt that there is a need for myths of people's origin and death because they instruct the people to bear these changes and they also justify the social system which was practiced within the tribe. So the myths contributed to social solidarity and community building and they still fear and also cleared the doubts of the people.

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- Lloyd Warner and William Henry ("The Radio Daytime Serial: A Symbolic Analysis", 1948)
  - Investigated *Big Sister*, a radio serial drama
  - Conclusion: adaptation of a morality play to a secular society doesn't just entertain; it allows for a catharsis of disruptive desires, frustrations and anxieties; provides education and a sense of security and significance
  - Fosters familial values; strengthens and maintains the fundamental social institution— family
- The concept of social control is separate from the influence theory which stresses literature as "shaping" society
- Two broad forms of influence theory: either detrimental or beneficial; both positions are a form of value-judgment rather than objective theories

Lloyd Warner and William Henry had investigated a radio serial drama, *Big Sister*, and their study had also come out in 1948. They also suggested that adaptation of a morality play within a secular society does not only serve the purpose of pure entertainment. It also simultaneously allows for a catharsis of disruptive desires, frustrations and anxieties, and therefore, it is able to provide education as well as a sense of security and significance among the watchers.

And therefore, we find that literature does serve a particular purpose in these contexts. The concept of social control is separate from the influence theory which stresses literature as shaping society. There may be 2 broad forms of influence theory. It can be either detrimental or it can be beneficial also. Both positions are a form of value-judgment rather than being objective theories. So I conclude this discussion at this point. Thank you.